

NACo National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

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Counties set to celebrate NCGM in April

By JIM PHILIPPS
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER

Just a couple of miles from NACo headquarters, the treasured cherry blossoms surrounding the Tidal Basin are in full bloom. So too are the nation's counties' plans to celebrate National County Government Month (NCGM) throughout the month of April.

For example, Marshall County, W.Va. commissioners are encouraging all eighth-graders to participate in an essay contest sponsored by the County Commissioners' Association.

See NCGM page 7

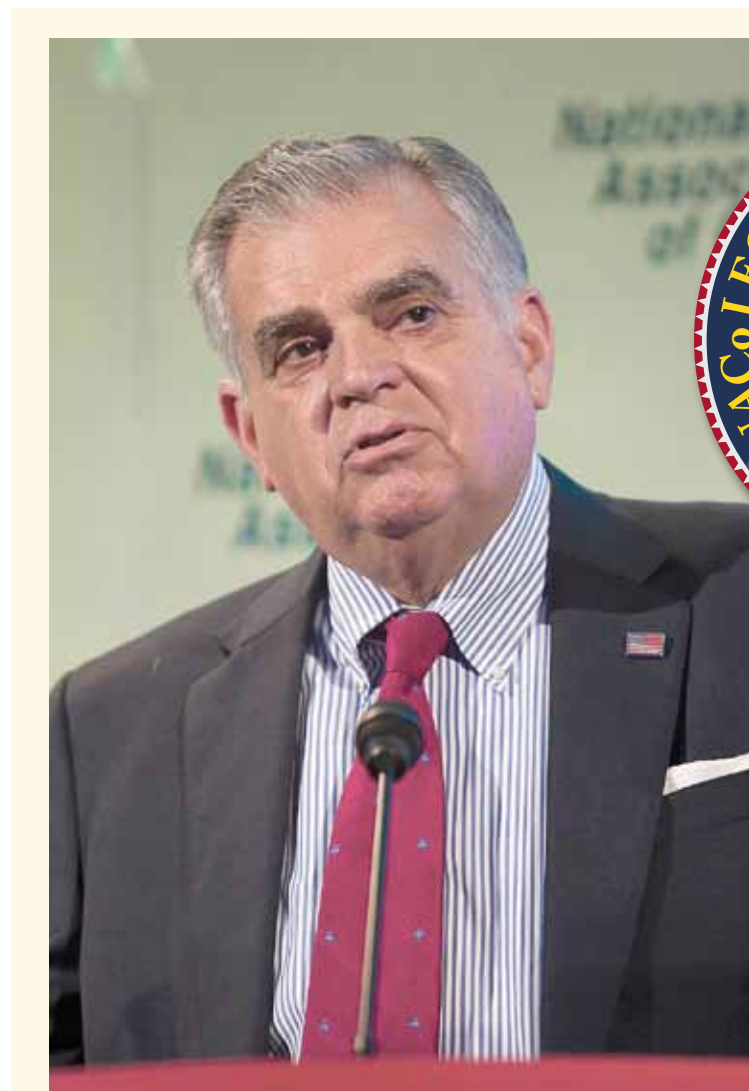
QuickTakes

Counties with the Lowest Income Inequality

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Source: Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index 2012

CountyNews Features



After-Action Report

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood was among the top administration and congressional leaders who spoke at NACo's 2012 Legislative Conference. For a full report on all the action at the conference, as well as exclusive County News photo coverage, turn to pages 8–12.

Oregon counties give face to 'county payments' debate

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

If Curry County, Ore. were a hospital patient, its vital signs might be flagging right now. The “doctors” who can cure its ills — or at least put them into temporary remission — work 3,000 miles away, on Capitol Hill.

The Oregon county, population 22,300, is teetering on the brink of insolvency in July, because federal forest payments on which its local budget is heavily dependent expired last year and have not been reauthorized by Congress. The Senate has approved a one-year extension, but the House has yet to act on it.

At best, a favorable amendment to the Senate transportation bill kicks the can down the road by a year, but counties want a long-term solution. Without one, within a year or two several other neighbor-

See CURRY COUNTY page 6

Senate transportation bill retains planning, bridge programs

By ROBERT J. FOGEL
SENIOR LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

By a vote of 74–22, the Senate passed S. 1813, known as MAP-21, March 14. The two-year bill provides \$109 billion in funding for highway and transit programs and, according to supporters of measure, would save or create nearly 3 million jobs.

“Passage of this is a major step in the enactment of a multi-year highway and transit reauthorization bill that will ensure that counties, cities and states will have access to federal funds to maintain and improve their highways, bridges and bus and rail systems,” said Larry Naake, NACo executive director.

While NACo was concerned about a number of provisions in the bill, two major subjects were priorities. As proposed, the Senate bill eliminated the off-system bridge program as part of the bill's focus to eliminate or consolidate dozens of programs. The bill also made it possible for the secretary of transportation, under certain circumstances, to decertify Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) between 50,000–200,000 population, subsequently eliminating local officials' guaranteed role in the planning process. NACo successfully lobbied for amendments to S. 1813 that make it local government friendly.

“NACo's success in getting these two bipartisan provisions included

in the bill makes a real difference for counties,” said Leo Bowman, commissioner, Benton County, Wash. who chairs NACo's Transportation Steering Committee.

An amendment restoring funding that has been available since 1978 for off-system bridges was offered by Sens. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Robert Casey (D-Pa.) and was adopted during consideration of the bill. The amendment requires states to spend almost \$650 million annually rehabilitating and rebuilding some 80,000 deficient bridges that are not on the federal highway system.

Additional language proposed

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County hopes to curb illegal immigration with language measure

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

In hopes of becoming a less welcoming place for illegal immigrants, Frederick County, Md.'s Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance establishing English as the county's official language.

The ordinance, effective once it was passed in February, required that all official county actions be in English, though it made exceptions for rights extended by the Native American Languages Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, the Voting Rights Act and others. Public safety functions, such as

emergency response services, would not be impacted.

Board Chairman Blaine Young was quick to point out that some of his predecessors passed a nonbinding resolution to the same effect in 2008.

"We just finished up what they started," he said. "We're not infringing on any rights granted by the state or federal governments."

The action was largely symbolic, as Young acknowledged that many people likely already believed English to be the official language, and the county basically operated on the premise codified by the ordinance. It still drew criticism from nearly two

dozen speakers during the public hearing, *The Frederick News-Post* reported. Several said the ordinance would give the county a black eye, not only with immigrants but others who would find the environment antagonistic.

Young argued that it would reinforce a welcome to legal immigrants.

"We welcome all legal, law-abiding immigrants to Frederick County," he said. "I hope they can appreciate we want people to play by the rules here. We're determined to protect quality of life if you're legal and law-abiding."

Reasonable accommodations will be made in regard to translating

government documents, though Young said there will be some limits.

"If we have one person come and ask for a thick budget book to be translated, that's just not going to happen," he said. "But for the most part we're not saying English is the only language that can be used in the county."

Frederick is the first county in Maryland to pass such a measure, though 31 states already have established English as the official language, including Virginia to the south. A visit from the Kansas secretary of state sold much of the commission on the idea at a time when Frederick County had issued

1,000 deportation requests, following citizenship checks on people the sheriff's office had arrested. Young pointed to the sheriff's office's high volume of deportation requests to indicate the scope of the problem with illegal immigration in the county.

Sheriff Charles Jenkins agreed that the numbers revealed a problem, but framed the measure as more political than consequential in deterring illegal immigrants from settling in Frederick County.

"I'm supportive of it, but practically speaking, it won't change

See ENGLISH page 6

House ponders rewriting its transportation bill, or considering the Senate's

TRANSPORTATION from page 1

by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and other senators was included in the manager's amendment to increase the likelihood that MPOs between 50,000–120,000 population would retain their MPO status and not be decertified.

Another amendment that NACo supported, offered by Sens. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), gives local governments

assured access to federal transportation funds for alternative transportation projects rather than leaving total discretion with the state DOTs.

There were a host of other amendments offered though most failed. Topics of the amendments that failed included contraception, turn back or devolving the federal highway program to the states, oil and gas exploration and the Keystone pipeline. Several unrelated amendments passed that NACo

supported including providing BP settlement funds to be used for Gulf Coast restoration, reauthorizing a one-year extension of SRS and PILT payments, and a provision boosting transit benefits for commuters putting them on parity with parking benefits (see sidebar for more detail).

Legislative action now moves to the House. Efforts to pass a \$260 billion five-year bill failed several weeks ago when the House

could not muster enough votes to pass H.R. 7. House leadership is now working to decide whether to rewrite H.R. 7 to make it acceptable to enough Republicans to pass a bill, perhaps by reducing funding or length of the reauthorization, or to pass it by making it a bipartisan bill that could attract support from both parties. Another option under discussion is to simply take up the Senate-passed bill.

In the meantime, both the House

and Senate will have to pass a ninth extension when the highway and transit programs expire on March 31. Many of the stakeholders are becoming concerned about missing the construction season. Assuming progress has been made on passing a multi-year bill, that extension is likely to be in the 60–90 day range.

Amendments would send funding to counties



The transportation bill also included several NACo-supported amendments that affect county governments.

PILT, SRS funding approved in Senate bill

By an 82–16 vote, the Senate approved a bipartisan amendment to the Surface Transportation Bill (S. 1813) that would fully fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and provide 95 percent of FY11-level funding for the Secure Rural Schools program (SRS) for one year. Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) offered the amendment.

Both programs would provide critical infrastructure funding to county governments to be used directly on county road improvement and maintenance projects (in the case of the SRS program) and indirectly through the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program (PILT). From years 2008–2011, more than \$568 million dollars were made available to county governments for roads through the SRS program alone.

"County governments are partners with the federal government and states in providing important programs and services to the American people," said Larry Naake, NACo executive director. "For county officials, special interests are constituents who decided to put trust in them as public servants to adopt sound fiscal policies while providing the basic services for which constituents pay."

Conservation Fund Reauthorized

The Senate debated a number of environment and energy amendments in the transportation bill, including reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and directing penalty fines from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill to five affected states.

The LWCF would be reauthorized until 2022 and receive \$700 million for the next two years, \$1.4 billion total. It is currently funded at approximately \$350 million and is used for conservation easements, and grants and land acquisitions. While the LWCF is authorized to

provide up to \$900 million yearly, annual appropriations have reached only \$700 million twice. The language faces serious opposition in the House where deep budget cuts are the norm.

NACo supports continued funding of the LWCF with funding priority given to those areas in greatest need of open space protection.

Language in the transportation bill would send 80 percent of the Clean Water Act penalty fines from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The language resembles provisions in the RESTORE Act, a bill recently introduced in the House and Senate.

The RESTORE Act deals with the penalty fines to be collected from the BP disaster under the Clean Water Act. Under current law, money from the fines would flow into the U.S. Treasury where it would be used to pay for future oil spill cleanups and to offset deficit spending elsewhere. The RESTORE Act would redirect it to the five states.

Boost to Raising Infrastructure Capital

Included in the manager's amendment to the transportation bill was language introduced by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) that will help local governments to raise capital for infrastructure projects. The provision would increase the bank-qualified debt limit from \$10 million to \$30 million. The last time the limit was raised, the first increase since 1986, was in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In ARRA, the limit was also raised to \$30 million, but the provision was allowed to expire at the end of 2010. The current provision reinstates the \$30 million limit from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.

With the increase, incentives for banks to purchase municipal bonds would not be limited only to municipalities that issue \$10 million or less in debt each year. As a result, many municipalities would be able to place bonds directly at financial institutions, including community banks, a move that should result in savings on interest and transaction costs.

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County jails join Internet video visitation trend

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



Friends, families and children may never have to enter a jail to visit an incarcerated relative again.

County jails from Minnesota to Florida are starting Internet-based video visitation systems that allow people to visit jail inmates from anywhere around the world.

"If somebody is incarcerated in Florida but their grandma is in Ohio, they can actually visit them via their computer," Charlotte County, Fla. Sheriff Bill Cameron said.

Faced with shrinking budgets, ballooning inmate populations and the complexities of managing visitations, jails around the country have increasingly turned toward the technology as a way of streamlining their operations.

The system works like Skype, where families or inmates pay a fee to chat over the Internet through a video screen. Families can access the system over the Web using any computer with a webcam.

A significant benefit of Internet-



Photo courtesy of iwebvisit.com

Video visitation rooms help inmates connect with loved ones anywhere in the world.

based video visitation to county jails is acquiring a new revenue stream. Each jail sets the cost and the visitors pay those fees. Prices vary from 35 cents a minute (up to 15 minutes) to \$33 for an hour-long call — giving counties anywhere from \$2,800 to \$5,000 per month, usually split between the county and the company that helps host the calls.

The Internet-based jail visitation

systems, which are currently active in 10 county jails and rising, began in 2010 in Ada County, Idaho. The sheriff's office teamed up with Blackfin, a technology firm headquartered in Boise and introduced a system that employed netbook computer terminals with built-in webcams. The terminals were mounted inside the housing unit to cut down on inmate transfers, and visitation requests could be made through an automated email system. The system was the first of its kind in the country, Ada County officials said.

