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# FEDERAL AGENCIES FREQUENTLY CONTACTED BY COUNTY SUPERVISORS

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The following is an alphabetical list of those federal agencies that county supervisors and their staff may need to contact for information and/or assistance. The list includes a description of each agency, the service relationship it may have with a county, and the public information phone number.

**Agriculture, Department of (USDA)** - Oversees programs which improve and maintain farm income; develops and expands markets abroad for agricultural products; helps curb hunger and malnutrition; maintains production capacity by helping landowners protect the soil, water, forests, and other natural resources; ensures standards of quality in the daily food supply; and promotes rural economic development. Food and Nutrition Service within the department operates the Food Stamp Program which provides food coupons through state and local welfare agencies to needy persons. (202) 720-2791 (www.fns.usda.gov)

**Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Bureau of** - Criminal enforcement activities intended to suppress illegal trafficking and use of firearms, contraband tobacco or illicit distilled spirits, and commercial arson. (202) 927-8500 (www.atf.gov)

**Census, Bureau of** - Administers decennial censuses of the U.S. population and compiles current statistics on population and housing characteristics, local governments, industry, trade, and transportation. (301) 763-4636 (www.census.gov)

**Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** - Facilitates the entry of persons legally admissible as visitors or as immigrants to the U.S. and grants benefits under the Immigration and Nationality Act as amended, including providing assistance to those seeking permanent resident status or naturalization. The immigration and citizenship services formerly provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were transferred to USCIS on March 1, 2003. (202) 514-2648 (www.uscis.gov)

**Commerce, Department of** - Promotes economic growth and international trade. Economic Development Administration within the Department targets economically distressed areas within the U.S. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is also within its jurisdiction. (202) 482-3263 (www.commerce.gov)

**Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)** - Enforces narcotics and controlled substance laws and regulations. Presents cases to the criminal and civil justice systems of the U.S., or any other competent jurisdiction, and supports enforcement-related programs aimed at reducing the availability of and demand for controlled substances. Works cooperatively with local law enforcement agencies on narcotics task forces. (202) 307-7977 (www.dea.gov)

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## FEDERAL AGENCIES FREQUENTLY CONTACTED BY COUNTY SUPERVISORS (CONT.)

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**Energy, Department of** - Responsible for long-term energy planning and development. Operates the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Program to assist with housing weatherization and energy conservation measures in schools, hospitals, and units of local government. (202) 586-5806 ([www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov))

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** - Provides for abating and controlling pollution through research, monitoring, standard setting, and enforcement activities. Coordinates and supports research and antipollution activities by state and local governments, private and public groups, individuals, and educational institutions. Oversees the implementation of the federal Clean Air Act which mandates air quality standards that must be adhered to by air pollution control districts. (202) 564-4355 ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov))

**Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** - Gathers and reports facts, locates witnesses, and compiles evidence in cases involving federal jurisdiction; provides laboratory and investigative services to support local law enforcement efforts; and may participate in cooperative narcotics or drug task forces. (202) 317-2727 ([www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov))

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** - Serves as the focal point for emergency planning, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Works closely with state and local governments by funding emergency programs and providing technical guidance and training (e.g., the agency would respond and assist state and local governments in the event of an earthquake or other natural disaster). (202) 646-4600 ([www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov))

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)** - Administers the highway transportation programs, seeking to coordinate highways with other modes of transportation to achieve the most effective balance of transportation systems and facilities. One of the federal agencies responsible for the implementation of the federal transportation program, TEA-21. (202) 366-0600 ([www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov))

**Federal Transit Administration (FTA)** - Develops improved mass transportation facilities, equipment, techniques, and methods; assists state and local governments in financing mass transportation systems; develops policies and proposals for the federal transit program; and administers capital planning and operating assistance grants and loan activities. One of the federal agencies responsible for the implementation of the federal transportation program, TEA-21. (202) 366-4043 ([www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov))

**Forest Service, United States (USFS)** - Under USDA, provides a sustained flow of renewable resources (e.g., outdoor recreation, forage, water, wood, fish) in a combination that best meets the needs of society; administers the nonrenewable resources of the National Forest System to help meet the nation's needs for energy and mineral resources; develops and makes available scientific and technological capabilities to advance renewable natural resource management, use, and protection; and furthers natural

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## FEDERAL AGENCIES FREQUENTLY CONTACTED BY COUNTY SUPERVISORS (CONT.)

