July 7, 2011

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

The California State Association of Counties requests that you co-sponsor the Retiree Health Coverage Protection Act (S. 1088). Created under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the program has assisted at least 54 of California's 58 counties in maintaining health insurance coverage for their early retirees. ACA funding has helped to maintain that coverage in advance of full ACA implementation by reducing costs of county plans as well as participant's costs.

The program has been extremely popular. Administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the temporary Early Retiree Reinsurance Program was allocated $5 billion and was slated to expire no later than January 1, 2014 when the ACA coverage provisions take effect. Due to the overwhelming response of retiree health plan sponsors, however, HHS is no longer accepting applications.

Introduced by Senators Kerry and Stabenow, S. 1088 will help California's early retiree plans, including those already participating in the Reinsurance Program, to maintain this important coverage until ACA is implemented and early retirees will have other affordable health insurance options. The $5 billion provided in the legislation will further assist counties and businesses participating currently and other plans whose applications were not submitted before HHS determined that it could no longer accept any more. HHS has a list of the participating plans in California which may be accessed at:
http://www.healthcare.gov/law/provisions/retirement/states/ca.html.

CSAC urges your support of this measure. If your staff needs additional information, please contact Tom Joseph, CSAC's Washington Representative, at 202.898.1444 or tj@wafed.com.

Sincerely,

Paul McIntosh
Executive Director