The Dakota County, Minn. jail is the first in Minnesota to allow inmates to video chat with virtual visitors. Other counties in the state are looking to follow suit.

The video calls in Dakota County cost 35 cents a minute, as opposed to phone calls, which cost 50 cents a minute. Since the system went live in January, the jail has received between \$2,800 and \$3,300 per month.

Dakota County Sheriff Dave Bellows said that if the jail adopts the system permanently, "we'll be able to pay for our equipment costs in the first year. After that, the money can be used for jail programs."

Inmate video visitation systems have traditionally been installed in county jail facilities that handle short-term incarcerations which usually attract high visitation traffic because of the close proximity of family and friends. Internet visitation also allows other professionals, such as attorneys, clergy or social workers to cut costs associated with travel, searching visitors and other requirements.

The Charlotte County jail, the first in the state to offer video visitation, has been using its system since April 2011. For a \$33 fee, visitors can avoid travel and see inmates face-to-face online for one hour. Inmates are allowed four online visits per month with an approved list of visitors, and the sessions are monitored by jail staff. Attorneys also can schedule private online visits. The fees are split with Montgomery Technology Inc., the host of the service.

This technology prevents the public from having direct or "physical" contact with inmates with some jails ending in-person visitation in favor of Internet-based video. It also frees up correctional officers' time for traditional security duties, reduces

the number of officers required for visitation, eliminates infrastructure dedicated to the traditional visitation process, reduces contraband infiltration and reduces the possibility of inmate confrontation, say its supporters.

Like phone calls, webcam communications do not go unchecked. Concerns include inmate access to graphic images or behaviors, or video visitors wearing inappropriate clothing or sharing criminal information.

Authorities in the jail and the host company can monitor the interaction in real-time and terminate the call should someone act inappropriately or illegally. If a violation occurs, the inmate and caller can be blacklisted from the system.

"We need to maintain security and make sure inmates adhere to the rules," said Lt. Lawrence Hart, Dakota County Sheriff's Office. "Two sets of eyes monitoring a call are better than one."

**For links to counties using video visitation and additional information, visit the online version of this story at www.naco.org/countynews.*

How did Gaston County, NC,
save **28,500 hours** a year?

Since implementing Laserfiche in 2007, Gaston County has standardized enterprise content management across **8 county departments and processes, from finance and payroll to DSS and case management**, saving over 28,500 man hours—the equivalent of 14 FTEs—a year. Three more departmental deployments are planned this year.

"Standardization is vital to the long-term success of the whole organization," says CIO Brandon Jackson. "We know that once we start deploying to larger departments, savings will mount up into the millions of dollars."



Visit Laserfiche.com/gc to download the Gaston County case study white paper.

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Counties employ specific strategies for mentally ill

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Effective medical care often relies on the tool matching the task, and for most mental health issues, the emergency department and legal system are blunt instruments.

In an effort to fine tune its response to mental health emergencies, Salt Lake County, Utah recently launched an option specifically designed to treat residents suffering from a psychotic episode or anxiety attack. Staffed by the University of Utah's Neuropsychiatric Institute, specialized two-person mobile crisis outreach teams can respond to a variety of situations, summoned either by a call to a crisis phone line or by law enforcement.

"Most of the time, the episodes people with mental illness experience are not best addressed by hospitalization or incarceration," said Barry Rose, the manager of the mobile crisis team. "Treating them appropriately ends up saving money from unnecessary trips to

the emergency department or a night in a jail cell. We want to deal with any sort of mental health crisis situation in a preventative way.

"Just (recently), one of our teams was able to work with police to resolve a case that simply involved getting someone medication."

The teams comprise a licensed therapist who can treat a patient and evaluate whether involuntary commitment is necessary, plus a peer specialist. A psychiatrist is available by phone. Rose said the peer specialist serves as a normalizing element for the patient. Utah offers a training program for peer specialists — people who have had personal experience with mental illness.

"It's someone who can tell the patient 'I've been there, I've had that experience and there's hope,'" Rose said. "They'll be able to connect on a different level than clinicians and certainly police could hope to reach."

One situation that lends itself to this approach is a suicidal person

who is no longer a danger to himself, but his family is still worried about him.

"Once the safety issue fades, we can treat the mental health concern for what it is, something that doesn't need to involve the law," he said.

The police, he said, have additional training that makes them better suited to deal with mental health crises. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, offered by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, familiarizes police officers and sheriff's deputies with the intricacies of mental illness and better suits them to manage a mental health crisis appropriately until the outreach team arrives.

"They're better trained to deal with the mentally ill than ever before," he said. "It definitely makes our jobs easier, but they (the police) benefit from CIT training, too."

Rose said the county's 30-minute goal to assemble the teams and reach a patient is helped by having teams dedicated to specific portions of the county. Another team

specializes in treating children.

"It's a bit unique, it's part of the new trend toward a more recovery focused, peer driven treatment," Rose said. "It has the potential to be a very powerful collaboration."

The program's \$2 million budget is funded by the county, Medicaid and other state and federal sources.

Just as CIT training can help law enforcement deal with the mentally ill, mental health courts tailor sentencing to incorporate mental health treatment for persistent mentally ill offenders. The courts direct the mentally ill to treatment, rather than forcing them to languish in jail, but also demand legal accountability from the defendants.

It's not a new concept, but those courts are popping up in new places, like Forsyth County, N.C.

That mental health court opened March 14 and has approximately 20 people waiting to be screened and

enter the program. Defendants will agree to participate in the program before the plea process, be screened and connected with mental health services. A court liaison will monitor the participant's progress over the course of treatment, a minimum of eight months, according to Jenna Lackard, executive director of the Ivy House Center for Self Sufficiency, which is handling the county's screening and assessment for the program.

"It's a long enough process that you can gauge someone's willingness to participate," she said. "The court liaison will make sure all of the defendants' goals are met."

The participants will mostly be nonviolent offenders, though Lackard said very few cases that do not meet that requirement will be heard at the district attorney's discretion.

When the defendant successfully completes the program, the charge will be stricken from his record.

Develop a social media policy that's right for your county

By JIM PHILIPPS
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER

This is part 2 of a two-part series on developing a social media policy.

WEB* CONTENT Many counties across the country have implemented guidelines and policies to manage their social media presence. This is critical today because millions of Americans are using social media tools in their everyday lives, and one of the pillars of effective county government is effective communication with the communities it serves.

Development of social media guidelines and policies was discussed in detail last month during a members-only webinar titled "Developing a Social Media Policy That's Right for Your County." It was presented by NACo and the National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO).

As described in part 1 of this article (see *County News*, Feb. 27), a good social media policy should establish guidelines for creating a county social media site; managing and using the site, and archiving information in compliance with public records laws and other legal considerations. Part 2 focuses on

the legal issues counties should consider and highlights specific examples of how counties, small, medium and large, are managing their social media presence through their policies and guidelines.

The best way to get started is to form a policy and guidelines writing committee which should include representatives of several county departments. In larger counties, the committee could include officials from county manager's office, public affairs, public works, public safety, information technology, human resources and the county attorney's office. In smaller counties, one or two board members, the county attorney, county department heads with public communications responsibilities and the public information office, if the county has one, should be included.

The county attorney or counsel is a key player in this process. NACo's Director of Research Jacqueline Byers, an attorney herself, said when drafting a social media policy,

counties must work closely with the county attorney's office to be certain that it addresses all of the necessary legal issues.

"Among these are First Amendment issues relating to government restrictions on speech — especially when editing or deleting information that has been posted on the government's website, the use of public resources issues, employee use of social media — both on behalf of the agency and personally, and other employment-related social media issues," Byers said. "Your state's Open Meeting Law issues, public records retention and disclosure issues, and equal access Section 508 disability access issues must also be given major consideration in any written policy."

During the Feb. 8 webinar, panelist Glenn Levy, associate counsel for San Mateo County, Calif., offered similar advice. He said confidentiality (HIPAA,

See **SOCIAL MEDIA** page 24

WEB* CONTENT When you see the "web" icon in a story, there's more information available in the online edition of County News at www.naco.org/countynews. Check it out!

Profiles in Service



» Toni Preckwinkle

NACo Board of Directors
President, Board of Commissioners
Cook County, Ill.

Number of years active in NACo: 1

Years in public service: 19 as a Chicago Alderman and 1 year as president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners

Education: B.A. in General Studies in the Social Sciences (1969) and MAT in History (1978)

The hardest thing I've ever done: my present job

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Harry Truman, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass

A dream I have is to: visit the Pueblo ruins in the southwest.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: was a varsity athlete in high school and college.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: run for public office the first time (I lost).

My favorite way to relax is: reading.

I'm most proud of: 20 years of public service as an elected official.

Every morning I read: *The Chicago Sun-Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*.

My favorite meal is: breakfast.

My pet peeve is: people who complain about the quality of their elected officials.

My motto is: "Democracy is the best and most fragile form of government on earth because it depends on an engaged citizenry."

The last book I read was: A Walter Moseley mystery.

My favorite movie is: *Dirty Dancing*.

My favorite music is: Rhythm and Blues.

My favorite president is: Harry Truman.

New 'Case Studies in County Governance' report released

By JACQUELINE BYERS
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

The National Center for the Study of Counties, an academic partnership between NACo and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia, recently released its latest study, "Responding to the New Realities: Case Studies in County Governance."

This report examines 11 county governments and the steps they have taken or are taking to reform the governing structure of their counties to function more effectively and more efficiently in the new economy. The cases reflect regional diversity and population size with the smallest having just over 150,000 people and the largest having more than 1.2 million.

Nine of the cases are grouped in the report by the general types of reform that they are undertaking. These include creating a charter and establishing a new form of government; consolidating a city and a county, and reorganizing the current county governance structure. The two shorter case summaries address charter change and the adoption of a charter for the first time.

The counties involved in the

studies that established a new form of government rewrote their charters and brought them to referendum. In November 2009, Cuyahoga County, Ohio voters approved a new charter that called for creating an elected executive-council form of government. Luzerne County, Pa.'s new plan for a county manager-council manager form of government approved in November 2010, and Macomb County, Mich., which decided that its existing form of government was outdated and inefficient, had its new charter calling for an elected executive with a smaller commission approved in November 2009.

Three other studies included in the report follow city-county consolidation attempts. These include Bibb County and the city of Macon, Ga., Shelby County and the city of Memphis, Tenn., and Vanderburgh County and the city of Evansville, Ind., which has a referendum scheduled for November 2012. The recent referendum in Shelby County and Memphis passed in the city but was overwhelmingly rejected in the county in a state that requires dual passage in order to be successful.

Bibb County and Macon are watching the progress of state legisla-

tion during the 2012 session which is required in Georgia before the referendum can occur.

The remaining long case studies look at counties that undertook major reorganizations of their governmental structure and service delivery processes in order to respond to the new economy.

Dutchess County, N.Y. was facing increased demand for social services just when it was facing fiscal stress because of reduced property valuations. Following a decision by the county executive not to increase property taxes, reducing the budget was the only way to achieve financial stability. Maintaining a strong fund balance and using evidence-based models for policy making, he was able to propose cost-saving reforms that had been politically unfeasible during healthier economic times.

Johnson County, Kan. has undertaken several reform efforts in the last few years. The latest, initiated by the county manager, was to create a fiscally sustainable and effective government by reducing the county workforce by 15 percent without resorting to laying off any employees. To help with this plan, the county hired a consultant who, after studying the county, offered 34

recommendations including centralizing support functions, consolidating departments, expanding use of electronic documents and enlarging the span of control in several departments. The county established study committees to analyze the recommendations which resulted in a plan to implement the recommendations over a two-year period.

Facing severe fiscal challenges, Washoe County, Nev. started its reforms and reductions in FY08 carrying through to FY12. In a highly unionized county, county leaders were able to reduce the budget by \$154 million and the workforce by 20 percent by working closely with union representatives. Finding that even more cuts may be needed, the county established a review board that hired a consultant to conduct a comprehensive review that would look at achieving a \$5 million saving the first year and increasing that to \$15 million annually.

The resulting study focused on staffing and compensation, business processes, service delivery and "other." The county manager used the County Strategic Planning Committee to prioritize the 64 recommendations from the study and created an

additional committee to analyze how reforms would be implemented and to measure projected costs and savings.

Several of these recommendations have been approved by the County Commission and are undergoing feasibility studies. This feasibility process is considered especially important for the recommendations that are most difficult to implement and the ones that are the most controversial.

The two short studies, Cumberland County, Maine and Lane County, Ore. look at counties that have used their charters to make changes that have allowed both counties to function more efficiently. Cumberland County created a new charter that kept the same form of government but made some fundamental improvements, while Lane County amended its charter in a referendum in November 2010 to clarify the roles of the County Commission and the county manager.