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resource conservation with other federal agencies and state and local governments. May assist in providing local fire protection and can be called for assistance in operating local campgrounds. (202) 205-1134 ([www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us))

**Health and Human Services, Department of (HHS)** - Administers major programs in the areas of health and welfare and includes the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Administration for Children and Families, and Public Health Services such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). (202) 619-0257 ([www.dhhs.gov](http://www.dhhs.gov))

**Homeland Security, Department of (DHS)** - Protects the nation against terrorist attacks. The Department is dedicated to achieving this goal while allowing for the free flow of people, goods, and commerce across our borders and through our airports and seaports. Component agencies analyze threats and intelligence, guard our borders and airports, protect our critical infrastructure, and will coordinate the response of our nation for future emergencies. Besides providing a better coordinated defense of the homeland, the Department is also dedicated to protecting the rights of American citizens and enhancing public services, such as natural disaster assistance and citizenship services, by dedicating offices to these important missions. (202) 282-8000 ([www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov))

**Housing and Urban Development, Department of (HUD)** - Oversees housing and fair housing opportunity programs: programs to combat housing discrimination and aid community and neighborhood development and preservation, mortgage insurance programs, rental assistance programs, empowerment zones and enterprise communities. Works with counties who act as the conduit for the Community Development Block Grant program which provides federal funds for local economic development (e.g., counties can loan companies these grant funds if they build and operate their businesses in a designated distressed area). (202) 708-0980 ([www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov))

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** - Protects the nation's borders from the smuggling of people, narcotics, and other contraband. Promotes public safety and national security by ensuring the departure from the U.S. of all removable aliens through enforcement of the nation's immigration laws. Deploys federal marshals to detect hostile acts targeting U.S. air carriers, airports, passengers and crews. Investigates a range of issues including exports of illegal arms and dual-use equipment that may threaten national security. (202) 514-2648 ([www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov))

**Labor, Department of (DOL)** - Administers a variety of federal labor laws guaranteeing workers' rights to safe and healthful working conditions, a minimum hourly wage and overtime pay, freedom from employment discrimination, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation. Protects workers' pension rights; provides for job training programs; helps workers find jobs; and works to strengthen free collective bargaining. Maintains a variety of price, employment, and economic data. (202) 693-4676 ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov))

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## FEDERAL AGENCIES FREQUENTLY CONTACTED BY COUNTY SUPERVISORS (CONT.)

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**Land Management, Bureau of (BLM)** - Manages more than 270 million acres of public land, including minerals management of these public lands and subsurface resource management of an additional 300 million acres where mineral rights are owned by the federal government. (202) 452-5125 ([www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

**Marshals Service, United States (USMS)** - Provides support and protection for the federal courts, apprehends federal fugitives, operates the Federal Witness Security Program, maintains custody of and transporting federal prisoners, and responds to emergency circumstances. Contracts with many counties to house federal pre-trial offenders. (202) 307-9065 ([www.usodj.gov/marshals](http://www.usodj.gov/marshals))

**Medicare and Medicaid Services, Centers for (CMS)** - Oversees the Medicare program, the federal portion of the Medicaid program, and related quality assurance activities. (202) 690-6145 ([cms.hhs.gov](http://cms.hhs.gov))

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)** - Conducts and sponsors research on the prevention, effects, and treatment of drug abuse. Operates a toll-free hotline for employers trying to eradicate drug abuse in the workplace; and coordinates activities with state and county alcohol and drug programs. (301) 443-6245 ([www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov))

**Natural Resources Conservation Service** - Formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), oversees the national soil and water conservation program in cooperation with landowners, other land users and developers, community planning agencies and regional resource groups, and other federal, state, and local government agencies. Assists in agricultural pollution control, environmental improvement, and rural community development. Provides technical assistance to locally operated resource conservation districts and local sponsors of watershed protection projects and resource conservation and development projects; and helps prepare maps showing the location of important farmlands. (202) 720-3210 ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov))

**Rural Development** - Part of the USDA, it includes the Rural Housing Service, the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, and the Rural Utilities Service. Offers rural housing and rural community facility loan and grant programs, business and cooperative development programs, and utility programs to promote comprehensive community and economic development in rural America. Also provides technical assistance, training, monitoring, and support to USDA field staff and communities. (202) 720-4323 ([www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov))

**Small Business Administration** - Promotes the interests of small businesses through loans to small business concerns, small business investment companies, and state and local development companies; ensures a fair share of government purchases, contracts, and property sales to small business; also makes loans to victims of natural catastrophes such as floods, etc. (202) 205-6740 ([www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov))

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## FEDERAL AGENCIES FREQUENTLY CONTACTED BY COUNTY SUPERVISORS (CONT.)

