



Board Workshop / Discussion Agenda

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

October 21, 2025 - 10:30 a.m.

Courthouse Room 220

WORKSHOP

1. **2026 Ramsey County State and Federal Platform: Proposed Legislative Priorities**

[2025-410](#)

Sponsors: County Manager's Office



Board of Commissioners

Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

Item Number: 2025-410

Meeting Date: 10/21/2025

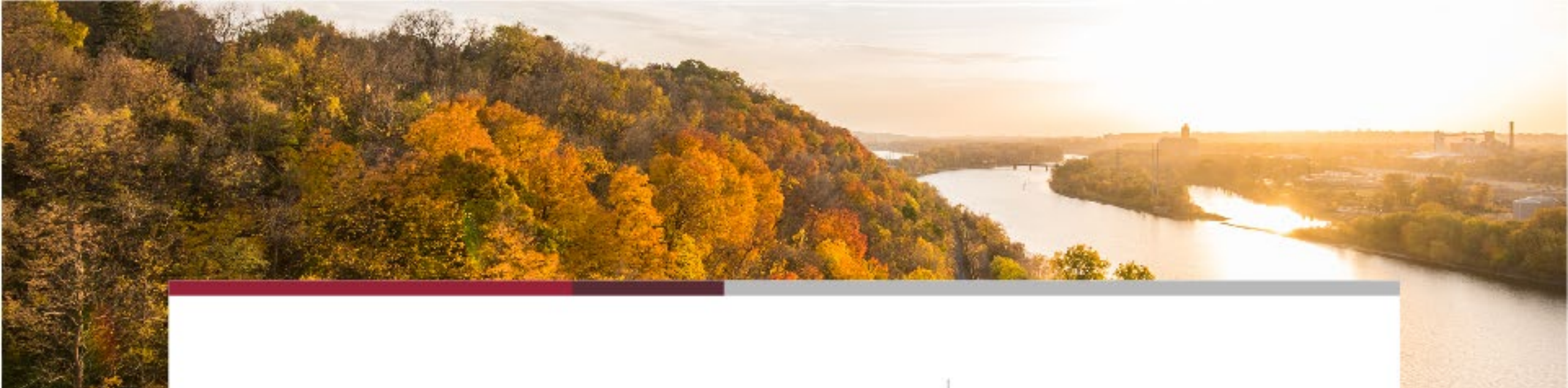
Sponsor: County Manager's Office

Title

2026 Ramsey County State and Federal Platform: Proposed Legislative Priorities

Attachment

1. Presentation
2. Proposed Advocacy Framework



Proposed 2026 Legislative Platform Priorities

October 21, 2025



Goals of This Workshop

- Review proposed 2026 legislative priorities and framework.
- Review and provide input on 2026 advocacy strategy.
- Provide feedback on proposed platform to be approved by the Legislative Committee of the Whole on November 4.

Recap from September 23 Board Workshop

- Government Relations provided platform development update.
- County Board requested:
 - Focused set of top legislative priorities to consider today.
 - Plan for topic-specific briefings for Ramsey County legislators (“Hot Topics”).
 - Create an advocacy framework that clearly identifies issues for active leadership and pursuit.
 - Additional resources for commissioner engagement with legislators.

Active Advocacy: Responding to Unprecedented Shifts

- NACo identified unprecedented shifts impacting local governments.
The stakes have never been higher—demanding new approaches and recalibrated responses that balance evolving responsibilities.
- Persistent property tax pressure.
- Our Path Forward
 - Agility in adapting to changing conditions
 - Opportunities to take ownership and to participate in emerging and urgent conversations
 - Laying the right foundation to be ready for *any and all solutions*
 - Balancing relationships while preserving our fiscal health
- Next Step
 - Launch of the New Human Services Advocacy Team
 - Led by the County Manager to strengthen alignment, coordination and proactive engagement.

Ramsey County's Overarching Themes in 2026

No new unfunded mandates.

Protect counties from further cuts.

Counties must be at the table for any service delivery change.

Reduce reliance on property tax.

