

CountyNews

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BRIDGING DOCTOR-PATIENT GAPS IN L.A.

Walfred Lopez, a Los Angeles County, Calif. community health worker, meets with patient Maria Rivera at her home. Photo by Heidi de Marco/Kaiser Health News

By **CHARLES TAYLOR**
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

They've been called "angels" and "saints" by the patients they help. But they aren't nurses or doctors. "They" are Los Ange-

les County community health workers.

The county's health department launched Community Care Connections in April, a corps of 25 community health workers (CHW) who serve as advocates

for patients of the public system who are managing — often unsuccessfully — chronic medical conditions.

It's the CHWs' knowledge of some of L.A. County's poorer communities that makes the

difference, according to Mark Ghaly, M.D., director of health and integrated programs for the county. They live in many of the same neighborhoods as their

See **HEALTH WORKERS** page 2

Two-year budget deal avoids gov't shutdown

By **AUSTIN IGLEHEART**
LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

On Nov. 2, President Obama signed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (H.R. 1314) into law. Under the agreement, top-line spending levels will increase by \$80 billion above those set by the Budget Control Act of 2011 through March 15, 2017. These increases will be divided evenly between defense and non-defense programs.

Overall, defense spending will increase from roughly \$523 billion to \$548 billion for FY16 and from \$536 billion to \$551 billion for FY17. Non-defense spending, meanwhile, will increase from \$493.5 billion to \$518.5 billion for FY16 and \$503 billion to \$518.5 billion in the following fiscal year.

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Four-month-plus Pa. budget stalemate squeezes counties' human services

By **CHARLIE BAN**
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

As wards of the state, Pennsylvania's counties have been malnourished and mistreated this year.

A four-month-and-counting state budget stalemate over school funding and deficit reduction is starving them and the providers of state-funded services, who continue to do work despite not being paid since June. On top of fouling up this year's finances, the impasse is also putting counties in a tough place as their budget seasons approach.

First-year Gov. Tom Wolf (D)



The Pennsylvania Capitol, in Dauphin County (Harrisburg)

and the Republican-controlled House and Senate remain far apart on Wolf's proposed \$1.8 billion income tax increase as part of the \$33.7 billion budget, though

negotiations have picked up in mid-November, with lawmakers targeting a deal by Thanksgiving. Their

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Community advocates work with patients

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patients and understand the challenges they might face in accessing medical care.

“They know what’s out there, what works, what doesn’t work, which corners are safe, which buses are okay to ride,” he said. “They know the stuff that a doctor who drives through a community everyday just doesn’t know.”

The Care Connections Program operates on an annual budget of about \$1.5 million and currently sees about 150 patients outside of regular office visits, Ghaly added.

Some CHWs might have health care-related backgrounds, but most do not, he explained. Many might be the person their family relies on to navigate the maze of doctors, appointments and medications. Some are successfully managing the same chronic

conditions as their patients, such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

CHWs, who are “entry-level” county employees, receive about 150 hours of training over six months, funded by the California Endowment, a private health foundation that provides grants to community-based organizations throughout California.

Once trained, their duties can range from scheduling medical appointments and helping with prescription management, to finding shelter for a homeless person whose lack of housing might be the crisis preventing them from addressing their medical needs.

“It’s really transformed some of their care, and, I almost say, their lives,” Ghaly said.

He believes this is a model of care that can potentially improve the health of patients who may find it hard to comply with, or even understand, the medical

“It’s really transformed some of their care”

— Dr. Mark Ghaly

advice they are given. Many are distrustful of a health care system that they find confusing — because of factors such as low literacy or poor language skills.

Similar programs in other parts of the country have shown that CHWs have helped to improve the quality of a patient’s care, Ghaly said. And while that might lead to lower system costs, there’s no guarantee of that. “What we’re looking at isn’t just, ‘Hey, do we save money because some people who often go to the emergency room now have the CHW to guide them to primary

care or outpatient care?”

“I’m interested in how it impacts the satisfaction of the providers and our staff, and similarly, hopefully [patients] have a better experience being one of our patients because of the Community Health Workers,” he said.

These are the patients whose doctors can find hard to manage. “It’s not because we don’t love them dearly,” he said, “but because we don’t always have the answers for them within the four walls of the clinic.”

Ghaly said some of the feedback from patients has been “heartwarming.”

Ami Shah, director of the program, shared a few comments from CHWs.

“One patient only went to the hospital because I was going to accompany her,” a community health worker identified as E.G. wrote. “Her family was so sur-

prised that she was important to us and she was surprised I would go daily to see her and even was there upon discharge. ... She was so thankful to God and the *Virgen de Guadalupe* for me coming into her life. ... She called me a saint!”

