Give stimulus package to local governments

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As Congress considers distributing funds as part of the economic stimulus package, priority should be given to existing programs that place these funds directly in the hand of cities, counties and school boards as quickly and efficiently as possible.

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Local elected officials are in the best position to know what projects are needed and which of these projects would deliver the most immediate benefits in terms of economic stimulus and jobs.

Although initially attractive as expedient, providing funds to the states (with direction to distribute the funds to local governments) would slow the process by adding additional bureaucracy and the opportunity for partisan gamesmanship.

LOCALS KNOW BEST

Local governments are generally less prone to fund pet projects and those promoted by special interest groups. Because local elected officials are most familiar with local economic conditions and challenges, they know and understand which public works and other projects would offer the "most bang for the buck," and create the most local jobs.

They are aware of laid-off workers within their communities who could immediately benefit from the stimulus package and at the same time are aware of circumstances where workers with a particular skill set are not locally available.

Local governments have policies and procedures in place that would enable them quickly to implement economic stimulus projects.

Purchasing procedures, bid documents and auditing mechanisms are regularly used by local government and are readily available to be applied to projects funded by the federal government.

Additional rules and regulations imposed through state involvement would add delays and unnecessary bureaucratic red tape.

NO 'POLITICS AS USUAL'

Finally, the selection process for local government projects is generally free from the partisan politics more prevalent at the state and federal level.

The majority of local government projects are conceived, bid and constructed free from labels such as "pet projects" or claims of catering to "special interests."

Local governments generally make the decision to construct public works projects based upon a sober assessment of need as opposed to the urging of one person or of a special interest group.

The decision as to the allocation of stimulus funds will be among the most important decisions Congress will make. How the package is implemented will have a direct effect on its success.

Projects should be quickly funded using existing programs, procedures and protections at the local level, free from "politics as usual."

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