



Rep. Tom Emmer on NACo Legislative Conference

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****MODERATOR:**

** I would like to welcome to the stage Congressman Tom Emmer. Congressman Emmer has represented Minnesota's six districts since 2015 and has served as House Majority Whip since 2023, the third-highest position in House Republican leadership. He began his public service at the local level, serving on a city council, and he brings that first-hand understanding of how local government delivers results. Please join me now in welcoming Majority Whip Tom Emmer. Congressman, thank you so much. Glad to have you.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Thank you, sir.

****MODERATOR:**

** We'll head over this way and have an armchair.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** All right. Sounds good. Good morning. It's an honor to join all of you for this year's National Association of Counties Legislative Conference. I want to thank President Clark for inviting me today, and I'd also like to recognize, because I'd be remiss if I didn't, there are Minnesotans in the room. Where are you? Hey, hey, it's great to see fellow Vikings fans, but we got another reason we're here today. You're here today, I might have sent the chief executive a note yesterday that said something like, wow, what a game. You get outshot 42 to 28, you got broken teeth laying on the ice, you play right through it, and you win the gold. Yeah, I just heard the chant, how about USA, USA, USA. These kids are going to remember that for 50 years, and it wasn't just the men's team. The women's team kicked a little behind, too. We're proud of all the Minnesotans that were on there. More importantly, we're proud of all the Americans that are on there. And I want to thank all of you for coming to Washington, D.C. this morning. I can't believe you made it through Snowmageddon. Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. It literally is a conspiracy of the grocery and liquor lobbies, I'm convinced. But that's just a Minnesotan. Look, I'm encouraged by the thousands of you from across the country who have gathered here in our nation's capital this week to engage on the issues that matter most to our communities. Governance starts at the local level. From public safety to infrastructure to economic prosperity, you are all boots on the ground fighting the good fight and making America, our country, the greatest place to live on the face of the planet. So on behalf of the entire House Republican Conference, I want to say thank you to you first. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our country. Thank you for your dedication to the people you serve. And thank you for your hard work in making our communities not just a place to live, but a place to prosper. We couldn't do what we do at the federal level if not for all of you. And with that being said, I want you to also know that our House Republican majority shares your mission of building a healthy, safe, and vibrant communities across this country. The way I see it, we are all members of the same team working towards the same goal, just like those two teams I just mentioned. And like any successful team, we may not always agree with each other. We may even bump into each other and challenge each other at times. That's not a bad thing. This is what teams do. But they come together at the end. We're all united by our resolve to make the communities that we love a



better place for our children and our children's children. That's why when the voters elected a Republican House, Republican Senate, and a Republican President in November of 2024, we hit the ground running to deliver on our campaign promises and to govern on behalf of all Americans in this country. In a little over a year, our House Republican majority has passed more than 400 pieces of legislation, 77 of which have actually been signed into law by President Trump. This includes our landmark piece of legislation, the One Big Beautiful Bill, or the Working Families Tax Cut Act, which codifies President Trump's America First agenda into law by making his 2017 tax cuts permanent, securing record border funding, unleashing U.S. energy, rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in government, and so much more. As the 2026 tax season begins to unfold, we're hearing more and more about the once-in-a-generation piece of legislation that is benefiting Americans from every walk of life. Thanks to common-sense tax provisions like an increased child tax credit, no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, and no tax on Social Security, I might add a double standard tax deduction, families are able to keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. We're taking... Sorry, those Minnesotans who are here would probably know that if my wife Jackie were in the room, she'd say, Tom, slow down, take a breath, smile. We're talking about refunds of \$1,000 or more on average, according to financial experts. This is life-changing stuff, and I'm proud of the House Republican team who work day in and day out to get it done. But that's not our only legislative win so far this Congress. We also passed the Lake and Riley Act, ensuring that criminal, illegal aliens are swiftly and permanently removed from our communities. We passed the Halt Fentanyl Act, equipping law enforcement with the tools they need to confiscate fentanyl-related substances and save lives. We passed the Genius Act to secure America's status as the crypto capital of the world. We passed a rescissions package to get rid of wasteful spending in our federal government, and we finally got back to governing as intended by at least in the House, passing 12 of 12 appropriations bills through regular order. I'm especially pleased to report that these funding bills include funding for hard infrastructure projects across the country, many in your counties that you represent. In Minnesota's 6th Congressional District, for instance, we work with city and county officials, many in this room, to secure more than \$40 million for 15 water and road projects across our communities. These funding awards will secure the future growth and success of our counties for years to come. The last funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security is being held up by Democrats, actually, who oppose the president's law and order agenda. But we're hopeful that President Trump is going to work out a deal with them soon, and we can also get that bill signed into law because it's important. It needs to be signed into law as soon as possible. Needless to say, to the dismay of haters and doubters and naysayers, Republicans have proven to be the party of good governance. We're just getting started. Thank you. Try to get past my partisan bent there. I'm proud of what we've done, and we've had some help on the other side of the aisle, too. Make no mistake about it. This country will ultimately come together. We've gone through this type of division in our history every so many years, but we always find a way to be better than we were before, and we'll do it again. This is a very special year in our nation's capital. Not only will it be an election year. I know you're all looking forward to that. It's going to be the year that we celebrate America's 250th birthday. That's 250 years of the greatest governing experiment the world has ever seen. 250 years of a nation of the people, by the people, for the people. 250 years of freedom that has been fought and earned by the sacrifices of brave American heroes for centuries. And as we celebrate 250 years of the greatest nation on Earth, we are reminded first to never take our freedom for granted. I thank God every day that he allowed me to be born in the United States of America, and as a proud dad of a U.S. Marine and Navy SEAL, I'm also constantly reminded of the fact that our freedom did not and does not come free. We must recommit ourselves to the value our nation was founded on and fought for. Values like individual freedom, limited government, the rule of law, and peace through strength. We've seen the consequences that come when we stray away from those values. Consequences like record-breaking inflation, a historic number of illegal immigrants flooding our borders, soaring violent crime, and total chaos overseas. Again, our House Republican majority has been hard at work trying to undo the damage of the previous administration and put our country on a better path for years to come.