M.C. wrote, “I had a patient tell me she had been waiting for eye surgery for three years, and because I helped her she finally received the surgery.”

Another CHW shared the translation of Spanish-speaking patient’s message: “You have arrived into our lives like an angel. You have become part of my family.”

The rewards go both ways, according to Michelle Bailey, who works in the program. “The moment that you realize that your services are not needed — that they have grown to be able to take control of their own situations — that’s just awesome.”

Barrels of oil and bandwidth tapped to pay for increase

PRESIDENT from page 1

In addition to the overall spending increases, the bill provides a total of roughly \$73 billion for the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund, representing a funding increase of \$32 billion for the Pentagon’s emergency war fund over the next two years.

Getting Paid

The bill includes several measures to pay for the increased funding levels. One measure allows the federal government to sell 58 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve between 2018 and 2025. The government will also be allowed to auction off portions of unused electromagnetic spectrum to communications companies to generate new revenue.

The bill also includes reforms to the Social Security Disability Insurance Program that would keep the program solvent until 2022. These reforms will prevent a 20 percent across-the-board cut in disability benefits that would have affected all beneficiaries beginning in 2016, in part by transferring money from the main Social Security fund.

The act prevents a dramatic premium increase for millions of Medicare Part B beneficiaries. Medicare Part B covers medical services needed to diagnose or

treat various medical conditions, including doctor’s visits and preventive services, outpatient mental health care and rehabilitation

services. While Part B premiums were slated to rise from roughly \$105 to almost \$160 in 2016, the bill limits that increase by setting

premiums at \$120. Current 2 percent cuts in Medicare payments to doctors would also be extended through the end of a 10-year budget as a way to offset the cost of preventing the spike in Part B premiums.

POLICY BREAKS

- NACo supports policies and reforms related to Social Security that will preserve benefits and ensure the financial security of current and future Social Security beneficiaries, particularly low-income and disabled individuals and surviving spouses and children.
- NACo opposes the Waters of the U.S. rule on the grounds that it expands federal control over county-owned and maintained

ditches, bridges, flood-control channels, wastewater systems and other infrastructure.

- NACo opposes the ozone rule, as it will increase the number of counties that are considered noncompliant, increasing costs and harming county economic development, and has urged Congress and the Administration to delay the new standards until the current standard of 75 parts per billion has been fully implemented.

YOU SHOULD KNOW... While the deal sets overall federal spending levels for the next two fiscal years, the House and Senate must still pass appropriations legislation to allocate funding to each federal agency and program before the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on Dec. 11.

Next Up

Congress must still act on a final appropriations package to fund specific government operations by Dec. 11 or risk another government shutdown. While this budget agreement helps lay out a path forward on this legislation, battles over specific funding priorities and other policies, such as the Obama Administration’s regulations regarding ozone levels, “waters of the U.S.” rule (WOTUS) and the FCC’s net neutrality rule, may still present significant obstacles over the next several weeks.

While opponents of these regulations are expected to press for language that would halt or roll back many of the Obama Administration’s regulatory actions, the president and most Democrats have vowed to oppose these measures.

It remains to be seen if or how these policy battles will play out through the appropriations process moving forward, but counties are encouraged to watch closely as Congress considers legislation regarding key county priorities.

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U.S. Senate votes to shut down WOTUS

By JULIE UFFNER
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The Senate showed its displeasure with the “Waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) rule Nov. 4 by passing a resolution of disapproval (Senate Joint Resolution 22) 53-44 that would nullify the revised WOTUS rule. The Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa)-filed resolution followed a failed procedural motion to bring up the Federal Water Quality Protection Act (S. 1140).

S.J.Res. 22 uses the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to squash the WOTUS rule. The CRA is a rare procedural move that allows Congress to overturn any “major” federal rule through a resolution of disapproval. The CRA has only been used once successfully — in 2001 to overturn a Department of Labor ergonomics rule.

S. 1140 would have withdrawn

the final WOTUS rule and required the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to restart the rulemaking process, inclusive of state and local governments and with a set of principles the agencies

should consider when rewriting the rule such as the types of ditches that should be exempt.

Both S.J.R. 22 and S. 1140 have been issued veto threats and neither the House nor the Senate has the votes to override a presidential veto

on these bills.

Although the vote to consider S. 1140 failed, the action allowed supporters of the language to gauge where members stood on the legislation and weigh options for putting the language into a must-pass bill, such as an omnibus appropriations measure by the end of the year.

While NACo supports S. 1140, it has no official position on S.J.Res. 22. If enacted, S.J.Res. 22 would kill the WOTUS rule in its entirety and prevent any provisions in the current rule to be used in future WOTUS rule-makings.

NACo has consistently urged the agencies to withdraw the rule and include state and local governments when restarting the rule-making process.