Advocacy Strategy

Government Relations engages with legislators and partners like AMC throughout the year.

Our Approach:

- Focus on most critical, urgent, and realistically achievable priorities.
- Emphasis on county responsible services.
- Strategic commissioner engagement with legislators.
- “Hot topics” briefings & learning opportunities.
- Leverage partnerships wherever possible.

More Intentional Focus

of proposals in 2026 compared to 2025 (State Platform)

Category	2025	2026 (Proposed)
PURSUE	27	5
SUPPORT/ OPPOSE	98	22
BONDING	3	2
TOTAL	131	30

Ramsey County Roles & Responsibilities

	Pursue	Leading advocate	Support	Bonding
Work with bill author to get bill jacketed and introduced	✓			✓
Identify key partners, get letters of support	✓			✓
Convene internal cross-functional workgroups to coordinate advocacy	✓	○		✓
Commissioner assigned as lead for testimony and legislator engagement	✓	○	○	✓
Develop tailored communications strategy	✓	○	○	✓
Provide supporting data and narrative information	✓	✓	○	✓

- ✓ Responsibility applies to all items in this category
- Responsibility applies to some items in this category, depending on need, capacity, and other circumstances around that item.

The background of the slide is a scenic photograph. On the left, there is a dense forest with trees showing autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. To the right, a wide river flows, reflecting the bright light of the sun, which is positioned low on the horizon, creating a strong lens flare and a warm, golden glow across the entire scene. The sky is a pale blue with wispy white clouds.

Proposed 2026 Legislative Platforms

Top Legislative Priorities in 2026

- **Impact:** are critical to Ramsey County services or operations
- **Viability:** have a chance of success within current political and fiscal conditions
- **Indicated with a (!) in this presentation.**

Bonding Items

- 2026 is a bonding year (no guarantee of a bonding bill).
- On Oct. 7, County Board approved two bonding priorities.
- Bonding requests are based on:
 - Alignment to strategic priorities, racial equity impact and opportunity
 - Clear vision
 - Previous momentum
 - Legislator buy-in and support
 - External factors such as community input and competing requests

Top priority	Bonding Request
!	Park at RiversEdge (\$20 million)
!	Aldrich Arena (\$8.5 million)



Pursue Items

Pursue means Ramsey County takes the lead works with the bill sponsor to get the bill jacketed and introduced. Ramsey County may co-lead with another partner. The issue mainly affects only the County and/or no other entity is leading. Requires a substantial investment of time and resources from the County.

Top priority	Proposed Platform Item
!	Establish Capitol Complex County Host Program (CCCHP) , a program similar to Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for Ramsey County as host of the Capitol Complex.
!	Amend MN Statute 383A to clean up human resources-related language; to raise small contract threshold to \$500,000; and to extend/eliminate sunset on Environmental Response Fund (Phase 1).
!	Seek funding extension for the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPCWDA).
!	Establish a statewide homelessness funding program , to be funded in the 2028-29 budget, that would provide ongoing, separate funding for counties and providers.
	Adjust adult protection funding allocation formula to a more equitable balance between screened-in cases and referral volume.

Leading Advocate Items

- Another county, coalition, or association is pursuing the bill or leading opposition.
- As a **Leading Advocate**, Ramsey County provides active advocacy efforts but is not the primary lead.

Top priority	Proposed Platform Item
!	Preserve current reimbursement method for MnCHOICES assessments , to ensure sufficient funding for Ramsey County’s MnCHOICES division budget and staffing.
!	Enhance efficiencies in Home & Community-Based Services , where program changes have increased administrative burden, increasing pressures on workforce and wait times for residents.
!	Modernize state human services systems to better serve residents and reduce counties’ administrative burden.
!	Preserve or increase formula-based transportation funding for Ramsey County.
	Increase access to secure mental health treatment options in the East Metro to better address residents’ complex behavioral health needs.
	Allow local governments to restrict guns on properties they own , especially buildings.
	Allow a portion of state housing and homelessness funds to be used for administrative costs.
	Repeal 2028 sunset of Local Homeless Prevention Aid

Support Items

- Include some top priorities, though the County will play a less active role in advancing them.
- Time and resources are invested in **Support** items on an as-needed or as-requested basis.

