Many of you have requested information on how to apply for the Coronavirus Relief Fund (Cares Act). The CARES Act provides for payments to State, Local, and Tribal governments navigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Oklahoma – State, Local and County governments received $1.53 Billion from this program, with 45 percent of that earmarked for Local and County governments.

Secretary of Budget Mike Mazzei asked that OML provide the most current information to municipalities.  According to Secretary Mazzei, the State has only received a partial allotment from the U.S. Treasury of the $1.53 billion that Oklahoma is slated to receive. The U.S. Treasury released their regulations for compliant uses of the funds this week. Now Oklahoma must craft local regulations and create an application process. Secretary Mazzei wanted all of you to be assured that the Governor’s Office is moving quickly to get this done and you will receive more information in the coming days on how to apply for the funds.

In preparing for the release of these funds here are some guidelines from the U.S. Treasury Department. The CARES Act requires that the payments from the Coronavirus Relief Fund only be used to cover expenses that:

* are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID–19);
* were not accounted for in your Municipal FY 2019-2020 budget as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act); and
* were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020

I understand that this program will provide minimal relief to municipalities, as the majority of our shortfall is due to loss of sales tax. At the moment there is no relief provided in that area. We continue to encourage Congress to include funds for revenue shortfalls for local governments. Congress had a second opportunity this week to provide relief to municipalities and failed to do so. I encourage all of you to question Oklahoma’s Congressional Delegation as to why municipalities were excluded for a second time. There is rumor of a third relief bill, if that becomes a reality, we will call on you to ask Oklahoma’s Congressional Delegation to support relief to our municipalities.