The House bill that deals with the WOTUS rule — the Regulatory Integrity Protection Act of 2015 (H.R. 1732) — passed in May (?).

Meanwhile, both the House and Senate FY16 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bills contain language to stop the final “waters of the U.S.” rule from being implemented.

NACo will continue to monitor developments on legislation in both the House and Senate regarding WOTUS.

The WOTUS rule was finalized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in June and implemented on Aug. 28. It would broaden the types of waters and their conveyances that fall under federal authority. Since it was proposed, NACo has expressed concerns about how the rule’s new definition for WOTUS could impact county owned and managed roads and roadside ditches, bridge projects, storm water conveyances, flood control channels and drainage ditches.



Financial Services News

Entries for NACo-Nationwide Scholarship Open Jan. 4

The NACo-Nationwide Scholarship Essay Contest, which opens Jan. 4, 2016 is an educational opportunity for high-school seniors. Graduating seniors whose parents, grandparents or legal guardians actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program are eligible to apply for a college scholarship of \$2,500. Four \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded in spring, 2016. Nationwide sponsors the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship to recognize its 35-year partnership with the NACo and its member counties.

How an eligible student can apply

Starting January 4, the application can be completed online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship. Please refer to the eligibility requirements listed below:

Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply.

Applicant’s parent, grandparent or legal guardian must be enrolled in and actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program.

Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term

of the 2016-2017 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

Immediate family members of NACo employees, or members of the NACo Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee, or its governing board of directors, or staff of individual States’ Association of Counties that are members of the LLC, or Nationwide employees are not eligible to apply; this program is not offered outside the United States.

Application and entry must be submitted online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship between January 4 and March 6, 2016. No faxed or emailed submissions will be accepted.

David Thompson at NACo Financial Services says, “Even though these applicants are often decades away from retirement, they often show impressive thinking when it comes to investing in their future. Their submissions reflect this focus in a manner that shows both depth and creativity. Now in our 11th year, we are pleased to be able to continue to award \$2,500 to help these seniors in the next step in their education.”

To help prospective applicants as they start to write their entries,

HOW ELIGIBLE STUDENTS CAN APPLY

Starting Jan. 4, the application can be completed online. Please refer to the eligibility requirements listed below:

- Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply.
- Applicant’s parent, grandparent or legal guardian must be enrolled in and actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program.
- Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2016-2017 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

Thompson shared a quality response from one of last year’s scholarship winners about the importance of building your retirement savings early:

Luke MacKay of Chino Hills, California, wrote: “Starting early means having more money set aside, allowing you to maybe retire ten or even fifteen years earlier than your coworkers who haven’t

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- Application and entry must be submitted online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship between Jan. 4 and March 6, 2016. No faxed or emailed submissions will be accepted.

saved. This can allow you to enjoy activities, family, volunteering or travel while you have the health and vitality to be really adventurous... and that’s what all the saving and hard work is for in the first place.”

For additional information about the NACo Deferred Compensation Program, please contact David Thompson or your Nationwide representative by calling

1-877-677-3678.

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THE HOME OF ROCK IS ON A VENTURE CAPITAL ROLL

Cuyahoga County floats new loan program to attract venture capital

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Move over Silicon Valley, Boston and Austin — Cuyahoga County, Ohio is angling for its share of the venture capital that flows into startup companies in your backyards.

County Executive Armond Budish recently announced a \$4.5 million loan program to a local nonprofit, JumpStart, which will make grants to early-stage and start-up companies.

County officials believe it's the largest county program of its type in the United States. "We've tried to find other models out there to see who's doing it well, and we haven't found any peers of this scale," said Nathan Kelly, the county's interim director of development.

Of the \$4.5 million, the county will lend \$2.5 million from its Innovation Match for Pre-seed Capital, and \$2 million from its Early Stage Loan Fund. JumpStart will leverage the county's contribution and aggregate \$25 million in new investment capital from public, private and philanthropic sources.

Any risk to the county is minimal. "We're guaranteeing the county we're going to pay them back the principal plus interest," said Ray Leach, CEO of JumpStart. "And we're saying if these investments generate great returns, the county is going to be able to participate in the profits of these investments." JumpStart has been in business for 11 years, he added, and has about \$40 million in assets.

"Because of our previous investing we have the assets and the balance sheet to guarantee the county is going to at least get their money back with a modest (2 percent) interest rate," Leach said.

While that might not sound like much, Budish, who was unavail-

able for comment, told a radio interviewer recently that the county's existing investment portfolio returns about 0.7 percent. Two percent is nearly three times as much.

By county charter, economic development is a "fundamental purpose of county government," Kelly explained. And the new loan program is an outgrowth of the most recent annual update to the county's five-year development plan, during Budish's first year in office.