For a complete copy of this publication go to www.naco.org ► Research ► Pubs ► Documents ► Responding to the New Realities: Case Studies in County Governance or contact Jacqueline Byers, director of research and outreach at jbyers@naco.org or 202.942.4285.

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Counties could end basic services over lost federal timber payments

CURRY COUNTY from page 1

ing southwestern Oregon counties will be facing the same drastic cuts as Curry County. They include Josephine, Lane and Klamath counties, according to Eric Schmidt, a spokesman for the Association of Oregon Counties.

George Rhodes is one of three Curry County commissioners. "It's a financial crisis for us," he said, "because the payments that we were receiving, up until this last one, equaled about 65 percent of our general fund budget (of \$5 million)." The county will have to terminate about 40 of the 78 employees July 1 if it can't replace the lost federal revenue.

"If that happens, heaven forbid, you'd stop using any kind of adjectives with the word services or county services, like 'mandatory' or 'essential' ... or 'basic' or whatever," Rhodes added. "There basically is going to be a caretaker in each department, and maybe if they're lucky, to have one or two others, and that's going to be it."

Services at risk include law enforcement, public and mental

health, elections and some assessment and taxation functions, he said. The county has alerted the governor's office that the state might have to assume the provision of those services. "This is your notice of that very real possibility or even likelihood," Curry commissioners wrote in a Feb. 15 letter to Gov. John Kitzhaber (D).

In a notoriously tax averse state — Oregon has no statewide sales tax, and proposals to pass local taxes routinely fail — Curry County commissioners considered placing a 3 percent local sales tax on its May 15 primary ballot but stopped short. Instead, they might hold a special election Aug. 7 or wait for a regular election Sept. 18. They want to give citizens more time to fully understand the proposal.

"Obviously, there are a lot of questions and a lot of answers," Commissioner Bill Waddle told the *Curry Coastal Pilot*, the local newspaper of record. "To be fair to voters, I am in favor of a fall ballot."

Counties in 41 states and Puerto Rico depend to varying degrees on "county payments" from the federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. Congress passed a one-year extension in 2007, and in 2008, the four-year reauthorization that expired last year.

But Oregon is unique in that it has 18 counties that are able to use some of those funds at their discretion in their general fund budgets, not just for roads and schools as is the case with other federal forest-lands counties.

These counties are called O&C counties, after the O&C Act of 1937 (see sidebar), so named for the Oregon and California Railroad that was to have been built in the late 1800s. It set aside a patchwork of about 2.3 million acres of federally owned lands in Or-

Oregon's unique O&C counties

The O&C Act of 1937 set aside approximately 2.3 million acres of federally owned forest lands in 18 western Oregon counties for the economic benefit of those counties.

The lands, now managed by the Bureau of Land Management, were originally granted to the Oregon and California Railroad Company by the federal government in the 1860s to encourage development in western Oregon. Despite the proposed railroad's name, there are no O&C counties in California.

When the railroad failed to sell the land to settlers, the government took back the land in 1916. The 1937 legislation was passed by Congress to compensate counties for being deprived of property tax revenues and a privately owned land base for economic development.

"No other state has anything like it," said Eric Schmidt, a spokesman for the Association of Oregon Counties, "and those O&C lands have been the basis of the revenue for most of the southwestern Oregon counties' general funds."

O&C county budgets are highly dependent on revenues from federal timber receipts, or the "safety net" substitutes paid to counties in recent years. Combined with revenues from the Forest Service lands, O&C Act revenues support more than 20 percent of the total budgets of nine of the O&C counties.

"It sounds easy to say, 'Well, just raise your taxes,'" said Doug Robertson, president of the Association of O&C Counties and a Douglas County commissioner. "But we can't raise our taxes 700 percent, which is what it would take to replace the O&C revenue; we can't even raise it 3 percent." Oregon voters have historically been resistant to new taxes, but the current situation has some giving the idea serious consideration.

egon, removing them from local tax rolls. To compensate, BLM promised to share timber-harvest revenues with the counties. However, lawsuits and environmental restrictions have cut deeply into logging activity — and therefore revenues — since the early 1990s.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), who represents southwestern Oregon, is promoting a bipartisan plan in the House to increase logging on O&C lands that would preserve old-growth forests but allow more timber to be harvested.

Waddle, vice chair of Curry's

commission, told *County News* this would benefit the O&C counties and the federal government. "We'd create jobs; you'd cut timber. We wouldn't want to take any more money from the government; it would be a sharing arrangement," he said. "The federal government would actually benefit from increased revenue as well as the counties involved."

With new local taxes largely off the table, counties could try to grow their way out of dependence on Washington. But that's far easier said than done, according to Doug Robertson, a Douglas County com-

missioner for 31 years and president of Oregon's Association of O&C Counties.

He said Douglas County began trying to diversify its economy 25 years ago, with some success. The county landed an Alcan Cable plant, now closed, that hired nearly 200 workers.

Optimistically, he said the \$10 million value of the plant plus homes owned by its workers — assessed at the rate of \$1.11 per thousand dollars of valuation — could generate maybe \$54,000 in property taxes for the county.

By comparison, two small sawmills cutting about 50 million feet of O&C timber a year would generate about \$2.1 million in revenue for the county, he said. "It would take 40 Alcan plants to replace that 50 million feet of O&C timber."

"You can't make that up," Robertson added. "We can't change our geography; we can't change who we are or where we live ... so, if you cut off the ability to manage those lands, there really isn't anywhere else to go to replace the revenue."

He said what counties need most are two things: a "bridge" from Congress with temporary guarantees of assistance and a long-term source of revenue from the O&C lands.

"We're trying to get away from the safety net and make folks recognize that the answer isn't to continue to go back and beg for money out of the federal treasury," he said. "It's to manage these lands in a reasonable and balanced way that provides benefits for all stakeholders, including the industry, the conservation community, the counties and so on."

Given the Senate's action, and that President Obama included funds for SRS in his proposed FY13 budget, Robertson said, "The federal government obviously realizes its obligation."



Share your point of view ...

Letters to the Editor

I believe the article "Fracking" ("Fracking for shale gas spurs new state, local laws") in the February 27 *County News* was unfair. It didn't treat the producers of "Gasland" fairly by stating that the American Natural Gas Alliance has "authoritatively debunked several of the more sensational incidents that the movie attributed to fracking."

Your article promotes the potential of industry jobs over the very serious threat to our nation's groundwater.

The toxic chemicals injected into the ground during this process are a very real threat to public health and should be taken seriously.

— Stephen Reid
DeKalb, Ill.
County Board Member

Frederick County, Md. language measure 'largely symbolic'

ENGLISH from page 2

anything we do," he said. "We have an obligation to provide interpreters in our investigations and we will continue to do so."

"In reality, it's just the county government establishing English as the official language, and I don't think too many illegal immigrants will be scared away because of that."

Suzanne Bibby, the director of government relations for ProEnglish, a Virginia-based organization supporting English-first legislation, dismissed the law as a tool for discouraging illegal immigration. She said such laws realistically try

to create incentives for immigrants to assimilate and to promote cost savings by discontinuing taxpayer-funded interpretations.

"Deterring illegal immigrants is a common assumption, but the real effect of official English laws is to preserve English as the common, unifying language of the nation, the states, and of the individual counties by codifying it by law," she said.

"It's funny how often people will assume that official English is some sort of illegal immigration enforcement measure, but the truth is, it's not. I have noticed a few news articles where Commissioner

Young has said that the English ordinance will deter illegal aliens from the county, but official English laws do not target any one group of people. They apply to *all* residents of the county, whether they are U.S. citizens, legal residents or living there illegally," she said. If someone is going to be communicating with the local government, it will have to be done in the English language, no matter what their legal status is. There are no immigration enforcement provisions in the ordinance."

Young said the county was also looking to expand its immigration reform by using e-verify to check the immigration status of job ap-

plicants, and he hoped to work on legislation that would make it difficult for illegal immigrants to rent housing.

The county's policies are still a far cry from the strict policing efforts taking place in Arizona and Alabama, where any interaction with a government employee can become an impetus for them to ask for residency documentation.

Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's counties in Maryland were also considering similar ordinances, but sponsors in Anne Arundel withdrew the ordinance. Queen Anne's commissioners will hold a hearing for their ordinance in April.

NACo provides resources to help counties celebrate NCGM

NCGM from page 1

tion of West Virginia (CCAWV) as part of their observance of NCGM.

The Intelligencer/Wheeling News-Register reported that students are being asked to write 500-word essays on the topic "How does my county government make life better for me?" A prize of \$250 will be awarded to the student winner, along with a \$250 prize for the classroom of the teacher who encouraged the winner's participation.

In DeKalb County, Ga., Chief Executive Officer W. Burrell Ellis, a member of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus, is accepting nominations in several categories for the 2012 CEO Community Hero Awards. One category will recognize an individual or organization whose contributions most exemplify the NCGM theme: "Healthy Counties, Healthy Families" or "ONE Healthy DeKalb," according to *CrossRoadsNews.com*.

For the fifth year as part of NCGM, Hays County, Texas will recognize employees who display "extraordinary customer service" by presenting "Above and

Beyond" awards. According to the *San Marcos Record*, members of the public are invited to nominate employees they found especially helpful during 2011. A citizen review committee will select winners from those nominated by the public.

Since 1991, NACo has encouraged counties to actively promote county government services and programs. It's not too late to plan events around this theme by promoting your county's health care, and wellness services, and recreational programs. The NCGM theme compliments NACo President Lenny Eliason's 2011-12 "Healthy Counties" presidential initiative that urges counties to promote healthy living and lifestyle choices.

NACo has free media resources available to assist counties in celebrating NCGM. On the NACo website at www.naco.org/NCGM, you will find a comprehensive planning and tips booklet, and a NCGM Media Resources Kit.

The booklet contains dozens of ways counties have successfully planned NCGM events in past years. Popular events include pub-

lic tours of county facilities, open houses featuring various county department services, and county official visits to local schools and community organizations. The booklet also contains help-



ful media relations strategies to ensure that counties' promotions and messages reach the widest audiences possible.

The Media Resources Kit includes media templates to create your county's own NCGM buttons, posters, flyers, banners, proc-

lamations and news releases. The templates are specially designed for the 2012 Healthy Counties, Healthy Families theme. Plenty of space is available to add your county's logo or unique county government month slogan or message. These additions are sure to enhance the festive atmosphere of your NCGM events.

When you find the templates you want to use, simply download the files onto a disk, add your county's local touch (county seal, logo, theme or tagline), and have the materials produced in the quantities you need by your print shop or a local business.

A special feature of NCGM is the National County Government Month Award. The purpose of the award program is to encourage counties to participate in NCGM and recognize nationally counties that sponsor outstanding programs during the month of April. The National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO), a NACo affiliate, will judge the entries. Three counties will receive the top award in rural, suburban and metropolitan counties, and — new this year

— second place awards will be presented.

All entries will be posted online to serve as a database of ideas for other counties to use. There is no cost to apply. Applications must be received by Friday, May 25 to be eligible.

Whether your county applies for an award or not, NACo wants to know about your county's NCGM activities and programs you have planned. A special online form is available on the NCGM Web page of the NACo website so you can inform NACo about your county's NCGM plans. There you will be able to upload your photos, flyers, calendars, proclamations and other county government month materials so NACo can share this information with other counties to help them have a successful celebration.

You may also send your activities and materials directly to NACo Media Relations Manager Jim Philipps at jphilipps@naco.org.

To access the NCGM planning and tips booklet, the Media Resources Kit and to learn more about the NCGM award program visit www.naco.org/NCGM.

NACo Prescription Discount Card Program

NACo has a new solution to help your county!

The NACo Prescription Discount Card Program Marketing Reimbursement Fee Option was vetted and approved by the NACo Board of Directors in December 2011 and launched in 2012. The benefits are two-fold to help the county and to help county residents!

To learn about this exciting new change contact NACo at 1-888-407-NACo (6226), Andrew Goldschmidt, Director, Membership Marketing at extension 221 or Ilene Manster, Membership Coordinator at extension 291.

The program has proven results to provide you the confidence to offer this program to your residents. County residents nationwide have saved in excess of \$454 million dollars on more than 36 million prescriptions. Currently, 1,400 counties and counting participate in the program.



Access the program
information at www.naco.org
or scan your smartphone here.

Operated by CVS Caremark.
This is NOT insurance.
Discounts are only available at participating pharmacies. Rev 03.12



NACo National Association of Counties
The Voice of America's Counties

Workshops bring variety to Legislative Conference



Legislative Conference After-Action Report

Educational sessions are vital and significant events at NACo conferences. Following are highlights from some of the workshop sessions held during the Legislative Conference.

Monday, March 5

■ The Future of the Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Planning and Development Program

Who spoke?