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**Social Security Administration** - Manages the Social Security Program and the Supplemental Security Income Program (SSIP) for the aged, blind, and disabled. Also assigns Social Security numbers to U.S. citizens and maintains earnings records for workers under their Social Security numbers. (410) 965-7700 ([www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov))

**Transportation, Department of (DOT)** - Establishes the nation's overall transportation policy. Oversees nine offices whose jurisdictions include highway planning, development, and construction; urban mass transit; railroads; aviation; and the safety of waterways, ports, highways, and oil and gas pipelines. Oversees overall implementation of federal transportation funding program, TEA-21, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, passed by Congress in 1998. (202) 366-4000 ([www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov))

**Veterans Affairs, Department of** - Operates programs to assist veterans and their families including pensions, education, rehabilitation, home loan guarantees, health care, and burial. (202) 273-5700 ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov))

On the Web: Additional federal agency information can be obtained at the following web sites:

FirstGov Information Portal: [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov)

United States Blue Pages: [bp.fed.gov](http://bp.fed.gov)

Source: The United States Government Manual 2004-2005, Office of Federal Register, Washington, D.C. ([www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/browse-gm-04.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/browse-gm-04.html))

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# THE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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Each two-year session of Congress begins in January of the odd-numbered year. The 113th Congress will convene in January 2013.

## **BILL INTRODUCTION**

Any member of Congress introduces a bill. The next day the title of the bill, its number, its sponsor and cosponsor(s), and the committee(s) to which it has been referred will appear in the Congressional Record. Identical legislation can be introduced simultaneously in the House and Senate and moved through both houses concurrently, with the exception of tax legislation and appropriations/spending, which can only originate in the House of Representatives.

## **HEARINGS AND AMENDMENTS**

Hearings on the bill occur in sub-committee, full committee, or, occasionally, both. After the hearings, the committee acts on the bill in what is known as the “mark up,” a session where the bill is subject to amendment and finally voted up or down. Mark-up always occurs in full committee, preceded in some committees by a sub-committee mark-up. The decisions on whether to hold hearings on a bill and how rapidly it moves along are largely controlled by committee and subcommittee chairs, not the author of the bill. The vast majority of legislation dies at the end of a two-year session without hearing.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Once the mark-up is complete, the full committee issues a report on the bill, which is now ready for floor debate. The committee report will usually describe the bill, any committee amendments, any minority views, and the reasons why the bill was approved by the committee. The committee report is numbered separately from the bill and is public information. Great weight can be given to committee reports when interpreting congressional intent.

## **FLOOR DEBATE**

The House and Senate use different methods for scheduling debates and votes on their respective floors. Amendments previously heard at the subcommittee or committee level, but not included in the bill under consideration, can be proposed again during floor debate. In the House, votes are recorded electronically. In the Senate, the roll is called by a clerk. If one house passes the bill, the process begins again in the second house; once both houses pass similar bills, they can establish a conference committee to resolve differences between the two versions.

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# THE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PROCESS (CONT.)

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## **CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

A typical conference committee is composed of seven or eight members from each house, although they can be larger. Conferees are almost always members of the committee(s) which acted on the bill, and thus may not include the bill's author. The majority party of each house composes the majority of the membership of each house's delegation. The conferees may consider only those provisions of the conference bills on which the two houses differ. Conference committee meetings are open to the public. When agreement is reached by the conferees, a conference report is written by conference committee staff which includes the conferees' recommendations and an explanation of the effect of the proposed recommendations on the original bills. If conferees cannot reach agreement, the bill may die without further action.

## **FINAL PASSAGE**

The conference report may not be amended by either house, although there are some situations where votes will occur on non-germane amendments to the measure. If the conference report receives approval by both houses, the measure is sent to the President for final action. If one or both houses reject the report, the conference committee process can begin again.

## **PRESIDENTIAL ACTION**

After the bill is delivered to the White House, the President has ten days to sign it or return it to Congress with a veto message. If the President does not act within ten days and Congress is in session, the bill becomes law without presidential signature. If Congress is not in session and the President does not act within ten days, the bill does not become law, on the premise that the President was unable to return it to Congress because Congress had adjourned. This is known as a “pocket veto.”

## **VETO OVERRIDE**

A vetoed bill is returned to the house where it originated. That house must vote first. A two-thirds vote is required to override the veto. If that occurs, the bill is sent to the second house which must also override by a two-thirds margin for the bill to become law.

For more information on the federal legislative process or on specific pieces of legislation, visit the Library of Congress website at <http://thomas.loc.gov>, the U.S. House of Representatives website at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov), or the U.S. Senate website at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).