"Budish wanted to update our approach — when we talk about smaller enterprises — and focus a greater emphasis on innovation development and venture capital attraction, and that is the focus of the awards that we're making to JumpStart," Kelly said.

There's plenty of venture capital available on the West and East coasts. On the shores of Lake Erie — not so much. "If we don't participate here," Budish said on WCPN FM's Sound of Ideas program on Oct. 28, "those businesses will go to the coasts and we won't have those jobs here in northeast Ohio."

All of this comes at a time when Cuyahoga County and Cleveland's standing as hospitable to entrepreneurs is rising after decades of losing Fortune 500 companies. In 1985, there were 28 in northeast Ohio; by 2000 there were nine, Leach said.

Recently, however, Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County seat, was ranked ninth in the United States and 34th in the world on an Inc. magazine and "a handful of other entities" list of the top 50 "entrepreneurial-friendly" cities, he said.

SpeedRead » » »

- » County loan to nonprofit would seed venture capital
- » Loan recipient JumpStart Inc. guarantees payback with interest
- » Cuyahoga County tech companies are lifting the economy

The successes of local technology companies are, no doubt, elevating the region's profile. In June, medical device manufacturer Medtronic acquired Cleveland-based CardioInsight Technologies, Inc. for \$93 million. Earlier in the year, Explorys Inc., a health care data cloud company that spun off from the Cleveland Clinic in 2009, was acquired by IBM's Watson Health unit for an undisclosed amount.

"We want to keep those kinds of stories brought to the fore," Kelly said, "because that will help us to attract and retain talent but also to attract new relationships around venture capital. Because we think that if those deciders have a good experience with new partners, then they'll do it again."

The loan program, up for its third reading before County Council this week, is expected to pass easily, Kelly said.



Election Follow Up: Votes and views on post-poll results

BY BEVERLY A. SCHLOTTERBECK
AND CHARLES TAYLOR
COUNTY NEWS STAFF

Two county tax-related measures that passed on Election Day

are attracting attention because of their novel approaches to community problems.

By 60 percent to 40 percent margin, Boulder County, Colo. voters approved a 5 percent excise

tax on the marijuana that growers sell to retailers, effective Jan. 1, 2016. At least half of the revenue raised will fund college scholarships beginning in 2017.

The “higher education” jokes have been plentiful. But county spokeswoman Paris Carmichael said college affordability is no laughing matter.

“We’re hoping these scholarships will help alleviate some of the problems of college debt and make higher education a real reality for all of Pueblo’s youth,” county spokesperson Paris Carmichael said.

To be eligible, Pueblo County or city high school graduates must be accepted by a college or university in the county and be planning to attend in the fall. The balance of the tax proceeds will go into a county Infrastructure and Community Development Fund. It will benefit a list of priorities, which includes developing a trail master plan, refurbishing the historic county courthouse dome and establishing a county energy efficiency department.

In Michigan, Kalamazoo County voters approved a 0.1 millage increase to help homeless families with school-age children find permanent housing. It will raise an estimated \$800,000 per year over its six-year lifespan.

The tax will help about 100 families each year, said County Commission Chairman John Taylor. “If we can build sustainability with wraparound services and programs, said “I think we can show that we can save the taxpayers a lot of money in the long run.”

Other ballot issues that affect counties fared as follows:

- Ohio Issue 2 (legalize medical/recreational marijuana statewide) – No
- Colorado Proposition BB (state can spend marijuana tax revenue on priorities previously approved by voters) – Yes
- San Francisco Proposition F (restrictions on home-sharing companies like Airbnb) – No
- San Francisco Proposition B (12 weeks per parent parental leave for city/county employees) – Yes
- San Francisco Proposition I (18-month moratorium on multi-family housing construction in gentrifying Mission District) – No

• Coos County, Ore. Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance (protecting gun rights) – Yes, and

• Utah Proposition 1 (raise sales tax by \$0.25 per \$1 to benefit transportation; on ballot in 17 counties) – 10 counties, Yes; 7 counties, including Salt Lake County – No.

“Overwhelmingly, New York voters re-elected incumbent county legislators and supervisors.”

– Steve Acquario

The States: Turnover Rates Average in Most County Elections

Only a few states hold local elections in off years: Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Here’s a snapshot of how county officials fared in their voting booths.

While results are not yet certified, it appears that Pennsylvania — at 33 percent — had its lowest turnover rate since the association began keeping records in the 1970s, said Doug Hill, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania executive director. The average has been 39 percent and the high is 49 percent

“Because we have all of our members up at once in the 59 non-home rule counties (eight are home rule, for our total of 67), we have the potential of changing the full board. This time, there were only three to do so. On average, it’s seven,” Hill wrote.