Yes, it's worth celebrating. The road to good governance hasn't always been an easy one, though. In fact, it's gotten pretty bumpy and ugly at times. In my role as whip, I've had a front-row seat at what governing really looks like. Some like to joke that my job is similar to herding cats. I like to tell them I wish they were all cats. In fact, I think we're herding a variety of exotic animals nowadays. It's not just cats. But that's the beautiful thing about our republic. It was created to bring together different people from different parts of the country to debate their ideas in an open and honest setting. We can and should challenge each other. We can even disagree with each other at times. But ultimately, we always unite as a team and deliver wins for the American people. I'm proud of what our Republican trifecta has accomplished in little over a year. We have repeatedly overcome the odds to pass once-in-a-generation pieces of legislation that no one thought could be possible. I can't tell you how many times I was told it's never going to happen. And we did it all with the narrowest majority in history. As I always tell our members and candidates, we run to win, but we win to govern. Because at the end of the day, this isn't about the politics, despite us all getting caught up in the politics. It's about making life more affordable for hard-working families. It's about keeping our communities safe. It's about making sure that people have the opportunity to self-determine, buy a home, build a career, and live out their personal version of the American Dream. That's what House Republicans' ultimate priority has been. And that's our shared goal with all of you. Again, we've accomplished a lot so far, but we can't let our foot off the gas. We've got to keep working and keep governing on behalf of the people who entrusted us with these positions. Why? Because failure is not an option. We can and we must work together to make America great for generations to come. The safety and well-being of our communities, the communities that you work in and you represent, depend on it. I want to close my remarks by once again saying thank you. Thank you to all of you for all the work you put in every single day. And I hope if we do have differences, that we discuss those differences in an open and honest way, and we try to find that place where we all come together to make this country and our communities a better place for everyone to live. Thanks again for being here. Thanks for having me. May God bless all of you this week, and may God continue to bless the greatest country on Earth, the United States of America. Thank you.

****MODERATOR:**

** That was wonderful. Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir. That was great. That was great. Thank you. Do you have time for me to ask you a couple questions?

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Yeah.

****MODERATOR:**

** Great. Thank you. Congressman, thank you, first of all, for your time and for those remarks this morning. And I'd like to have an opportunity to visit with you here in front of my NACO colleagues because you do have a local government background, which we appreciate anytime somebody can bring that into Congress. So as Majority Whip, you're in a unique position to bring a lot of different voices to the table in that role. From your perspective, what's the best way to strengthen the partnership between federal policy makers and those of us who are in county government?