- **Yolanda Chavez**, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD
- **Stan Gimont**, director, block grant assistance, Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD
- **Virginia Sardone**, acting director, Affordable Housing Programs, Office of Community Planning and Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development
- **Mariia Zimmerman**, deputy director, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development

What participants learned:

HUD's Community Planning and Development (CPD) programs have recently been on the congressional funding chopping block. Speakers at this workshop spoke about current funding levels for key

HUD CPD programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME investment and Partnerships and Sustainable Communities.

Chavez updated attendees on current funding with the current HUD program budget at \$44.8 billion, a 3.2 percent increase from last year. However, the level for the CDBG and HOME investment programs remained level compared to last year's numbers.

"With no increase in funding to the CDBG and HOME investment programs, counties will have to do more with less," she said.

Gimont discussed CDBG, some of its shortcomings and how HUD has begun to address them. Additional improvements to data systems are one of the examples Gimont gave of how HUD is helping grantees stay in the loop.

Zimmerman concluded the panel with information on HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The goal is to help counties connect housing to jobs, foster local innovation and build a clean energy economy.

Staff Contact: Daria Daniel, 202.942.4212, ddaniel@naco.org.

■ Highways, Bridges, Buses and Airports: When Will Help Arrive?

Who spoke?

- **Joshua Schank**, transportation policy analyst with the Bipartisan Policy Center
- **Gael Sullivan**, Senate Aviation Subcommittee staff member



Photos by David Hathcox

Outagamie County, Wis. Executive Thomas Nelson asks a question about the future of federal assistance for transportation funding.

What participants learned:

Schank predicted that whatever transportation bill comes out of the House next year will be superior to what emerges this year, and not just because of election-year posturing.

He said the tension between moderate and conservative House Republicans is holding up legislation that would match the Senate's bill, which he said would maintain its quality through the next Congress.

"(House Speaker) John Boehner can't submit a bill with a spending plan that would appeal to lots of Democrats and some of the Republicans because he'd lose his job," Schank said.

The old paradigm for transpor-

tation is obsolete, he said, because the gas tax hasn't increased in decades, the number of vehicle miles has been stagnant, and fuel efficiency has increased which all contribute to a drop in gas tax revenues. That said, he recommended against a gas tax holiday, because the normal fluctuations in the price would be indistinguishable to consumers, plus the revenue would be lost.

What is key to making progress is plainly outlining the goals of a federal transportation policy and creating accountability.

"Congress needs to show people what they're getting for their money," he said.

Sullivan recounted the progress made in the current transportation bill, particularly the modernization of air traffic control technology and Essential Air Services.

Staff contact: Robert Fogel, 202.942.4217, bfogel@naco.org.

■ Creating Energy Efficiency and Renewable Jobs in Your Community

Who spoke?

- **Valerie Brown**, NACo past president and Sonoma County, Calif. supervisor
- **Don Gilligan**, president of the National Association of Energy Service Companies
- **Clark Wiedetz**, director of alternative and renewable energy at Siemens
- **Henry Kelly**, acting assistant secretary in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy

What participants learned:

Employment rates and energy efficiency need not be considered mutually exclusive, according to the panelists at this educational session.

Brown outlined the job growth that resulted from a retrofit program in Sonoma County, Calif.

The results of her home energy efficiency audit shocked her, but also opened her eyes to the job opportunities for idle contractors who were suffering from the home construction slowdown during the recession.

The county fronts money for energy efficiency improvements for both residential and commercial buildings, which owners pay back through their property taxes.

Gilligan introduced energy savings performance contracts and what they could mean for energy savings. In addition, ancillary benefits could be even greater, such as reducing employee absenteeism by improving air circulation.

"Even the tiniest improvement in employee productivity dwarfs the energy savings," he said.

Wiedetz demonstrated the job-creating might of solar by shocking the audience when he said New Jersey had overtaken California in the number of solar power projects.

"The biggest political driver in the move to solar energy is jobs," he said, citing 35,000 new jobs in the Garden State, which motivated Gov. Chris Christie to support further investment. He also warned that without a congressional extension of the wind power production tax credit, which expires at the end of this year, 37,000 jobs, mainly

See **WORKSHOPS** page 14



Yolanda Chavez, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD, speaks with participants seeking more information on CPD programs.



Hardy McCollum, Tuscaloosa County, Ala.'s probate judge and commission chairman, pensively listens to ways to create jobs in the renewable energy industry.

Conference attendees had plenty of workshops to choose from

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on small projects, would be in jeopardy.

Kelly said he was enthusiastic about the potential for job growth in the renewable energy sector.

Staff contact: Jared Lang, 202.942.4224, jl原因@naco.org.

■ The Clean Water Act: Out with the Wash

Who spoke?

- **Ellen Gilinsky**, senior policy advisor, water, U.S. EPA
- **Susan Parker**, partner, Barnes and Thornburg, LLP
- **Jon Pawlow**, counsel, Water, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, U.S. House of Representatives

What participants learned:

Representatives of the EPA, the House committee with oversight of water issues, and an environmental lawyer shared their perspectives on provisions of the Clean Water Act (CWA) that affect counties.

One topic of interest to NACo members is the "Waters of the U.S." guidance issued by EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is currently being evaluated by the Office of Management and Budget, Gilinsky said.

Bodine reviewed several cases that the U.S. Supreme Court may decide that could have far-reaching impacts on local governments, including *Los Angeles County Flood Control District v. Natural Resources Defense Council*. L.A. County is appealing a decision from the 9th

Circuit that found levels of pollutants in the Los Angeles River, among others, exceeded limits allowed by the county's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for municipal storm water discharges.

"This case brings up an enormous number of issues for counties," Bodine said.

Staff contact: Julie Ufner, 202.942.4269, jufner@naco.org.

Tuesday, March 6

■ Hydraulic Fracturing: Balancing Energy Independence vs. Environmental Concerns

Who spoke?

- **Fred Hauchman**, director of science policy at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Research and Development
- **Peter Robertson**, senior vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs, America's Natural Gas Alliance
- **Drew Nelson**, clean energy project manager at the Environmental Defense Fund
- **Jeff Wheeland**, Lycoming County, Pa. commissioner

What participants learned:

The whole picture of the impact caused by hydraulic fracturing is far from developed. The controversial drilling method used to extract natural gas from shale deposits has been the target of a lot of criticism for its possible contamination of water sources.



Helen Stone, Chatham County, Ga. chairman pro tem, listens intently as she takes notes at a workshop on e-verify mandates.

Hauchman said most information available presently about hydraulic fracturing was anecdotal. "There's a paucity of peer-reviewed data in this field," he said.

An EPA study of hydraulic fracturing's effect on the water cycle is due in 2014.

Wheeland said rumors about hydraulic fracturing could spread quickly and polarize a population, as it has in many counties sitting atop shale deposits. Natural gas is released from those rock formations



Michael Kirschman, Mecklenburg County, N.C., nature preserves and natural resources division director, presents his division's detailed analysis of how parks add value to the economy.

by a high-pressure mixture of water, chemicals and sand.

He stressed that officials in counties that may be involved in gas extraction should proactively inform citizens about what the process involves, and question-and-answer sessions could be vital to that exercise. Robertson acknowledged that every type of energy production carries inherent risks, but assured the audience those risks could be managed appropriately.

Nelson said that people generally don't trust the gas industry to do the right thing, so drilling companies bear a burden of trying to convince the public they will not be a menace to the environment.

"It's in everyone's best interests for this to be done the right way," he said.

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■ The Legal Workforce Act: Implications of E-Verify Mandates

Who spoke?

- **Jenna Morgan Hamilton**, Capitol Legislative Strategies, LLC
- **Kevin Leonard**, director of government relations, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

What participants learned:

Hamilton and Leonard addressed the potential impacts on counties of the Legal Workforce Act of 2011 (H.R. 2164). The bill would mandate that state and local governments use the federal E-Verify system to establish that new hires are eligible for employment. Leonard brought the perspective of a state, North Carolina, that has passed its own e-verify law. Hamilton said H.R. 2164 is unlikely to pass in the current session of Congress.

From the business community's perspective, she said the bill would pre-empt state and local efforts to pass their own e-verify laws and would undo legislation that currently exists.

Hamilton said e-verify is frequently viewed as related to immigration but is a much bigger issue. "Ultimately (it) comes down to a new regulation coming from the government that impacts every employer on every hire they make," she said. "Regardless of if they ever hire an immigrant worker,

See **WORKSHOPS** page 15



John Pawlow, counsel to the House Water, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, addresses the unlikelyhood of Congress expanding EPA jurisdiction over local waters as Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor Penny Gross looks on.



Sherman County, Ore. Commissioner Michael Smith takes notes about the hydraulic fracturing process and its effect on the water table.



Dennis Sandquist, director of planning and development for McHenry County, Ill., listens to speakers explain how counties can take advantage of changes in federal economic development policy.

Workshop session explores foreign investment in U.S. counties

WORKSHOPS from page 14

every employer will have to fall under the requirements.”

That would include North Carolina, whose law took effect Oct. 1, 2011. It mandates counties and cities to use federal e-verify system.

Leonard said a recent survey of a sample of county human resources directors found few problems in interacting with the federal e-verify system and negligible added costs to the hiring process.

“There’s training involved in getting started; that was time-consuming for staff,” he said, “so that’s something to be aware of if you’re heading in this direction or if your state is heading in this direction.”

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Tom Freeman (l), foreign trade commissioner for Riverside County, Calif., describes how his county has attracted foreign direct investment dollars by reaching out to foreign government representatives.

■ Counties in the Global Economy: Creating Local Jobs with Foreign Investment

Who spoke?

• Aaron Brickman, deputy

executive director, SelectUSA

• **David Thompson**, executive director, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

• **Tom Freeman**, foreign trade commissioner, Riverside County, Calif.

What participants learned:

Freeman is a rarity: a county foreign trade official. He noted that he is the county’s designated representative to 190 countries around the world and is also responsible for federal and state



Paul Stange, a CDC policy advisor on prevention, says HHS is developing tools to make community health needs assessments easier to perform.

legislative advocacy on trade issues. The county’s Board of Supervisors created the position and the organizational structure that supports it.

“I’m a firm believer in making the contacts, even though we’re county officials and staff, (it) opens doors into direct leads,” he said. After the state eliminated its office of trade, Riverside County decided to focus on foreign direct investment (FDI).

The county has four bilateral trade agreements in place, he said, including one with Croatia. In a

county that has been hit hard by the home foreclosure crisis, Freeman said one “bright light” in the county’s economy has been foreign direct investment. “I don’t think you can get there and become a magnet without engaging yourself on the national and international stage,” he said.

Thompson cited the example of a neighboring county to Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, N.C. that recently attracted \$400 million in FDI from Germany, largely, he believes, on the heels of Mecklenburg County’s relationship with that nation, where it has a Sister City. “They couldn’t market their county as independent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, but they surely could market it as being part of the ... region,” he said.

Brickman kicked things off by setting the scene: explaining foreign direct investment in the U.S., the role of economic development organizations and the U.S. Commerce Department’s new SelectUSA program (<http://selectusa.commerce.gov>), which was created last year by presidential executive order, in part, to provide easy access to federal-level programs and services related to business investment.

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(County News staff, Charlie Ban, Christopher Johnson, Bev Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor contributed to this report.)

Fairfax County, Va. supervisor reports on steering committee’s deliberations

The following is a reprint of an article in the March 8 issue of the Falls Church News-Press written by Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor Penny Gross on the deliberations of NACo’s Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee.

The Clean Water Act, acid mine drainage, hydraulic fracturing, the Keystone XL pipeline, and electric vehicles were among the variety of issues debated at the 2012 Legislative Conference of the National Association of Counties (NACo) meeting in Washington, D.C. last weekend. The conference drew county representatives from Alaska to Florida, Massachusetts to California. Hawaii was represented, too.

In the Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee, which I have the honor to serve as a vice chair, county supervisors and commissioners learned about the effects of acid mine drainage from abandoned mines in the west, and supported “Good Samaritan” legislation that would allow voluntary efforts to clean up abandoned sites without the specter of liability. Often, the mine clean up improves and protects water quality, but cannot fully meet Clean

Water Act standards and, therefore, could be subject to citizen lawsuits. According to the Colorado sponsors of the committee resolution, local Good Samaritans are ready to clean up mines that may have been abandoned a hundred years ago, when the threat of liability is removed. The resolution was passed unanimously by the more than 65 county officials at the table.

Of interest to urban and rural counties alike was the potential for increased electric vehicle production, as well as a plea for research and development of energy storage technology. As electric vehicles prove their efficacy, something called large format lithium ion batteries will be needed to reduce the time needed to charge and extend the distance that can be traveled on a charge.

Re-use of the batteries after their useful life powering the vehicle also needs more research, according to a guest speaker from the Electric Drive Transportation Association. Enhanced energy storage for renewable sources such as wind and solar would make the nation’s electricity grid more reliable, secure, and efficient. A resolution supporting

that approach passed with only six “no” votes.