Top priority	Proposed Platform Item
!	Address the comprehensive substance abuse, mental and behavioral health needs of the community, including youth and those with acute and/or complex needs.
!	Enhance public safety and reduce gun violence
!	Support the Catalyzing Underutilized Buildings (CUB) Tax Credit to encourage redevelopment efforts and to increase housing stock.
!	Protect counties from increased costs resulting from federal changes to SNAP and MA
!	Move MAAFPCWDA case review responsibility to state
	Address racial disparities in healthcare quality, access and outcomes, especially those likely to result from recent federal legislative changes that will cause residents to lose access to healthcare.
	Classify residential addresses of elected officials and government officials as private government data.
	Transition the special property tax refund to a property tax credit that is automatically calculated and issued
	Increase state allocations to 40% of Operations & Maintenance costs for regional parks and trails.
	Support legislation aligning with Climate Equity Action Plan
	Allow recovery of costs of special elections for state and federal offices.
	Expand the responsibilities of Office of Broadband Development to include Digital Opportunity

Priorities Led by Ramsey County Attorney's Office

- RCAO would take the lead on the following items, supported by Ramsey County Government Relations.

Proposed Platform Item
Remove automatic cost-of-living adjustments for maintenance and child support orders in favor of routine reviews, as required by federal regulations, enhancing fairness & improving compliance.
Require employers to report new hires of 1099 independent contractors to DHS , which will help increase child support payments and enhance the fairness of child support orders.
Increase funds in the state auto theft fund for advanced prevention and intervention efforts.

Summary of All Top Priorities

County Role	Top Priorities
Pursue	Bonding for Park at RiversEdge
	Bonding for Aldrich Arena
	Capitol Complex County Host Program (CCCHP) for Ramsey County
	Amendments to MN Statute 383A
	Seek funding extension for MAAFPCWDA.
	Establish a statewide homelessness funding program
Leading advocate	Preserve current reimbursement method for MnCHOICES assessments
	Enhance efficiencies in Home & Community-Based Services
	Modernize state human services systems
	Preserve or increase formula-based transportation funding for Ramsey County
Support	Address substance abuse, mental and behavioral health needs
	Enhance public safety and reduce gun violence
	Support the Catalyzing Underutilized Buildings (CUB) Tax Credit
	Protect counties from increased costs resulting from federal changes to SNAP and MA.
	Move MAAFPCWDA case review responsibility to state

Federal Platform

- Defend against funding cuts and identify bipartisan legislative opportunities that we can support.
- Potential platform items:
 - Delay implementation of changes to SNAP and Medicaid.
 - Preserve funding for Emergency Management, Continuum of Care, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
 - Affordable Housing (e.g., Road to Housing package, including bill from Sen. Smith to streamline CoC funding process).
 - Rule/policy changes to allow streamlining of MnCHOICES reassessments.
 - Transportation and infrastructure funding opportunities.

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Commissioner and Legislator Engagement



LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES



A communications plan, including a one-pager providing key context for the issue



A list of key legislators and legislative committees



Any bill language that is in the works



Commissioner Engagement with Legislators

For **top priorities**, Government Relations will:

- Work with Board Chair and Legislative Team to determine Lead Commissioner on each.
- Provide resources to guide engagement with legislators (see left).

Government Relations will set up a meeting with legislative delegation to present state platform, aiming for December.

Engagement with Ramsey County Delegation and External Partners

- “Hot Topics” briefings for Ramsey County delegation
 - Issue-specific briefings on selected Top Priorities.
 - Planning four sessions, November – February.
 - Survey findings
- Ongoing connections to AMC, NACo, and external working groups.
- Coordination and engagement with other metro counties and other key stakeholder organizations.