Also a record for the Keystone state: 19 counties kept all three members of their boards: the average has been 13.

In New York, any turnover could be attributed to retirements and term limits, not election defeat. “Overwhelmingly, New York voters re-elected incumbent county legislators and supervisors,” Steve Acquario said. He’s the New York State Association of Counties executive director. “A few counties may have political turnover as majority control, but even those races are too

close to call at this time,” he added. Incumbent county executives on the ballot fared well, too, he said. All were re-elected.

Moving South: Virginia’s 408 board seats were up for election. Of those, 300 were held by incumbents, and of those, 82 percent won re-election, according to reports in *County Connections*, published by the Virginia Association of Counties. Between open seats (108) and incumbent losses (53), counties in the commonwealth overall saw a 39 percent turnover in board seats.

Virginia also witnessed some very close races. In two counties, candidates won their races by three votes. In a third county, the margin of victory was four voters while only two votes separated winners and losers in another county.

In Louisiana, there was no significant trend in turnover, according to Louisiana Police Jury Association Executive Roland Darte. Politically, though Darte said, Louisiana is an odd creature. Statewide registration shows Democrats at 46 percent; Republicans at 28 percent and Independents at nearly 26 percent; yet Republicans control the governor’s mansion and both chambers in the state Legislature. But at the local level, more Democrats hold office, Darte said.

Mississippi results were not available as of press time.

Profiles in Service

Tracey A. Johnson

NACo Board of Directors
Commissioner
Washington County, N.C.



Number of years active in NACo: 2

Years in public service: 9

Occupation: Printer

Education: East Carolina University, Beaufort County Community College, UNC School of Government ALC (Advanced Leadership Corps)

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: being the primary caretaker for my grandparents that both suffered from Alzheimer’s

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: my grandmother as a teenager; President Barack Obama; my father, whom I’ve never met

A dream I have is to: see my county overcome some of its economic challenges through job creation.

You’d be surprised to learn that I: only have seven states left to visit all 50.

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: drag race on a country road.

My favorite way to relax is: Sleep late on a weekend.

Every morning I read: five newspapers.

My favorite meal is: steak and fries with gravy.

My pet peeve is: one line open at the grocery store.

My motto is: “I am only one, but I am one; I can’t do everything, but I can do something. I will not let what I can’t do interfere with what I can do.” — Edward Hale

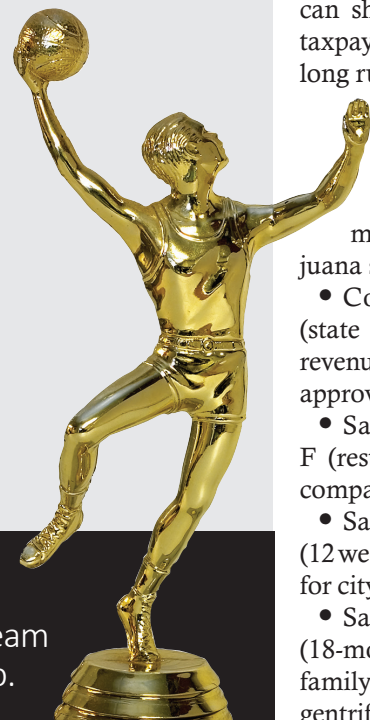
The last book I read was: *The Death of Cliff Huxtable 1937-2015 So We Can Survive Bill Cosby,* Fan Fiction by Teresa Dowell-Vest

My favorite movie is: *Love and Basketball.*

My favorite music is: anything by George Howard or Rachelle Ferrell.

My favorite president is: Bill Clinton.

My county is a NACo member because: Small rural counties need all the help they can get to have a voice when it comes to big government. NACo provides a voice for all counties.



I’m most proud of: Coaching a “10-year and under” basketball team and winning a state championship.

QUICK TAKES

TOP CRANBERRY PRODUCING STATES 2014

STATE	BARRELS
Wisconsin	5,022,000
Massachusetts	2,070,000
New Jersey	652,000
Oregon	500,000
Washington	156,000



Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, August 13, 2015

House moves to reauthorize Export-Import Bank

By **DARIA DANIEL**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Using a rarely exercised legislative procedure known as a “discharge petition,” the House has passed legislation to reauthorize the Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank of the United States. The discharge petition allows legislation to skip the committee process and go straight to the floor if a majority of the House is in favor.

A total of 127 Republicans joined all but one Democrat in the 313 to 118 vote Oct. 27.

The legislation, H.R. 597, would extend the Ex-Im Bank’s authority through 2019. It expired June 30.

“International trade is one of the major industries in Palm Beach County as well as in the State of Florida. This reauthorization would

“It would enhance job creation and retention — a major goal in the county.”

— Priscilla Taylor

allow our businesses to continue and even expand,” Palm Beach County Commissioner Priscilla Taylor said.