There was a livelier debate about the Keystone XL Pipeline, which proposes to send crude oil from Canada via pipeline through Montana and other western states to Texas for refining and export. Extensive wordsmithing of a resolution supported the comprehensive review of the Presidential Permit for Keystone and other pipeline projects, and the resolution passed by a vote of 52 to 6. Paramount in all the discussions was the potential economic boost to local coffers. Funding for local programs and services is very tight, or non-existent, for most counties across the country, and that challenge hung heavily in the room.

The committee debates at NACo reflect a lot of commonalities between counties. Regardless of the subject matter — environment, transportation, human services, or education — how to pay for locally delivered services, state and federal mandates, and increasing regulatory pressures are shared issues, whether in a large urban county like Fairfax, or a small rural county like Maui, Hawaii. The challenges often are the same; it’s the scale that differs.

First donation drive launched at 2012 Legislative Conference

A small gesture can mean a great deal. NACo conducted a donation drive for the first time at its Legislative Conference. Conference attendees donated toiletry items to the Covenant House Washington (CHW), a local affiliate of Covenant House, an international 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to protecting and safeguarding homeless and at-risk youth.

“Covenant House Washington provides services to over 2,000 youth each year. Many of these youth come to us in crisis and with nothing but the clothes on their backs,” said Carlette Mack, CHW director of external affairs. “Our mission is to meet their immediate needs and being able to provide hygiene products is critical to making them feel comfortable and good about themselves.”

“Not only do we provide these hygiene products to youth that live with us,” she continued, “but our outreach teams hand out food and hygiene products to youth on the streets. We value the support that we receive from our community, and we cannot thank NACo enough for supporting our mission, but also for supporting the young people we serve.”

NACo plans to continue its efforts in giving back to the communities and counties where NACo conferences are held. Look for the next donation drive at the Annual Conference and Exposition in Allegheny County, Pa. in July.

Administration, congressional speakers dominate NACo Legislative Conference



Legislative Conference After-Action Report

Attendees at NACo's 2012 Legislative Conference, March 4-7, had several opportunities to hear administration and congressional officials from both sides of the political spectrum on the pressing issues of the day. Following is a report on their remarks.

Opening General Session, March 5

■ Rep. Adrian Smith, (R-Neb.)

U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith discussed his priorities as Congressional Rural Caucus co-chairman during remarks at the Opening General Session; chief among them is reauthorizing the Farm Bill with a strong bias towards international trade. "My priority remains that the Farm Bill must take into account the growing impact of international trade on our economy. Expanded trade remains one of our best tools to generate economic growth and is vitally important to Nebraska's agricultural producers," Smith said.

Direct payments, or subsidies, will probably end in the next farm Smith predicted. "I hear from producers back home that they are prepared to move forward without direct payments, so I think this will be one change to expect in the next Farm Bill."

Other items on Smith's agenda include the preservation of rural infrastructure in the face of declin-

ing government spending at all levels. Essential Air Service (EAS), critical-access hospitals and even post offices contribute to a healthy, vibrant rural America. Domestic spending on programs such as these should not be severely or arbitrarily reduced," he said. Like NACo, Smith believes there should be a balanced approach when attempting to reduce the nation's deficit.

"Make no mistake, our nation's unsustainable fiscal pattern requires government at all levels to set priorities and to cut spending where it is no longer needed. But our strategy should be thoughtful, and not arbitrarily eliminate things we know work. I think the real question is: 'How do we make these programs work better, and utilize resources more efficiently?' Simply put, we need a balanced approach."

Smith's balanced approach would include comprehensive tax and entitlement reform, and a slowdown in defense spending.

"County government is the backbone of America's public service to our citizens. So in the broader effort to reduce Washington's unsustainable spending, we need to make sure we're not undermining that basic foundation of American society. We also need to be mindful that domestic discretionary spending is only a small piece of the overall budget pie in Washington. If we are going to be serious about addressing our unsustainable debt and deficits, we need to reform our entitlement programs and looking for reasonable savings in the defense budget."



Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.)

■ Rep. Kay Granger, (R-Texas)

At the Opening General Session, U.S. Rep. Kay Granger, (R-Texas) laid out the tenets of her political philosophy. She focused on what the government should do, what the size of government should be (small), and what the government should supply (infrastructure and defense).

Every partisan discussion on the federal level should focus on those questions, she said. "I think that discussion is appropriate and absolutely necessary," she said.

She insisted that careful distinctions be made between spending and investment in infrastructure, and warned against cuts in defense spending. She emphasized the job-creating capacity of transportation investment and asked NACo members to "do something to help us" pass transportation legislation.

General Session, March 6

■ Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Sen. Michael B. Enzi (R-Wyo.)

In a rare instance of bipartisanship, the senior senators from Illinois and Wyoming, and another eight Democrats and Republicans have teamed up to co-sponsor the Marketplace Fairness Act, legislation that would give states the authority to enforce their own tax and require Internet retailers to collect state and local sales and use taxes.

Both men were shopping for support for the bill from conference attendees at their general session appearance. Durbin, the



Sen. Michael B. Enzi (R-Wyo.)

Senate's second in command spoke first and before addressing the Fairness Act took the opportunity to defend government with a capital "G."

"The people who hate governments," he said, "have got to realize that we're all in this together. In a disaster, who's the first to show up? Government employees. We have no need to apologize for what we do with our lives. What we do makes for a stronger America."

Transitioning to the Marketplace Fairness Act, Durbin recited a litany of sales tax amounts lost to states because Internet retailers, for the most part, do not collect the taxes. California loses \$4.1 billion; New York, \$1.8 billion; Ohio, \$629 million; Oklahoma \$296 million. Altogether, Durbin, said, states lose \$23 billion annually in uncollected sales taxes.

"This is totally unfair to the bricks-and-mortar businesses who do have to collect sales taxes," he said.

Amazon, the Internet's largest retailer, endorses the bill.

Enzi, a self-described "accountant and introvert from Wyoming," picked up the theme of fairness. "It's a serious monetary fairness issue," he said. As a former small business owner, himself, Enzi said he understands how important it is to level the playing field for all retailers.

The loophole in tax collecting, created by the Supreme Court's 1992 *Quill* decision, creates a distorted American marketplace, he said, "by picking winners and losers, by subsidizing some businesses at the expense of other taxpayers at the expense of other taxpayers. All businesses and their retail sales, and all consumers and their purchases should be treated equally," he said.

Enzi told the audience that he was not looking to add co-sponsors to the bill, but encouraged them on their Capitol Hill visits, to ask their senators if they intend to vote in support of the bill.

■ House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi laid out her ABCs for job creation to the General Session.

"County interests are national interests and that's why we must renew and strengthen our partnership between America's counties and the federal government," she said.

See **SPEAKERS** page 17



Rep. Adrian Smith (R-Neb.)



Rep. Kay Granger, (R-Texas)



House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)

N.C., Colo. programs win Human Services Innovation Awards



Legislative Conference
After-Action Report

By MARILINA SANZ
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The National Association of County Human Services Administrators (NACHSA) honored the Wilson County, N.C. Success in School program and the La Plata County, Colo. Senior Outreach Nurse program with its 2012 Innovations in Human Services Awards. The awards were presented by Merced County, Calif. Supervisor

Hub Walsh, chairman of NACo's Human Services and Education Steering Committee during the Legislative Conference. "As a former human services director, it is good to have the opportunity to recognize the good work counties do, despite all of the challenges," Walsh said. Wilson County, N.C. conducted an intensive case record review to identify the challenges teens face to graduate from high school and obtained a grant from the state's Department of Instruction to implement Success in School. The initiative targets teenage

custodial parents receiving child care subsidies. It relies on strong case management support and intense services such as parenting education, tutoring, job-readiness training, summer employment opportunities, pregnancy prevention counseling, money management and financial education. Human Services Director Glen Osborne noted that one of the new practices social workers learned is the need to communicate with teens via text messaging. The program has produced significant results since it started in August 2008. The school drop-out

rate for teen parents averages 63 percent. In school year 2010-2011, 80 percent of teen parents enrolled in the program remained in school or graduated from high school. In 2007, Valley Wide Clinic, a federally qualified health services clinic in La Plata County, closed its doors, leaving 12,000 senior citizens and Medicaid clients without primary health care. At the same time, no health care providers in the county were taking new Medicare patients. The county hired two senior outreach public health nurses to help identify isolated seniors living in the

rural and unincorporated areas of the county. The nurses are trained to identify eligible clients, conduct health assessments and help access home-health services and fill out applications for public benefit programs. The program worked with the San Juan Basin Health Department educators to provide outreach to Spanish-speaking elders in the county. A 2010 client service survey revealed that 65 percent reported a higher quality of life, 61 percent felt safer with regard to fall prevention, and 48 percent reported eating more nutritious food.

High-speed rail not dead but needs state, local advocacy

SPEAKERS from page 16

Among the priorities she mentioned are: **American-made products:** Particularly supporting entrepreneurs, thus strengthening the middle class. That includes stopping the erosion of industrial technological and manufacturing base. **Build America:** Investing in infrastructure, specifically public transit, high-speed rail and broad-

band, plus roads and water and sewer systems. "Some of our water systems are made of brick and wood — it's a sanitation concern, too," she said. Though the budget crunch and recession engender a lot of resistance to spending, she countered that such concerns did not derail projects historically. "Everything you can name was not a time when we were flush,"

she said, citing the transcontinental railroad, the interstate system and the Golden Gate Bridge as examples. "We're delinquent in doing it again," she said of infrastructure improvements. She dismissed the House's transportation bill, though, saying it was bad for jobs and bad for safety, and urged county officials to lobby in support of the Senate's transportation bill. **Community Recovery:** Encourage the movement of ideas from the local level. "The initiatives toward recovery are best achieved by solutions that spring from the communities," she said. She also called for campaign finance reform. "Endless, undisclosed money is not the right way to go." America's leaders, she said, should be selected by a vote of the people, not by the vote of the richest bankroll. And those campaigning for office should "stand by your ad."

"If we have clean campaigns, we will elect many more women, young people and minorities to office," she said. "Nothing is more wholesome for democracy."

■ **U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood** Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood emphasized to the General Session that high-speed rail was still a priority for the administration, but its implementation would rely on support from several stakeholders, including governors. "There's not enough money in Washington for high-speed rail," he said. "There's not enough money in the states for high-speed rail, and there's not enough money in private investment for high-speed



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

rail. All together, there's enough money for high-speed rail." Citing California, Illinois and the Northeast Corridor, he said emphasis would be put on regions that had articulated plans for how to make it work, where the transportation department feels it has serious partners. "We're not going to impose ourselves on states that don't want to get into the rail business," he said. He also said he did not see the gas tax being raised. "It's not the resource it once was," he said, outlining how increased fuel efficiency and an aggregate drop in the amount Americans drive, plus the fact that the tax had not been raised in decades, has led to stagnant revenue from the tax. ■ **Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack** U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack dismissed the notion

that the Farm Bill couldn't be passed because this is an election year. President Lincoln created the Department of Agriculture in 1862 in the midst of the Civil War, he said. That same Congress also passed the Homestead Act expanding America to the West and funded the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. "So don't buy how tough it is," Vilsack said to a round of applause. He also spoke about the strong agriculture economy in rural America. America exported \$136 billion in agricultural products last year and is running a \$22 billion trade surplus. In an interview after his remarks, Vilsack addressed the fate of rural development in the next farm bill. NACo supports a strong rural development title in the legislation. He said there may be fewer programs and less money, but available resources will be used to leverage additional private-sector investment. He said the bill will continue the conversation on the bio-based economy, which began in the 2008 farm bill's energy title. "We think we ought to expand beyond energy, beyond fuel and look at ways in which we can recapture the chemical industry in this country through bio-based efforts," he said, adding that currently, there are more than 3,000 companies in the U.S. that are bio-based that employ nearly 100,000 people. "We think that's just the tip of the iceberg," he added. "So, you're going to see components of our rural development efforts in that respect in the farm bill."

(County News staff, Charlie Ban, Bev Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor contributed to this report.)

Word Search

Counties that begin with "M"

C	K	N	M	A	C	O	M	B	N	I	T	R	A	M	X	J	M	O	O
L	A	G	O	M	A	G	O	F	F	I	N	P	L	T	I	A	A	J	K
R	N	S	G	S	M	A	J	O	R	M	T	Q	V	B	R	C	R	N	V
L	I	A	S	Q	I	K	M	C	D	T	A	W	L	I	D	Z	A	A	S
B	D	F	Q	A	D	N	A	E	K	E	D	O	D	D	A	T	J	B	
T	Z	E	P	R	M	A	A	M	S	E	C	N	E	T	D	N	H	A	O
B	L	L	A	H	S	R	A	M	T	O	A	W	S	R	I	M	O	K	L
U	U	U	A	W	H	R	I	A	J	Z	N	U	J	P	A	A	N	S	Q
L	Y	L	D	Z	I	D	N	P	W	T	I	P	U	M	T	R	M	A	L
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J	A	P	P	V	U	F	O	T	W	A	A	U	C	S	P	S	F	M	F
L	A	H	V	S	Q	T	O	K	M	U	M	A	P	O	H	G	M	H	G
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D	L	M	D	V	E	C	N	M	Y	Q	D	H	P	K	W	B	M	E	K
G	X	N	A	U	H	G	H	V	D	I	L	I	U	Y	Z	S	U	Y	M
C	D	K	Q	H	F	S	O	O	O	J	M	C	F	U	M	N	Z	Q	P

- MACKINAC (Mich.)