Association of Minnesota Counties District 10 Meeting

- Monday, November 3, 8am – 12pm
- Ramsey County must select preferred items for AMC platform; commissioners and proxies may vote for five.
- Government Relations will work with chair and co-chair of Legislative Committee of the Whole to coordinate votes for greatest impact.

Next Steps

November 3

- Association of Minnesota Counties District 10 meeting.

November 4

- Legislative Committee of the Whole reviews and recommends approval for platform.

November 18

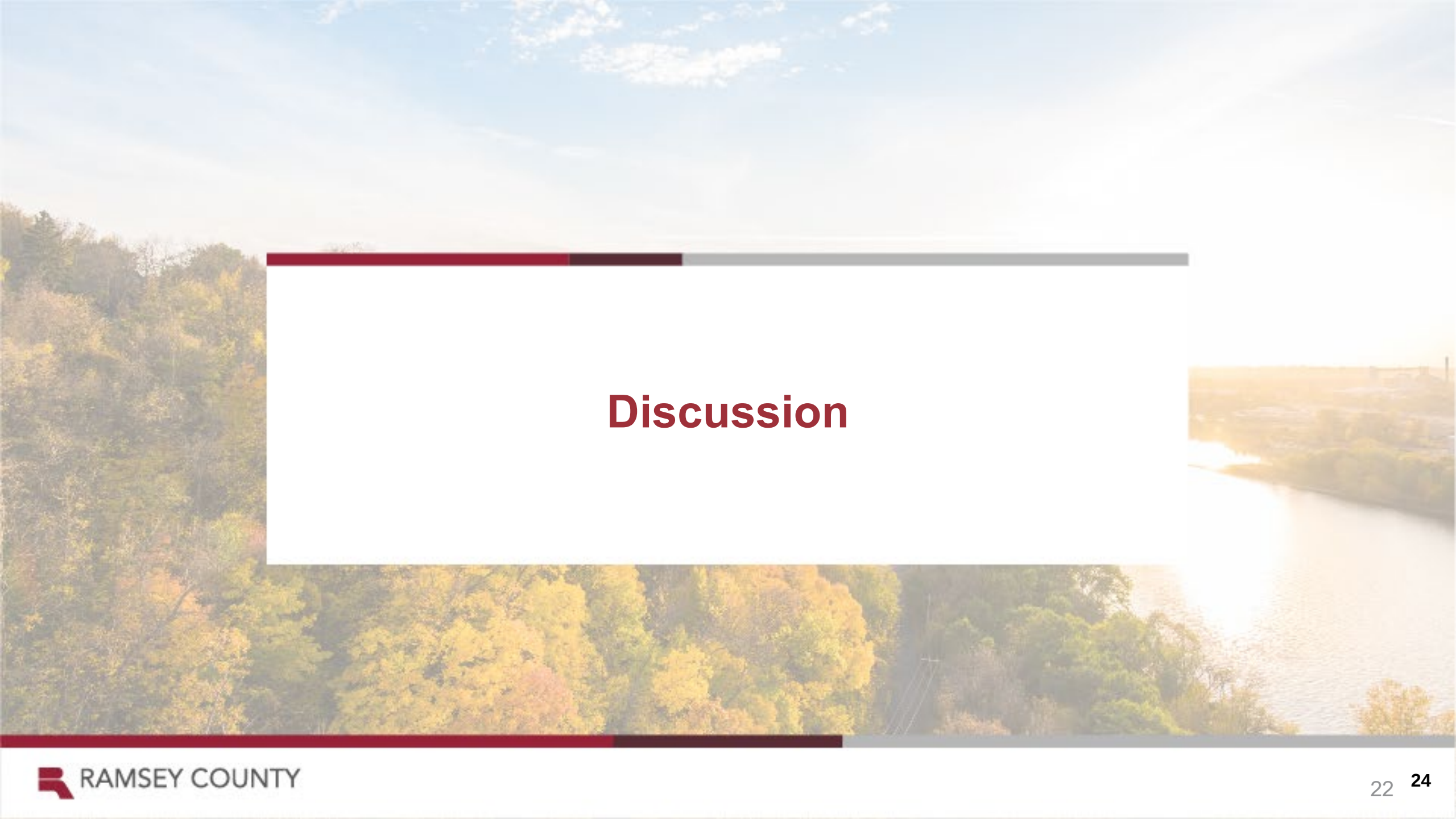
- County Board approves the state and federal platforms.