“It would enhance job creation and retention — a major goal in the county,” she added.

The bank provides financing assistance to U.S. businesses to export their products and services overseas. NACo policy supports a long-term reauthorization of the Ex-Im Bank because the bank supports economic development and helps to maintain and create jobs at the local level, especially for small businesses.

NACo has been working with the National Association of Manufacturers and other members of the Ex-Im Bank Coalition to support reauthorization.

The path for Ex-Im Bank reauthorization still remains unclear. Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell (R-Ky.) has said he is not willing to bring up the matter to the floor. The Senate did pass a reauthorization of the Ex-Im Bank as part of their highway transportation — MAP-21 reauthorization bill—but the House did not include a comparable provision in its bill.

COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS PENDER COUNTY, N.C.

Aging School Finds Second Life

By **CHARLIE BAN**
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

PROBLEM: Pender County, N.C.’s population had moved far from the county seat and services.

SOLUTION: Renovate a historic, but vacant, school building and place county services there.

Pender County, N.C. had an awfully nice school.

The Topsail Consolidated School, built in 1924, was a long-time part of the coastal North Carolina community. It was historic — one of the area’s first integrated high schools. And, it had

Places by the Historic Wilmington Foundation. At least someone noticed it was still around.

By 2013, the county came to the rescue. Even though the building’s best days seemed to be in its past, the county’s future, resulting from a 7.8 percent population boom from 2010 to 2014, would secure the building’s role.

Almost three-quarters of the county’s population lives close to the Atlantic coast, more than a half-hour’s drive from the county seat of Burgaw, and since 2008, the county had been leasing a former medical office in the area as home to satellite offices to the tune of \$150,000 a year.

The building housed the sheriff’s office and departments including health and human services, planning and community develop-

ment, permitting and inspections, veterans’ services and juvenile justice services. As demand for those services increased, so did the space they would need, and the school, which the county had acquired in 2004, was the perfect place.

“We wanted to keep the building as historically significant as possible, but still move into the 21st century,” said Planning Director Kyle Breuer.

A separate cafeteria building houses the sheriff’s office, juvenile justice department and a magistrate’s office, along with two holding cells. The rest of the departments are in the school.

It’s not all for official use. Two conference rooms and an auditorium in the annex are available for the public.

Though the nearly-\$5 million price tag is much higher than the \$150,000 annual lease for office space, the departments the old medical office housed would eventually need more space, and energy efficiencies added in the renovations will decrease utility costs. And, with almost an entire vacant floor, there’s room to grow.

But that wasn’t the only financial consideration.

“The school property is in the growing part of the county, near the resorts,” Breuer said. “It’s a highly-desirable location, commercially, and the county faced a critical decision about whether to keep the school or sell the property.”

County administration hasn’t looked back, though.

“The commissioners listened to the public, and they made it clear that school building was part of the county and they wanted it to stay that way,” Breuer said.

County Innovations and Solutions features noteworthy and award-winning programs.

ment, permitting and inspections, veterans’ services and juvenile justice services. As demand for those services increased, so did the space they would need, and the school, which the county had acquired in 2004, was the perfect place.

After \$4.8 million in renovations, repairs and asbestos remediation, the school was ready to become the “county government annex.”

The building’s legacy dovetailed when the grandson of the original 1920s architect who designed the school, himself an architect, came

NACo on the Move

► NACo Officers, County Officials

• NACo President **Sallie Clark** addressed members of the Virginia Association of Counties at their Annual Conference Nov. 8–10 in Bath County on her Safe and Secure initiative. She was also a featured speaker at the Utah Association of Counties Annual Conference in Washington County, Utah Nov. 11–13.

► NACo Staff

• **Julie Ufner**, associate legislative director, spoke at a seminar sponsored by EPA for the agency’s staff on the regulations-writing process. Ufner’s presentation focused on the role of counties in the federal-state hierarchy, the impact of unfunded mandates and how federal, state and local partners can work more closely together during the rule-making process.

• **Maeghan Gilmore**, County Solutions and Innovations Department program director, traveled to Sacramento County, Calif. to present NACo’s Stepping Up initiative at the Words to Deeds Conference: Changing Paradigm for Criminal Justice and Mental Health.

• **Chris Marklund**, associate legislative director, and **Cecilia Mills**, research associate, spoke at the Utah Association of Counties Annual Conference in Washington County Nov. 11–13. Marklund outlined the priority issues for NACo’s Western Interstate Region caucus and Mills showed attendees how to navigate NACo’s online data portal, the County Explorer.

► Coming Up

• **Alex Koroknay-Palicz**, membership coordinator, will represent NACo at the Association of Oregon Counties conference in Lane County (Eugene) Nov. 16–19.