MACOMB (Mich.)

MACON (Ga.)

MACOUPIN (Ill.)

MADERA (Calif.)

MADISON (Neb.)

MAGOFFIN (Ky.)
- MAHASKA (Iowa)

MAHNOMEN (Minn.)

MAJOR (Okla.)

MANATEE (Fla.)

MARATHON (Wisc.)

MARICOPA (Ariz.)

MARIES (Mo.)
- MARION (Ore.)

MARSHALL (Miss.)

MARTIN (Texas)

MASON (Wash.)

MASSAC (Ill.)

MCCOOK (S.D.)

Created by: Christopher Johnson

It's not all general session speakers and workshops; tech summit, policy discussions enliven conference as well



Legislative Conference After-Action Report

The Legislative Conference serves as a marker for other NACo-related activities such as policy deliberations and committee meetings. These supplementary events, held a few days before the official opening of the conference, feature specialized topics and speakers.

Following is a report on some pre-conference sessions.

Saturday, March 3

■ Technology Summit: Application of Mobile, Location-Based and Cloud-Based Technologies

Speakers discussed the benefits of mobile applications (apps), Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies in the workplace and cloud-based solutions at the semi-annual NACo Technology Summit, held each year in conjunction with NACo's Legislative and Annual conferences.

Bruce High, chief information officer, Harris County, Texas, opened the morning session by explaining how apps have grown to include most cellphones and tablets. Mobile apps throughout the county include service requests, civil services and a Harris County Library app where people can check out books or ask the librarian a question 24 hours a day.

Rafael Mena, chief information officer, Orange County, Fla.,



Photos by Jack Hernandez, County News

Bruce High, CIO, Harris County, Texas (r) explains how rural counties can obtain financial help to develop mobile apps as Patty O'Connor, taxpayer services director, Blue Earth County, Minn., and Harold Tuck, CIO, San Diego County, Calif. (l) look on.

discussed how mobile apps were being implemented in his county and trends that show data is surpassing voice traffic when it comes to mobile devices.

"Mobile devices have become the norm for a lot of people to conduct business," Mena said. "Whether it's a text or email, counties need to strive to make sure all platforms can support these mobile apps."

Patty O'Connor, taxpayer services director, Blue Earth County, Minn., talked about how volunteering as elections officer for the

county was a real eye-opener into the world of mobile apps. The Blue Earth County Election app shows residents where their polling places are and how long the wait is.

"The more things we do on apps, the more people we can reach," O'Connor said. "Elections have a ways to go before people can vote using a mobile app but it will become a reality sooner rather than later."

Harold Tuck, chief information officer, San Diego County, Calif., spoke about how mobile technology has been made the top priority

by CIOs this year. He added that establishing mobile technology in counties starts with a BYOD policy in the workplace. But before a county can decide on using this policy, it needs to ask questions like, "Is the IT department prepared for the latest technologies such as desktop virtualization and software-as-a-service?"

Doug Robinson, executive director, National Association of State Chief Information Officers, discussed how states and counties have been faring during the recession. Robinson said states are

recovering slightly faster economically than counties, even though there are 29 states projected to have budget shortfalls. He also touched on mobile apps' increasing the amount of data stealing and how counties need to be prepared to secure any information that is attached to a mobile app.

The panel concluded with a discussion on cloud computing as well as how some small rural counties struggle to develop or even afford mobile apps. Tuck added that some of these counties have no IT departments and need to partner with other counties or corporations to develop apps no matter how small they are.

"Other counties or corporations, including U.S. Communities, can really help rural counties out," Tuck said. "This cuts costs and helps even the smallest county develop mobile apps."

Sunday, March 4

■ Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee

Zachary Markovits, the elections initiatives manager for the Pew Center on the States, introduced the Elections Performance Index. It is an assessment that will ultimately help officials improve their elections processes. The analysis will show a variety of indicators, including errors in voting and factors contributing to no-show voters.

He predicted that the news media's coverage of the 2012 election will focus on voter registration and voter identification regulations, along the same lines that the last three presidential elections included discussions about voting technology, time spent in line, and increases in early and absentee voting, respectively.

NACo Past President Glen Whitley, who serves on the Governmental Accounting Standards Advisory Council, said the council will look into a proposal to require local governments to submit five-year financial projections, which he explained to the steering committee. Feedback from committee members bolstered his opposition to the measure. The council makes recommendations to the national Government Standards Accounting Board.

Committee Vice Chairman



Rafael Mena, CIO, Orange County, Fla., discusses how mobile apps are being implemented in his county during a session of the Technology Summit.



Marc Kraft, Douglas County, Neb., asks a question at the Finance & Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee.

Expert outlines legal challenges to Affordable Care Act

CONFERENCE from page 18

Larry Inman, a commissioner from Traverse County, Mich., typified the response from his colleagues.

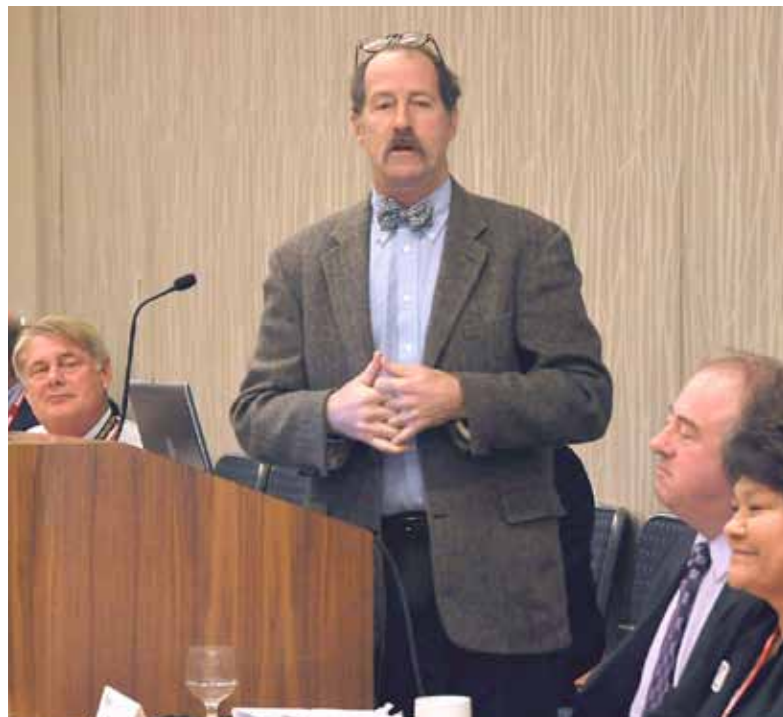
"If everything in our world was constant, then yeah, that would be easy," he said. "But when the federal and state governments can't decide how much they're giving to local governments, it adds a lot more uncertainty."

Complicating that procedure is the fact that within that five-year window, an entire county board could turn over, leaving the new board committed to policies the new members don't support.

■ Health Steering Committee

Katherine Jett Hayes, a George Washington University law professor, addressed the committee's Health Reform Subcommittee on legal challenges to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which will soon reach the U.S. Supreme Court. Oral arguments are scheduled for later this month.

She said four questions the high court will consider are: the consti-



Frank Shafroth, director of legislative affairs and intergovernmental relations at the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, addresses the Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee.

tutionality of the ACA's minimum coverage requirement; whether that requirement can be severed from the ACA if it is deemed constitutional; whether Medicaid provisions in the act are "coercive;" and whether the federal Anti-Injunction Act bars

challenges to the health insurance reform law, based on the question of whether the penalty for failure to observe the individual mandate is really a tax.

"I think you could make a legitimate argument that the Anti-

Injunction Act does not apply," she said. The Supreme Court could decide that it is in fact a penalty and not a tax."

The Health Steering Committee also heard from Craig Martinez, health policy advisor for the Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor and Pensions, who said prevention funding is viewed by some in Congress as a slush fund. He said it's easy for legislators to tap prevention funding for other reasons because they're not really sure what the funds are used for or what they benefit.

He urged NACo members to make their healthy-initiative prevention programs more visible to their local representatives. "Invite them to your event, invite their local staff and share your stories and successes," he suggested.

Monday, March 5

■ International Economic Development Task Force

Ambassador Ron Kirk, U.S. trade representative, highlighted the Obama administration's National Export Initiative in remarks to NACo's International Economic

Development Task Force.

He said the president's blueprint calls for boosting U.S. exports of products made in America. "The administration's trade agenda is creating job-supporting export opportunities for businesses, workers, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers and service providers in counties across the nation," Kirk said. The goal to initiative is to double exports by 2015.

He added that the United States-Korea trade agreement, effective March 15, will open up Korea's \$1 trillion economy and strengthen the economic partnership with a key Asia-Pacific ally.

To help local governments take better advantage of foreign trade opportunities, Kirk said the administration is working to "de-mystify trade" with online tools at www.ustr.gov, and BusinessUSA (www.businessusa.gov)—"a one-stop shop for local leaders like you to find resources that will help grow and build businesses in your community."

(County News staff, Charlie Ban, Christopher Johnson, Bev Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor contributed to this report.)

National Association of Counties

County Courthouse Awards 2012

NACo is now accepting applications for the 2012 County Courthouse Awards.

As a leader in innovative problem solving, you deserve to be recognized for your outstanding efforts. The purpose of the award is to profile elected county officials who have improved the lives of citizens through outstanding governance and strong leadership.

Applications must be received online at www.naco.org/courthouseawards by April 27. If you have questions, please contact NACo associate legislative directors Dalen Harris or Erik Johnston at 202.393.6226 or by email at dharris@naco.org or ejohnston@naco.org.



Celebrate National County Government Month

Healthy Counties, Healthy Families

NACo National Association of Counties
The Voice of America's Counties
www.naco.org/NCGM

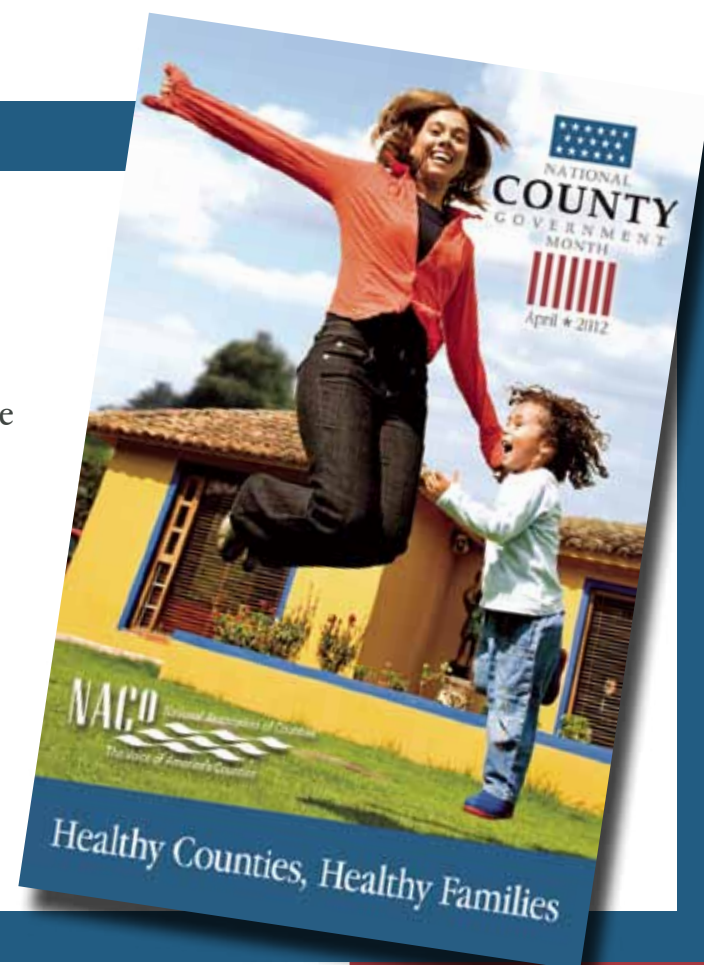
This year's National County Government Month theme is "Healthy Counties, Healthy Families." Start planning today to hold fun and interactive events to promote your county's health care and wellness services and recreational programs.

A special feature of NCGM is the National County Government Month Award. The purpose of the award program is to encourage counties to participate in NCGM and recognize nationally counties that sponsor outstanding programs during the month of April.

Visit www.naco.org/NCGM for more information about specific judging criteria. Applications must be received by Friday, May 25 to be eligible. All entries will be posted online to serve as a database of ideas for other counties to use.

For more information contact Jim Philipps at jphilipps@naco.org or 202.942.4220

Sponsored by the National Association of Counties to raise public awareness about the roles and responsibilities of counties.



