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For Immediate Release  
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## **WCA Commends Governor Walker & Legislature for Several County-Related Initiatives as State Budget is Signed into Law**

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) commends Governor Scott Walker for signing into law today the 2017-2019 State Budget that contains several initiatives advocated for by counties.

County-related highlights of the state's two-year spending plan include:

- **Next Generation 911:** The budget provides approximately \$7 million annually, beginning in FY19, for creation of a statewide 911 network. Creation of a statewide network is the critical first step towards upgrading Wisconsin's 911 system.
- **Child Welfare Funding:** The budget provides an additional \$5 million annually, beginning January 2018, for child welfare services and nearly \$3 million for the expansion of in-home safety services program statewide over the biennium. The child welfare funding increase is the first increase in the children and family aids appropriation since the appropriation was created.
- **County Transportation Funding:** The budget provides the largest increases in county transportation funding in more than a decade. Specifically, the budget provides approximately \$13 million in additional county general transportation aids (GTA), an additional \$5 million annually in local road improvement program (LRIP) funding, an additional \$7.5 million annually in local bridge funding, and an additional \$33.7 million in routine maintenance agreement (RMA) funding. The budget also enacts the federal swap program that results in efficiencies by exchanging federal funding for state funding in the local surface transportation program.
- **County Conservation Funding:** The budget provides \$900,000 annually in additional funding for county land conservation staffing and cost-sharing grants. While past budgets have appropriated additional funding for the program, this budget represents the first time the additional funding will be appropriated on an ongoing basis.

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- **Regional Service Delivery:** The budget allows counties to form joint commissions to deliver services collaboratively. This new budget language will give counties the option to deliver services regionally or cooperatively with other units of local government without impediment from existing state statutes.
- **County Veterans Service Officer Grants:** The budget reverts county veterans service officer grants back to a block grant program and eliminates all restrictions on how the grant dollars can be spent. This change will allow the grant dollars to be spent as efficiently and effectively as possible in an effort to increase services to veterans.

In March 2017, the WCA Board of Directors identified four priorities for the state budget: Next Generation 911, regional service delivery, child welfare funding, and increased transportation funding.

“County officials and WCA staff worked hard to keep the conversation on these topics at the forefront and we are happy to see each of these priorities as a part of the final budget signed into law,” said WCA Executive Director Mark D. O’Connell. “Each of these issues have a tremendous impact on the citizens of Wisconsin and the direction our state will go in the years ahead.”

O’Connell concluded, “We are grateful to Governor Walker for signing this budget bill into law today that contains numerous items to assist counties and we commend the Legislature for their vision and hard work to put in place a budget that invests in the future of our state.”

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