• **Caitlin Myers**, membership services associate, and **Kaye Braaten**, past NACo president, will also represent the association at the Washington State Association of Counties conference (Braaten) in Skamania County Nov. 17–19 and the Iowa State Association of Counties Fall School (Myers) in Linn County Nov. 18–20.

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, membership-marketing director, will attend the Kentucky Association of Counties Annual Conference in Fayette County (Lexington), Nov. 18–20.



NACo Board member and Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor Gerry Hyland, received a special Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) award for his 28 years of service to the association at VACo’s annual meeting. He is seen here showing off the award with his Fairfax County colleagues (l-r): Supervisors Jim McKay, Linda Smyth, Penny Gross, Sharon Bulova; and NACo President Sallie Clark. Photo courtesy of VACo

Pa. budget was due July 1; counties are on the hook until it passes

PA. BUDGET from page 1

battle blew past what was formerly the longest budget stalemate — 101 days in 2009. Even when the budget is resolved, and counties and their service providers are reimbursed, many providers may take an overall loss because of interest payments on loans to keep their organizations running in the interim.

Late budgets for the Keystone State have become routine in recent years, but the latest didn't seem that daunting, initially.

"Everybody kind of thought in the back of their minds that this was going to be an extremely difficult budget because of the perspective of the two sides, but I don't think anybody could have predicted that we'd be sitting here, now in the fourth month after the constitutional deadline, without a budget," said Brinda Penyak, deputy director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). "That was far-fetched in anyone's imagination."

Penyak greeted news of the start of earnest negotiations with cautious optimism.

"It's the first ray of hope we've seen in a while," she said. "It's good news, but it's tentative. It's pretty clear the sides are closer than they have been, but while the details are being worked out, there isn't anything we can rely on."

One of the state association's major priorities in the process is to keep the state from deferring payment of a one-quarter of child welfare services for one year. Counties are already subject to nearly two dozen new mandates that, while they have increased child safety, have caused call volumes and caseloads to increase dramatically.

On the public radio program *Smart Talk* in mid-October, Lancaster County Commission Chairman and CCAP President Craig Lehman said the two sides have been stubborn in their positions, to a worrisome extent.

"You'd always see incremental progress in coming toward a budget agreement so things will move forward," he said. "I am not aware of any progress (this time)."

Lancaster County told its human services providers in April and May, well ahead of the end of the state's fiscal year, that it would not be able to pay for services after July 1.

"All providers are continuing to provide services," said Chief Clerk Andrea McCue. "But we're really getting to a critical point now because some providers are going back for their second or third line of

SpeedRead » » »

- » Pennsylvania has been without a budget since July 1
- » Most counties have stopped paying social service providers
- » Many providers have had to take out loans to continue service and will have to pay interest

credit," she said. "We have had some smaller providers tell us they've maxed out their own personal credit cards to pay staff and aren't paying themselves. They're trying to keep things going, but they'll have to stop accepting new patients or reduce their hours to keep their doors open."

That will likely mean service interruption for people who rely on the service providers.

"In many cases, there is no 'Plan B,'" McCue said. "If we don't have these providers to provide these services for us, we won't be able to provide them. The county's not in business to provide those services."

As of Oct. 15, Berks County's social services operations were \$7 million in the hole, and the county's cash reserves as of Nov. 9 were more than \$15 million lower than at the same point a year before, county COO Carl Geffken said.

North of the state capital, Harrisburg, social services in Juniata, Mifflin and Huntingdon counties are on their last legs because Juniata Valley Developmental and Behavioral Services, the provider for all three counties, is running out of money.

"If nothing changes in the very

near term, the director said, they'll be forced to shut their doors as of the middle of this month," said Juniata County Administrator Jim Bahorik.

Counties have varied in their approaches. Some have cut down on travel. Others, like Wayne County, have scaled cutbacks with respect to the size of businesses they owe, for instance paying 50–60 percent of invoices to larger providers, versus 85–95 percent to smaller providers.

Tioga County's location, in the Marcellus formation, has given the county a fortunate financial position — debt free in 2014 and able to give loans to its area agency on aging and human services department.

"Compared to most counties, we're in pretty good shape," said Commissioner Roger Bunn. "We've received \$20 million since 2012 in extraction fees and that's let us keep our core responsibilities without borrowing money. We had \$5 million we hadn't spent yet, so we're keeping things afloat for a few months, until this is over."

They're holding off on taking care of additional programs, though.

"There are some things — a battered women's shelter, some early childhood programs — we'd like to help but they're not core services we're mandated to provide," he said.

Allegheny County has \$40 million of its own money it is using to support its smaller providers, the kind that can't get loans to keep their operations going.