National County Government Month

April ★ 2012





News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

• Seeking to break managed care's monopoly on dental care for **SACRAMENTO COUNTY**'s poor children, state Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg plans to introduce legislation to **allow more choice in dentists**, his aide told the Board of Supervisors.

More than 110,000 Sacramento County children on Medi-Cal participate in a mandatory dental managed-care model, the only one of its kind in the state, but only 30.6 percent of children with that coverage saw a dentist last year, the *Sacramento Bee* reported.

Steinberg, who represents Sacramento, proposes a bill giving Sacramento children the option of a fee-for-service model, which pays dentists for each visit they report. The measure also would include beefed-up consumer protections and would take effect July 1, he said.

• Calling them "furry four-legged biological time bombs," the **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** Board of Supervisors wants an estimated **150 feral pigs** out of the county.

The progenitors of the local population are believed to be a Russian variety of pig that was released in the San Diego River watershed about four years ago by someone raising them on the Capitan Grande Indian Reservation.

Most of the pigs have been found on publicly owned land managed by the Cleveland National Forest, California State Parks, the San Diego Public Utilities District and tribal reservations. Some hunters and wildlife experts have put the population closer to 300, the *Fallbrook Bonsall Village News* reported.

The pigs can transmit diseases to livestock and humans via contaminated water or when they are eaten. The supervisors have asked county staff to look at potential eradication efforts.

• **Mobile home parks** are now much harder to close in **SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**.

The supervisors established a procedure for closing the parks, which includes requiring a closure impact report, relocation assistance for displaced owners and a review by the county Planning Commission.

The process can be initiated by a request from the park owner or a 25 percent vacancy rate, according to the *Santa Maria Times*.

If a mobile home can be moved, it requires the park owner to pay for relocation costs, up to 30 nights of housing and one year's worth of

rent differential, all of which could cost as much as \$22,900 per home.

If the homes can't be moved, the land owner must pay for 12 months of rent and purchase the unit at in-place market value. The median price in the county is \$147,000.

► COLORADO

• A modification the **EL PASO COUNTY** Commissioners made to recently passed **oil and gas regulations** preserves the county's desire for enhanced water-quality monitoring while heading off a threat of litigation from the state.

Oil and gas drillers are now required to undertake an initial, baseline water-quality test and, after drilling is completed, one follow-up test between one and three years later. The resolution also directs county staff to pursue an intergovernmental agreement with the Oil and Gas Commission to transfer that water-quality monitoring to the state level. If such an agreement is reached, the county would again modify its regulations to reflect it.

"I think this offers protection on the one end while also being very pro-business and bringing in a new industry," Commissioner Sallie Clark told *The Gazette*.

► FLORIDA

Hoping to draw international attention from rowing enthusiasts, **SARASOTA COUNTY** commissioners approved plans to spend \$19.5 million to build a **rowing park**, which includes a 30-acre, man-made island built in a lake.

The park is being built with the goal of attracting the 2017 World Rowing Championships and other international events.

Developers are waiting to see if \$5 million in state funding makes it through the budget process. Among the items state funding would help pay for is a three-story tower — complete with press room and bullet-proofed VIP quarters — for heads of state.

The county money will pay for the basic infrastructure of the refurbished park — expected to be done by March 2013, according to the *Herald-Tribune*.

► IDAHO

• The state House may allow **BOISE COUNTY** to impose an **obligation levy on county property taxes** to help pay a \$5.4 million judgment against the county, the *Idaho Statesman* reported.

The levy wouldn't have to be approved by voters, nor would it be subject to the 3 percent cap on annual property tax increases.

The county had filed for bankruptcy protection after the judgment was handed down that the county improperly blocked a proposed development in 2010, but the application was denied because the court said the county wasn't insolvent. Money was available in various reserve accounts, including the road and bridge fund, and solid waste enterprise fund.

The only alternative, House Majority Caucus Chairman Ken Roberts said, is for Boise County residents to approve a one-year increase in the regular property tax levy. That would be subject to a two-thirds vote, and it would cost substantially more compared to spreading out the payments over several years.

• With the federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act's having expired, **CLEARWATER COUNTY** Commissioner Stan Leach told the *Lewiston Tribune* that he's joining with commissioners from **IDAHO, VALLY, SHOSHONE** and **BOUNDARY** counties on a plan to offset the budget loss by **setting aside 200,000 forested acres** to be managed as a trust.

The commissioners have been meeting with congressional representatives to discuss the idea.

Under the plan, the land would be managed like state trust lands, with any revenue raised from logging, mining or other activities going to the counties.

► MONTANA

Increased quotas and longer seasons for wolf hunts should help **RAVALLI COUNTY** manage the **large predator population** in the Bitterroot Valley.

The policy developed by the county appealed for coordination between the county and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in making management decisions for large predators, but dropped specific quotas for wolf, lion and bear hunts.

► NEW YORK

ORLEANS and **WYOMING** counties are supporting **GENESEE COUNTY**'s push to **legalize Las Vegas-style casinos** in the state. Genesee's Legislature approved a resolution last month calling for enhanced gaming at Batavia Downs Casino, the *Buffalo News* reported.

The three are among 15 counties, and the cities of Buffalo and Rochester, that comprise Western Regional Off-Track Betting, which owns and operates the Batavia track. Enhanced gaming, including

blackjack and roulette, requires a change in the State Constitution — which would have to pass both houses of the State Legislature in two consecutive years and then pass a statewide voter referendum.

The Seneca Nation of Indians has said such an action would violate the 10-year-old agreement giving the nation exclusive gambling rights in Western New York.

► NORTH CAROLINA

GUILFORD COUNTY Register of Deeds Jeff Thigpen **filed suit against Merscorp, Inc.**, DocX and others seeking to clean up the "mess" they allegedly created in the county's property records registry.

"Our office uncovered an abundance of falsified, forged and fraudulently executed mortgage documents," Thigpen said. "But our investigation only found the tip of the iceberg. We need the banks to clean up their mess."

The suit cites as evidence Thigpen's identification of over 6,100 mortgage documents (4,519 of those by DocX) which were filed with the

register of deeds and signed in the names of known robo-signer aliases such as "Linda Green," "Christie Baldwin" and "Jessica Ohde."

Meanwhile, in another court case MERS and Bank of America Corp. have asked a judge to dismiss a lawsuit brought by **Texas counties**, accusing MERS of **filing false claims** in property records.

The counties allege MERS was established to avoid paying filing fees and to facilitate easier mortgage transfers.

In their motion to dismiss, MERS and the banks said, "No false, fraudulent or otherwise wrongful activity occurred by filing security instruments naming MERS as beneficiary or mortgagee."

► PENNSYLVANIA

The EPA says well water testing at 11 homes in **SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY** where a gas driller was accused of polluting groundwater showed **no elevated levels of contamination**.

See NEWS FROM page 23

NACo on the Move

» NACo Officers and Officials



Chris Rodgers

• **Chris Rodgers**, NACo first vice president, spoke about NACo and its priorities for counties at the Minnesota Association of Counties Annual Conference in Ramsey County, Minn. March 21.

• **Linda Langston**, NACo second vice president, served as a panelist at the Disasters Roundtable of the National Research Council of National



Linda Langston

Academy of Sciences workshop, "Integrating Disaster Recovery: What Should Long-Term Disaster Recovery Look Like?" in Washington, D.C. March 21.

» NACo Staff

• **Bill Cramer**, marketing director, will present NACo's County Government Works Initiative and the online game for students, "Counties Work," at a session titled Counties Work at the Michigan Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Ingham County, Mich. March 26–28.

On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson.

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Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Hennepin County, Minn.

Inmate Carpenters Mean Savings for Affordable Housing Programs

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

While “giving back” to society, some nonviolent offenders in Hennepin County, Minn. have been able to help improve the lot for several low-income families and special-needs residents.

It's a chain gang concept with higher-developed skills and a lasting impact—using the low cost of prisoner labor to make the public good of affordable housing more available.

That's all thanks to a partnership between the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HCHRA) and Sentencing to Service Homes (STS), a job skills program that includes a one-year carpentry training program for men and women

incarcerated in state prisons on nonviolent convictions and with a connection to Hennepin County.

In 2010, the STS program moved to the development arm of the Public Works Department from its earlier home in corrections. That was an eye opener, according to Housing Development and Finance Director Kevin Dockry and led to pairing STS with the HCHRA. “We saw how we could tie two goals together, and that there was a way several parties could benefit from the partnership,” he said. “We could help STS stabilize its revenue stream by helping the program find a steady stream of projects, and the overall cost would be lower for the building and rehab projects.”

STS gives inmates an opportu-

nity to develop a trade to bolster their employment prospects upon release, and also provides a framework for them to complete their tests and obtain a driver's license.

In 2010, adults and juveniles assigned to STS crews completed more than 309,000 hours of work and community service valued at more than \$3 million.

The program's low recidivism rate gives it a lot of credibility.

The Minneapolis Building and Trades Council provides journey-men foreman crew leaders to serve as site foremen.

As simple as the partnership seems, complexities abound.

“We don't want (STS) bidding against other small contractors all the time because they obviously can undercut the market rate, so it takes a judicious approach as to

what's the right fit, and so we don't cause too many troubles in the building industry,” Dockry said.

In addition, because STS is a training program and works with convicts, additional considerations come into play with different prospective projects.

“It does take some more time we need to find projects with more time flexibility, because they're still learning and won't be able to finish the job as fast as a professional,” Dockry said. “There are also concerns about properties being vacant when the crews work on them.

Despite those complications, the program has gone well so far, creating opportunities to work on six properties — two duplexes designated for affordable housing and four single-family homes that house 12 patients in an treatment program for the mentally ill.

“We've found that the nonprof-

its we've been working with have been happy with the quality of the work and the performance of the STS carpenters,” Dockry said.

Local property tax revenues had accounted for more than half of the STS funding. However, thanks to the revenues generated by STS crews' contracting work, the county has been able to reduce the portion of the program's budget that comes from property taxes, down to 46 percent in 2011 from 58 percent in 2010, meaning almost \$120,000 in savings for the county.

“It's a modest change, but it's progress,” Dockry said.

The STS Homes/Affordable Housing Collaboration was named best in category for Community/Economic Development for the 2011 Achievement Awards.

Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights award-winning programs.

Financial Services News

Enabling Better Purchasing Decisions and Effective Budgeting

Just a few years ago, making purchases via the Internet was considered novel, even intimidating. While electronic commerce increased steadily in the '90s, its phenomenal surge in popularity over the last decade has been nothing short of revolutionary. Because of its convenience, people of all ages and varying degrees of technical savvy have jumped on the e-commerce bandwagon. Local governments are also taking advantage of online purchasing, with its point-and-click convenience and 24/7 availability.

To address these concerns, U.S. Communities has launched a state-of-the-art online purchasing system. It's a convenient platform that simplifies the purchasing process

and provides real-time access to the best overall government pricing on thousands of products.

The process is similar to other online ordering systems. Buyers can add or delete items from their shopping cart, however they only have to become familiar with one ordering process and input their information just once to access multiple suppliers' products and services.

U.S. Communities' online marketplace offers numerous advantages for participating members. Not only will buyers save time, they'll also save money by having ready access to real-time contracted pricing and the ability to easily compare prices. Aggregated search results allow buyers to see prices, images and product information,

and easy side-by-side product comparisons.

Unlike the many innovations and trends that have exploded — and ultimately imploded — in our fast-changing digital world, e-commerce is clearly here to stay. U.S. Communities has streamlined online purchasing across multiple platforms with its online marketplace, making informed, efficient purchasing easier than ever before. Any public agency — including local and state government, school districts and nonprofit organizations — can take advantage of the quality products and outstanding savings available through the U.S. Communities program.

To learn more about the U.S. Communities online marketplace, please visit www.uscommunities.org and click “Shop Now.” For more information, contact Jim Sawyer at jsawyer@naco.org.

(Financial Services News was written by Nancy Que, U.S. Communities.)

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www.naco.org



What's in a Seal?

» Pitt County, N.C.
www.pittcountync.gov



Pitt County was formed in 1760. It was named for William Pitt the Elder, who was then leader of the House of Commons.

Pitt was an English statesman and orator, born in London, England. He studied at Oxford University and in 1731 joined the army. Pitt led the young “Patriot” Whigs and in 1756 became secretary of state, where he was a pro-freedom speaker in British Colonial government.

The original inhabitants of this Coastal Plain region were the Tuscarora Indians. Once European settlers began to inhabit the area, tensions escalated and the Tuscarora War started in 1711. John Barnwell, a South Carolina colonel, was ordered along with several hundred troops to rid the area of the Tuscarora, and in April 1712 Barnwell accepted the Indian surrender at Catechna, the central city of the Tuscarora that lies north of Grifton.

The seal shows the county courthouse in the center along with a tobacco leaf and cog representing Pitt County's history in agriculture and industry.

