Counties to meet in Allegheny County, Pa. for NACo's 77th Annual Conference and Exposition

1,800 county officials will share ideas on economic recovery; urge federal government to help, not hurt, local government effort to create jobs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – County officials from across the country will meet July 13-17 at the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) 77th Annual Conference and Exposition in Allegheny County, Pa. (Pittsburgh) to set national policies affecting counties and share ideas on economic growth and opportunity for Americans.

More than 1,800 elected and appointed county officials, exhibitors, presenters and guests are expected to participate in the conference at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh.

NACo President Lenny Eliason, Commissioner, Athens County, Ohio, said NACo's Annual Conference is the most important gathering of county officials of the year and offers the best opportunity for leaders in county government to discuss pragmatic solutions to common challenges facing counties and communities.

 Counties in most states are responsible for providing essential services to communities, including maintaining roads and bridges, operating airports and other transit systems, delivering critical health care services, providing law enforcement, courtroom and jail services, funding schools, and numerous human services for seniors, children and families. Counties are the first line of defense for natural disaster emergencies and pandemic preparedness and response.

“The nation's counties are deeply concerned about funding for a variety of federal programs which directly affect counties and communities and new federal regulations under consideration,” Eliason said.

For example despite months and years of aggressive advocacy effort from NACo, Congress has yet to pass the farm bill and only recently (June 30) passed a new surface transportation bill. Far from the usual 5-year bill, the highway bill is a 27-month bill that will go through Sept. 30, 2014. NACo is also concerned about funding levels for emergency preparedness and response, and various justice, public lands programs, and community development/housing programs.

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Counties are trying to prevent implementation of a “waters of the U.S.” guidance, which would broaden federal Clean Water Act (CWA) jurisdiction for tributaries (i.e.: ditches, culverts, channels). Counties fear that this would have a huge impact on county functions such as storm drains, roadside ditches, flood control programs, and pesticide application.

Despite several years of local revenue and budget challenges, counties remain on the cutting edge of implementing innovative and cost-effective solutions to the challenges they face. Many of these initiatives – from green government efforts and information technology advances to criminal justice system reforms – will be explored in detail during the Annual Conference.

Highlights of the five-day conference include:

- **NACo Technology Summit:** “Using Technology to Survive and Thrive in Tough Economic Times”
  
  8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Friday, July 13
  
  Room: 413-415 (4th floor)

- **Race to Healthy Counties Run/Walk**
  
  6:00 a.m., Saturday, July 14
  
  East Lobby of the convention center.

- **Sunday General Session**
  
  2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., Sunday, July 15
  
  Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom (3rd floor)
  
  Features guest speakers Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and Jay Wilkinson, author of “Dear Jay, Love Dad – Bud Wilkinson’s Letters to His Son.”

- **NACo Town Hall Meeting**
  
  8:30 a.m. – noon, Monday, July 16
  
  President Eliason, Past President Glen Whitley and members of the Veterans and Military Service Task Force will conduct a Town Hall session to provide insight into the lives of the country’s veterans and the issues they face when they come home. The Town Hall will focus on the effects of war on returning troops, veterans and their families, how to engage and work with veterans and their families, and community resources available for veterans and their families.
  
  Room: 414/415 (4th floor)

- **Monday General Session**
  
  2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday, July 16
  
  Features guest speakers: Gov. Tom Corbett (Pa.); U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack; “Game Change” authors John Heilemann and Mark Halperin; and humorist/best-selling author Dave Barry.
  
  Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom (3rd floor)

Click [here](#) for more information about the General Session guest speakers. Other speakers of note (call for exact times):

- Pennsylvania Congressman Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-5th) will speak before the Western Interstate Region (WIR) Board of Directors Meeting, Friday, July 13, 1-4 p.m. Room: 411/412 (4th floor)

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• The University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics will lead a panel discussion on challenges facing local governments before the Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee meeting, 1:15-4:15 p.m., Saturday, July 14. Room: 411/412 (4th floor)

• Lee W. Munnich, Jr., Senior Fellow and Director, State and Local Policy Program, University of Minnesota – representing the Mileage-Based User Fee Alliance – will speak on the potential for mileage-based user fees as an alternative for future funding and improved performance of the U.S. transportation system before the Transportation Steering Committee, 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, July 14. Room: 413/415 (4th floor)

• Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, will speak before the Labor and Employment Steering Committee meeting, 2-4 p.m., Saturday, July 14. Room: 328 (3rd floor)

• Jonathan Adelstein, Administrator, USDA's Rural Utilities Service (in charge of rural broadband, electric and water/wastewater issues) will speak before the Technology and Telecommunications Steering Committee, 9-11:30 a.m., Saturday, July 14 (Room: 304/305 third floor), and 9:45-10:45, Saturday, July 14 (Room: 317/318 third floor) before the Rural Development Subcommittee meeting.

• Mark Doms, Chief Economist, U.S. Department of Commerce, will speak before the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee meeting, 1:30 – 4 p.m., Saturday, July 14. Room 317/318 third floor. During the same meeting, Mark Rosekind, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board, will address the issue of what a county official can expect when there is a local NTSB investigation.

• Thomas Murphy, Co-Director of the Penn State Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research Local, will speak about regional and environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing during the Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee meeting, 1-4 p.m., Saturday, July 14.

Educational Sessions
Conference participants will attend a variety of educational workshop sessions to gain greater understanding of issues affecting county government. Examples include: Counties Save Money by Selecting the Right Cooperative Contract; Counties in the Global Economy: Strategies to Attract International Tourism; Jobs and Capital: Economic Development 2012; Counties in the Global Economy: Growing Agricultural Trade in Your Community; and Sustainable Purchasing and Politics: Leading but staying out of the Mud.

Click here for the complete listing, schedule and descriptions of the workshop sessions.

On Friday, July 13 and Saturday, July 14, NACo’s 11 steering committees will meet to discuss and adopt official resolutions addressing issues such as budgets and revenues; rural and urban development, green government; transportation; public safety; emergency preparedness and response; housing and more. Resolutions adopted by conference delegates will serve as official NACo national policy positions – The American County Platform – for the next 12 months. It will be available at www.naco.org by early August.

On Sunday, July 15, NACo’s Rural Action Caucus (RAC) and Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) steering committees will meet to get updates on caucus priorities and initiatives and hear from guest speakers.
More than 150 exhibitors will be on hand to showcase the latest goods and services available to help local governments better serve their communities. Exhibit Hall will be open **Sunday, July 15, 10:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., and Monday, July 16, 10:00 a.m. –2:30 p.m. (Hall A, 2nd floor)**

On **Tuesday, July 17**, delegates will vote on the final policy resolutions, elect NACo’s 2012-2013 officers, and the new NACo president will appoint NACo committee leadership. (10:00 a.m.–noon, Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom (3rd floor)

Click [here](#) to view the entire conference schedule of meetings and events.

**Note to media:**
NACo-issued press credentials are required of members of the media to attend conference events. Press credentials will be issued from the Conference Press Office (Room: 306/307, 3rd floor) at the convention center Friday, July 13 through Tuesday, July 17. The Press Office phone number is 412.325.6011.

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*The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).*