

Nearly 70 Minnesota County Officials, Staff Attend Private White House Briefing and Tour

Nearly 70 county commissioners, official, staff and guests traveled to Washington D. C. to attend a private briefing and tour at the White House on May 31, 2018

The White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs organized similar events for county officials in each state to visit the White House and attend a personalized briefing from federal officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, who spoke to the Minnesota group about the importance of partnership between local and federal government officials.

Three Wright County Commissioners, Christine Husom, Darek Vetsch, and Mike Potter, along with Wright County's Auditor Treasurer Bob Hiivala were able to attend this event.

Commissioner Husom had this to say about the trip. "I was excited for the opportunity to attend the Intergovernmental White House briefing and it far surpassed my expectations. A number of agency heads summarized their duties, and then took questions from the commissioners. Many concerns were expressed, and the agencies wrote them down. We were thrilled when Vice President Pence stopped by the meeting. He spoke for a while and assured, "This is not a one and out," and encouraged us to continue a dialogue with the White House. We were given contact information at the agencies for that purpose. I found the briefing very informative and motivating."

Commissioner Vetsch when asked to comment stated "I was honored to be part of the 70 County Commissioners, staff and other elected officials from across Minnesota to attend a White House briefing by the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs of the Trump administration on Thursday, May 31, 2018. This briefing gave members direct contacts to the White House and details on how policy and fund works at the federal level and how it trickles down to local county affairs. A visit by Vice President Mike Pence made this event truly special. The Vice President and a dozen other speakers spoke on how the Trump administration is working hard to close gaps between the federal government and local government affairs, with hopes of bringing a more streamline system to policy making and funding.

NACO (National Association of Counties) did a wonderful job on Wednesday, May 30 with preparing members of this delegation for the May 31 White Houses briefing. They took time to give members updates on a variety of issues relating to county government on the federal level, as well as educating the group on what NACO is working on for counties and what we can do to be involved.

Closing the gaps in communication between governmental agencies across the federal, state and local level is the key to a more efficient government and a start at getting tax paying dollars to the places they need to be. Creating events like this and attending them is key. I want to thank the White House Staff and the Trump Administration for caring about local government and county affairs."

Auditor Treasurer Hiivala expressed how fortunate he was to be included in the attendees at the White House last week. "I was more impressed that this trip was more of a direct invitation by the White House and coordinated with the National Association of Counties (NACO). The invitation was a request for Minnesota local officials to give members of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs input on issues.

At Wright County we are active with our own State, Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC). Attending this White House event was a chance to see what could be coming our way from the national level.

I believe that since this was an invitation from the White House to Minnesota Counties, it was important that we were there. Minnesota was well represented, and we conveyed a level of interest and competency in the matters being debated at the federal level."