(If you would like your county's seal featured, please contact Christopher Johnson at 202.942.4256 or cjohnson@naco.org.)

Research News

What Winter?

Counties across the nation are breathing a sigh of relief as one of the warmest winters on record winds down. In locations from North Dakota to North Carolina, local governments are reporting a winter for the record books, and most counties are happy about the break they got this year in their snow removal budgets.

Interestingly, some Canadian counties have found that the warm winter actually caused them to exceed their salt budgets because of the constant thaw during the day and refreeze at night. More trucks had to be sent out to salt roads more after than would be the case if there had been heavy snow. But most U.S. counties saw a mild winter as a windfall for their budgets.

Kent County, Mich. is looking forward to an extra \$750,000 to use elsewhere in its budgets and has begun filling potholes much earlier than in the past and was also able to use a much more durable material for these potholes. Greene County, Mich. is still sitting on its entire \$40,000 budget for salt and sand, and Highway Superintendant Brent Murray said he could not be happier. He plans to carry over that money for the 2013 budget cycle. He has also saved \$20,000 in fuel costs and more than \$5,000 of his overtime allocation.

Cuyahoga County, Ohio reported at the end of December that it had saved \$21,000 compared to average salt and overtime costs in the last four years. Beltrami County, Minn. is saving money on snow removal and using that as an opportunity to do much-needed brush and tree clearing from the county rights of way, according to its county engineer.

Although some counties are busy counting the money that they will be able to move to other areas of their budgets, others are facing a different kind of side effect from the warmer weather. In Clarke County, Va., school children may see an early start to their summer vacation this year. Assistant School Superintendent Rick Catlett reports that the five extra school days (sometimes called snow days) that are built into the year just to make sure that students reach the required 180 school days may not be needed this year. It is currently under consideration that students will receive an additional day off during spring break, and four days off at end of the school year.

Orange County, Texas has a different problem. The warm weather and recent rain is creating a significant problem for the Mos-



quito Control Department. It is currently experiencing a high level of mosquito activity throughout the county. Service requests started earlier than in previous years and the department received 260 calls in February where treatment was needed. "This is not normal for this early in the year," said Patrick Beebe, department director. "In fact, the number of service requests

was a record. The number of acres we sprayed from the air also was a record."

Pest control experts in Montgomery County, Md. and Fairfax County, Va. are already reporting mosquito sightings and have issued early warnings for ticks.

Counties that own gas utilities are experiencing another kind of problem because of the mild winter. Across the country there is a glut of natural gas since usage fell because of the warmer weather.

County-owned utility systems, like the Jefferson-Cocke County Utility District in Tennessee, are failing to meet their revenue requirements, and the general manager of the utility says that prices could fall below \$2 per thousand cubic feet, something not seen in decades. The utility is currently forecasting a shortfall of \$170,000

in its revenue projections if the warm winter continues.

In New York's Hudson Valley, local store owners are also feeling the pinch because of the warm weather. Many rely on snow. Some get paid to move it out of the way, some sell salt and shovels to help remove it, and auto body shops get the bulk of their business from accidents on snow-covered or slick roads.

Many stores that stocked up on snow removal apparatus after the last couple of brutal winters found themselves looking at these supplies just sitting on their shelves. Several private snowplow operators in the area have said they spent most of their winter working on landscaping projects. A slowdown in sales means a slowdown in sales taxes for many counties.

Tourist attractions that rely on cold weather are likewise seeing major drops. Numerous New England ski resorts are reporting revenues from ski rentals are down as much as 55 percent, daily ticket sales down about 60 percent and ski lessons down about 40 percent. North Carolina Ski Areas Association (NCSAA) reports that since most North Carolina ski areas do not own or operate lodging, many overnight stays are in local commercial lodging, including hotels and motels, as well as private accommodations.

"The benefit to the local economy," cited an NCSAA study, "is apparent from the gross lodging revenues" generated in Watauga County, N.C. municipalities like Boone, Blowing Rock, Maggie Valley, Beech Mountain, Banner Elk and Sugar Mountain.

Even though many people may stay home and enjoy the warmer weather, reports from southwest Florida show many snow birds are still taking the winter trip down south. Even though the weather is warm in Dayton, Ohio, people are still flying to Lee County, Fla. for baseball spring training, sandy beaches and sun.

In North Dakota, where winter fishing from fish houses on state-owned lakes is common, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department urged all fishermen to remove their structures off the melting lakes by March 15 nearly 30 days earlier than in recent years.

(Research News was written by Jacqueline Byers, director of research and outreach.)

Washington county balks at drainage requirement for new development

NEWS FROM *from page 21*

The agency's sampling of well water at dozens of homes in Dimock Township "did not show levels of contamination that could present a health concern," the Associated Press reported.

A fierce debate has been ongoing in Dimock over the environmental and public health impacts of natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale.

EPA's report is unlikely to quell suspicion about the water's safety, however.

Previously, state environmental regulators had said Houston-based Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. contaminated the aquifer underneath several homes in Dimock with explosive levels of methane gas.

► VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY joined with the nonprofit organization Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) to **improve energy efficiency** in 320 homes in the county. The program will provide local homeowners with expertise, guidance and financial support to make energy-saving upgrades to their homes.

LEAP will promote and administer the federal Home Performance

with ENERGY STAR program. It will use its own \$125,000 in grants to provide incentives to county homeowners who achieve at least a 20 percent energy savings after completing energy retrofits. Arlington Community Federal Credit Union will provide low-interest loans for program participants.

The county will provide expertise and guidance on how best to market the program in northern Virginia, and will help publicize the effort.

► WASHINGTON

CLARK COUNTY is the lone western Washington jurisdiction to buck a rule for **handling rainwater runoff** on newly developed land. County commissioners say the rule is costly, illegal and an economy-killer, according to *The Columbian*.

They are pressing their case in a state appeals court, but a federal judge has ordered the county to follow the rule during the appeals process.

At issue is a state requirement that newly developed and redeveloped sites drain as slowly as they did prior to the arrival of "European Americans" — when 95 percent of the county was forested. The county rejected that requirement until a federal judge said it had no choice.

If the county loses the case, it could be ordered to pay penalties of up to \$37,500 per day under the federal Clean Water Act.

► WYOMING

The **NATRONA COUNTY** Commission was been asked to review a controversial — possibly flawed — **appraisal of leased properties** at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Alcova and Pathfinder reservoirs or to ask the bureau to do so, the *Casper Tribune* reported.

The Natrona County Parks Board, which advises the commission, recommended the review after a boisterous hearing on the issue. This follows recent guidance that the federal land under trailers, marinas and other facilities be valued according to their "highest and best use," which would increase lease rates dramatically.

An appraiser told the board the highest and best use of a boat club would be five high-end residential lots. But current lessees say zoning regulations bar that kind of development, making the assumption flawed.

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.)

Job Market & Classifieds

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR — COLBERT COUNTY, ALA.

Salary: DOQ.

Colbert County Commission is accepting applications for the position of County Administrator. Job description and applications are available in the County Commission office located at 201 North Main Street, Tuscumbia, AL 35674. Applications will be accepted through Monday, April 23. Colbert County Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

April Fooling

The most recent HR Doctor article was about the most famous fest in March — St. Patrick's Day. However, the month ahead is crowded with holidays. Some are known around the world, others are as rare as private access to the Vatican archives. Every month is crammed with holidays courtesy of Congress, governors, state legislatures and local governments.

Here are some April examples beginning with April 1 — April Fool's Day. Even as far back as the 14th century, there was an established connection between April 1 and acts of benign foolishness in Western culture. Previously, in late March there was a Roman holiday called "Hilaria," which was an occasion for innocent pranks and good humor. Like many of our established holidays, there are Roman antecedents, which our culture borrowed.

The media has a special opportunity to create April Fool's Day messages, although most

won't due to the presence of hordes of drooling plaintiff's attorneys orbiting around the parking lots. Imagine though some possibilities: "California Balances Its Budget — Surplus Funds Shared with Counties" or "IRS Appreciation Day Announced." The possibilities are endless.

Easter and Passover often coincide and are perhaps the most widely celebrated. There are, however, many other causes to celebrate in April. It is, after all, International Guitar Month. It is also the time when we recognize National Peanut Butter and Jelly Day, Golfers Day, as well as the esteemed "Rubber Eraser Day." In a world continuing to move away from meaningful written expression in favor of tweets, video calls and smartphone apps, certainly the Rubber Eraser Day must be numbered.

This author has never been a fan of crustaceans, however, if I were, this would be the month to

celebrate National Shrimp Scampi Day, soon after having a wonderful morning of zucchini bread, which is also celebrated this month. In another stunning personal admission, the HR Doctor is clumsy and would never qualify as a contestant in the new show "Stumbling with the Semi-Stars." I will not be likely to take the day off on National Juggler's Day.

Of all the April non-religious celebrations I do have a favorite. It occurs on or about April 1 and is known as the International Edible Book Festival. It is an opportunity for bakers to integrate text and taste to create a cake that can be read. I'm sure that using red velvet cake might generate some added points. It is a time to create works that can be consumed with the passion similar to the way that an avid reader would consume every word in a great novel — or one of these articles.

For the HR Doctor, the entire concept of being able to eat your

own words could come in extremely handy. That is especially true for elected officials or public administrators in general. I am sure that after the presidential elections, there will be ample opportunities for the candidates to gorge themselves on their own words, perhaps with some Humble Pie as a side dish. This may be wishful thinking, however, in such a big ego gathering.

The origin of "holiday" is based in religion. Celebrating a holy day is a time for reverence and remembrance. Like many things in our society, the whole meaning has been diminished as lobbyists work for the designation of a day to recognize their clients and the products they make. A quick scan of all of these so-called holidays throughout the year only makes me wonder why I can't simply go online and buy a holiday to give as a gift to a friend. "National Steve Swendiman Retired from NACo Day" comes to mind.

Whatever I may think of as I go through a list of the various holy days we have created over the years, and after I stop shaking my head, I recognize a theme which is very important to the HR Doctor's overall philosophy. Taking time to recognize, celebrate and appreciate is a critical component of happiness and success at work and in every other aspect of life.

Without interrupting your plans to celebrate National Eraser Day, spend a moment to think about who and what you would honor if you could create a holiday. For me, it would surely be "National Charlotte the Beautiful Spouse Day." We'll go out and enjoy that day soon. For now, I will just have to have a slice of zucchini bread topped with peanut butter and jelly.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor • www.hrdr.net

Counties must consider legal issues in social media policies

SOCIAL MEDIA from page 4

privacy, consent) and copyright — intellectual property issues are important too. Levy said published

Terms of Use provisions for each particular social media platform are important to consider as well. The county attorney should review the Terms of Use as established by

Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites before they are used as an official county communication.

"The key challenge when using social media, we found from a legal perspective, is that the law is not fully developed," Levy said. "There's a lot of guess work involved based on past usage. Plus, social media evolves quickly so the issues are a constant moving target."

Levy said it's critical that counties fully consider all these legal issues before implementing any policy or guidelines and to inform county departments what steps they need to take before they post or Tweet on official county social media platforms. These steps should include review of general department principles and development of a work plan.

In Fairfax County, Va., the public affairs department developed social media account set-up questionnaires for county agencies and departments to complete to ensure that they have considered important aspects of social media use.

"We created a Twitter-use form and a Facebook-use form and a general social media questionnaire," said webinar presenter Greg Licamele, the county's direc-

tor of communications, integration and engagement. "Why do you want to use these tools? What is the purpose?"

Levy said even when your county's policy and guideline are in place, the work is not complete.

"Contact county counsel with any and all questions that come up both during and after setting up social media use," Levy said. "Follow the adopted policies and be uniform in their enforcement. There's a lot that's unclear and changing so be flexible and stay tuned."

But what about smaller, rural counties? Do they need social media policies? Yes, they do. Wythe County, population 30,000 located in Southwestern Virginia, has a simple one-page policy. It is essentially the following:

Board of Supervisors and the county administrator shall approve what social media outlets may be suitable for use by the county and its departments;

The county administrator will review department requests to use social media sites and may delegate this review function to the public information officer.

Employees representing the county government via social media outlets must conduct them-

selves at all times as representatives of Wythe County. Employees that fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to the disciplinary procedures outlined in the Wythe County Employee Personnel Policy.

The Public Information Office will monitor content on each of the Department's social media sites to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, message and branding consistent with the goals of Wythe County.

NACo is assembling links to county social media policies and guidelines. Currently available for review at www.naco.org/mediatools are policies from Fairfax County, Va., San Mateo, Calif., Orange County, Calif., Wythe County, Va., Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Nevada County, Calif., Douglas County, Kan., Carver County, Minn., Arlington County, Va., and Clark County, Nev. If your county has an effective policy, please share it with NACo by contacting Jim Philipps at 202.942.4220 or jphilipps@naco.org.


* The Feb. 8 webinar recording and related materials are available at www.naco.org in News Room ► Media Center ► Tools for County Officials.



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