November – February

- Meetings with legislators and partners.
- Ramsey County Delegation Meeting (planning December)
- Board presentation on Congressionally Directed Spending projects (January – February)

February 17

- 2026 Session begins.

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Discussion

Top Priorities: A Proposed Advocacy Framework

Issue area	Legislative platform position	Lead commissioner	Possible key legislators (RC legislators in red)	Likely committee path	Partners	AMC position
Bonding: Park at RiversEdge	Pursue	TBD	Sen. Pappas Rep. Perez-Vega (HF 1420/SF 1401)	House Capitol Investment Senate Capitol Investment	Saint Paul, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Council, River partners	They lobby for an overall big omnibus bill; not for individual projects.
Bonding: Aldrich Arena	Pursue	TBD	Rep. Fischer Sen. T. Xiong (HF 2455/SF 2799)	House Capitol Investment Senate Capitol Investment	Community users	They lobby for an overall big omnibus bill; not for individual projects.
Capitol Complex County Host Program (CCCHP)	Pursue	TBD	Rep. Liz Lee / Hollins Senator TBD Tax chairs	House Tax Committee Senate Tax Committee	TBD. Saint Paul has been supportive on CPA formula issues.	TBD; staff have encouraged a PILT approach in the past.
Amendments to MN Statute 383A	Pursue	TBD	Rep. Liz Lee? Sen. Tou Xiong? Rep. Kaohly Her?	House Elections Finance and Gov Ops; Senate State and Local Gov; Taxes (House & Sen)	TBD	Local bill, so likely not to take any positions.
Funding extension for MAAFWCWA	Pursue	TBD	Rep. Agbaje & Sen. Champion were bill authors	House Children and Families; Senate Health	TBD	Specific to Hennepin and Ramsey Counties
Statewide homelessness funding program	Pursue	TBD	Rep. Brion Curran Sen. Z. Mohamed (HF 1914/SF 2124)	2025 bills went to Senate and House Health/Human Services	Hennepin County, other counties TBD	Supports regional approach to ending homelessness.
MNChoices reimbursement method	Leading Advocate	TBD	Rep. Noor, Sen. Hoffman, etc.	Human Services	TBD	Unclear at this time
Enhance efficiencies in Home & Community Based Services	Leading Advocate	TBD	Rep. Noor, Sen. Hoffman, etc.	Human Services	Counties	This will likely be a top priority for MACSSA
Modernize state human services systems	Leading Advocate	TBD	Committee chairs and more TBD.	House and Senate Human Services and/or House Children and Families and Senate Health	Counties	This will likely be a top priority for both AMC and MACSSA
Preserve or increase formula-based transportation funding	Leading Advocate	TBD	Rep. Koegel / Rep. Koznick; Sen. Dibble (as committee co-chairs)	Depending on bill, Taxes and Transportation.	Other metro counties on TAA funding; Hennepin County on MVLST	District 10 Transportation Group working hard on this.
Address substance abuse, mental and behavioral health needs	Support	TBD	Committee chairs and more TBD.	Health/Human Services	Counties	This will likely be a top priority for both AMC and MACSSA
Enhance public safety and reduce gun violence	Support	TBD	Public Safety Committee members	Public Safety; State and Local Govt? Health?	Saint Paul	None.
Support CUB Tax Credit	Support	TBD	Rep. Hussein; Rep. Howard; Rep. Harder Sen. Mohamed HF457/SF768	Housing, Taxes	Rethos, St. Paul, Downtown Alliance, etc.	None.
Protect counties from increased costs from SNAP and MA changes	Support	TBD	Committee chairs, and more TBD.	Health, Children and Families; State Govt?	Counties	This will likely be a top priority for AMC