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July 22, 2020

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
U.S. Senate  
205 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

This letter comes to you from the Mayor's Council of Oklahoma, but we do so on behalf of all Oklahoma's cities and towns. We are pleased that amid continued public health, economic and fiscal challenges our nation faces, there appears to be a growing bipartisan consensus that Congress should enact a fifth coronavirus relief bill by the end of this month. We sincerely appreciate all you have done to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic and fiscal crisis. Congress has taken swift and bold action to protect our state and country. Unfortunately, as the virus surges once again in Oklahoma, more federal assistance will be needed for the state and its cities and towns to weather the unprecedented economic downturn. That is why we send this urgent request that you quickly pass an additional measure that includes **direct and flexible fiscal assistance to all municipalities** across the nation.

Oklahoma municipalities provide essential services that keep our economy and neighborhoods strong. Our core responsibilities include sanitation services, water and electric utilities and public safety. In addition to those functions the majority of our local governments oversee public health, affordable housing and summer youth programs and a litany of other programs that make our communities work. As the coronavirus spiraled into a global public health and economic crisis, local leaders were and continue to be on the frontlines of minimizing the spread and installing life-saving measures. In concert with those efforts local leaders were also charged with reopening the economy, while minimizing the financial burden of mass unemployment and industry shutdowns on residents and businesses. Since the beginning of this crisis Mayors and municipal leaders have implemented lifesaving and economy-saving measures to protect our state and its people.

Despite these efforts, the sudden, deep and indiscriminating crisis and ensuing economic decline has left city budgets with unmanageable revenue losses and unexpected expenses. Although, billions of dollars have been committed by the federal government, many of these programs were off limits to municipalities. We were unable to utilize the payroll protection program or any of the loan programs afforded to the private sector. The unfortunate result is numerous municipal professionals are now without employment. Outside of Oklahoma City and our largest counties, we have largely been at the mercy of the state to determine how best to utilize the CARES Act funding and FEMA Grants. The financial impact to our communities will be felt for years to come with a reduction in municipal services. That end result is the deterioration of citizens' quality of life. Unlike every other form of Government in our state, the quality of everyday life of Oklahomans is the sole responsibility of municipal government. Over ninety percent of Oklahomans live within municipal borders, meaning we manage where people live, worship, raise families, educate and most of all call home.

Oklahoma's cities and towns sole dependence on sales tax has amplified the impact of the crisis. We are the last state in the country to utilize this volatile and archaic system of funding local governments and the consequence of the state's inaction is our financial hardship. Although, this is not a congressional issue to fix, you can assist us with the financial resources to allow us to continue providing the essential services our citizens depend on.

Thank you again for your efforts during this unprecedented time and for your attention to our request. We are confident that, working together, our nation can overcome this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray Paland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MCO President  
Mayor of Jones

Mayor David Holt  
Oklahoma City

Mayor Marlon J. Coleman  
Muskogee

Mayor David Berrong  
Clinton

Mayor Breea Clark  
Norman

Mayor Bill Bush  
Owasso

Vice Mayor Kim Peterson  
Guymon

Mayor Stan Booker  
Lawton

Mayor Ed Bolt  
Shawnee

Mayor Scotty White  
Poteau

Mayor Craig Thurmond  
Broken Arrow

Mayor Homer Nicholson  
Ponca City

Mayor Steven J Gentling  
Guthrie

Mayor Matt Dukes  
Midwest City

Mayor Matt White  
El Reno

Mayor Jack Smiley  
Altus

Mayor George Pankonin  
Enid

Mayor Randy Ross  
Choctaw

Mayor Craig Parham  
Amber

Mayor Will Joyce  
Stillwater

Mayor Mike Brown  
Weatherford