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** I think it starts with communication. And I mean communication where we don't get caught up in the politics. We're going to have disagreements, and yes, you're right. I mean, I started out as a city councilor. I served on two different city councils. The city of Independence, Minnesota, and later the city of Delano, where I moved to. I've told people that it was the greatest experience in public service that I ever had. Why? Because you didn't run as a Republican or a Democrat. And I tell this story all the time, and we forget this, that my first parade that I



walked in my own hometown when I was in the state legislature for the first year, it's the Fourth of July parade, and everybody has been to these. You've got the little kids on the curb waiting for the candy. You've got the 30-something parents sitting in folding chairs behind them. And if they're lucky enough, they've got their grandparents standing or sitting behind them. And I get to the end of the parade in my town, and this little gal comes running out into the middle of the street, gives me a big hug, and in my ears she says, Why couldn't you have been a Democrat? You would have been such a good Democrat. We forget. We forget that at the end of the day, it's about solving problems. And I think we get caught up wearing the jersey, and I did a little bit today, but it's not about the jersey. Thank you. I think that's number one. When we sit down at the table, it's okay to go out and campaign hard. Paul Ryan said this to me once. I said, What is happening around here? Paul said, You know, we used to go out and campaign against each other really hard, knock down, drag out campaigns, and then we'd get back to Washington, D.C., and we would have the discussions and get the job done because we knew that was what we had to get done. He blamed back then the advent of 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, soundbite-driven, entertainment news, and I would add today, social media layered on top of that has made us all tribal. It's given us, you know, we're only looking at one side of the discussion. So I say to all of you, despite what you may disagree with me on, it isn't about the disagreement. It's about the discussion.

****MODERATOR:**

** Thank you for that. Thank you. So we say a lot in conversation as counties around here that if we're not at the table, we're on the menu. So what tips could you give to us to make sure we have a meaningful voice at that table when policies are being made that will impact counties? How can we get ahead of some of that?

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** I think your message that you gave this morning is the right message. It's about people. It's about your stories. You know, I just had a meeting with one of my counties last week when I was in Minnesota the last couple of days, actually, and they were explaining to me the problem as they try to enroll people in the SNAP program, for instance, or in Medicaid. They've got a system that's so antiquated that they can't be responsible for some of the mistakes that are on there. You know, it's kind of like going to the Anoka County Airport, which I did before the last election, and they showed me that their air traffic control system is still run on floppy disks. So I think it's your stories and sharing them with actual policy makers. This is why I say it starts with a discussion. I may have a perspective that is uninformed. You've got one. You may think of me as, oh, that guy's never going to listen to me. Well, let's sit down at the table. You show me that floppy disk, and I'm going to say, oh my gosh, this is ridiculous. Why aren't we solving that problem? So I think that's what you've got to do is make those stories live. Make them real.

****MODERATOR:**

** Thank you. Appreciate that. Two of our major priorities we're spending a lot of time on this week and in the coming year will be the Farm Bill. Very important, especially for a lot of our rural communities and surface transportation reauthorization. Counties have 44% of our roads and 38% of our nation's bridges. Do you have any outlook you can give us on what to expect with Farm Bill or surface transportation reauthorization this year?

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Yeah, I think you're going to see them both. You're going to get to hear from the Chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, G.T. Thompson. Hopefully, the message he's going to give you is that we passed a lot of his Farm Bill already in the Working Families Tax Cut Act. A lot of the things that Republicans and Democrats like to fight about, the funding stuff, was done in that bill. The stuff that remains, G.T. has been working in cooperation with his Democrat counterparts. I think he's ready, or very soon he'll be ready, to bring that to the



floor and move it forward. I think you're going to see the rest of the Farm Bill done this year. The Surface Transportation Act is something that Sam Graves, I hope you're going to have Sam here. That committee, it's funny, when I came to Congress, when it comes to transportation, when it comes to agriculture in particular, those aren't Republican and Democrat issues. Those are American issues. Look for both of those to find their way to the floor and get passed, at least out of the House. We're going to have to see the Senate a little bit more functional as we go forward. Maybe if they can reach an agreement and understanding on this Homeland Security Bill, that'll open the floodgates and great things will start moving.

****MODERATOR:**

** That's encouraging to us. You'll certainly be hearing priorities from these counties as those bills move forward. But NACO family, please join me in thanking Majority Whip Emmer for being with us this morning and for having a dialogue with us. Thank you, sir. Have a great week.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Thank you so much. Thank you. Have a great week. Thanks. I don't see any transcript segment included in your message that needs speaker labels added. Could you please provide the actual transcript text that you'd like me to label with the speakers ****MODERATOR** and ****REP. TOM EMMER**? Once you share the transcript content, I'll add the appropriate speaker labels while preserving all the original text exactly as specified.

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