"Agencies aren't getting paid unless they've given our director of human services reason to believe

they would otherwise go out of business," said Finance Director Mary Sorka. "We're spending about \$2.5 million a month keeping the smaller operations afloat. If their sole client is Allegheny County, they're obviously having trouble right now."

Even though the stalemate is mainly affecting human services, county-wide measures are shoring up finances in the meantime. No non-essential purchases or new hires.

"Whether that department is state funded or not, we've requested that all departments comply with that," she said.

Every Child, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit that provides foster care, in-home family preservation services, has done more than \$400,000 of work for Allegheny County, without being paid. Between 45-55 percent of the organization's revenue comes from its purchase-service contracts with the county. The organization took out a \$100,000 low-interest emergency loan from local Bridgeway Capital, but Executive Director Laura Maines said it's not relieving the accumulating stress.

"It's the equivalent of putting your finger in a dike," she said. "After four months, it's really adding up."

The long-term scars from the impasse will likely transform social service providers.

"The next time around, if I'm able to hold on to some cash, I'm going to squirrel it away to keep the doors open next time, rather than reinvest it into technology, efficiencies, new programs, new ideas," Maines said. "Our sector is becoming risky because of what is happening with the state. We can't be the best customers because we won't be able to pay on time. We're slow to pay vendors, but we also know that ripple effect will hurt them too."

Repayment of loans to get providers through the impasse also worried Maines.

"Those interest payments mean part of our budget will not be going to our mission, it won't be serving the vulnerable citizens of Pennsylvania," she said. "It's going to pay debt."

The state association is hoping to get provisions in the budget to compensate counties for the expenses they incur during the stalemate while maintaining services, either interest forgone paying for service, interest due on loans or late-payment fees.

"We want the state to make the counties whole," Penyak said.

With no clear idea when the budget will be resolved, counties and their human service providers are trying to stretch their available money and hope their message reaches the leadership in the General Assembly. Wolf recently enacted his own state travel ban, which Maines said, when combined with other budgetary clamps for the Legislature, will give the state officials a taste of what everyone else is dealing with. In some ways, the continuity of service has kept the crisis from taking on a larger narrative.

"We beg borrow and steal to do our jobs (but we keep doing them) and it takes a while for people outside the social service bubble to feel the pain of a budget impasse," she said. "If this goes into December, we're all collectively going to start looking at what we can do without, how can we reduce services to stay open. It's a scary thought because you're serving such a vulnerable population, and it's not like they have very many options beyond us."

Penyak said there's been some ideas could lead to a compromise, including opening up new revenue sources like Internet gambling and privatizing the state-run liquor stores, but Wolf and the Republican leadership remain far apart.

On *Smart Talk*, Lehman echoed that.

"You'd always see incremental progress in coming toward a budget agreement so things will move forward," he said. "I am not aware of any progress (this time)."

Maines, though, saw the new governor's approach reducing the sense of urgency.

"In 2009, at least (then-Governor Ed) Rendell kept the legislators in Harrisburg," she said. "This year, they didn't pass the budget, then everyone went on vacation in August. The state didn't feel the same pain this time that the counties and their providers are feeling."

Even when the budget, which is a collection of dozens of resolutions, passes, it will be weeks before counties will actually see the money.

"We're working with the administration to make that happen as fast as possible," Penyak said.

Once the budget passes, the individual state departments will then send their allocations to the state treasury, which then go to individual counties.

"As it stands now, even if the budget passed today, counties wouldn't actually see that money for a few weeks."

OVERALL HUMAN SERVICE FUNDING CLAWING BACK

Before the budget impasse started, Pennsylvania's counties were already on a diet. More than 15 years of decreasing funding from the state for human services accelerated in 2012 with a 10-percent cut, totaling \$84 million.

Gov. Tom Wolf (D) pledged in his budget proposal to restore the 10 percent cut, one-third (\$28 million) at a time over the course of the next three years, but the budget stalemate has scuttled that for now.

The budget that the legislature passed, and Wolf vetoed, did not include the restoration, but Brinda Penyak, deputy director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, is not convinced it's a dead issue.

"We don't know that they're necessarily opposed to it in the budget they sent to the governor," she said.

The restoration would represent 0.08 of 1 percent of the total \$33.7 billion state budget.

Salt Lake County continues to innovate when addressing behavioral health

BY JEANNIE EDENS AND NASTASSIA WALSH

Ten years ago, in an effort to address a growing jail population, Salt Lake County implemented Project RIO (Right Person In/Out) using a federal Bureau of Justice Assistance grant.

The county's criminal justice and mental health systems agreed that ideally, persons with mental illness would have the same rate of contact with the criminal justice system as any other person. Systemic improvements were implemented at five intercept points, with the goal of diverting non-violent offenders with behavioral health conditions from incarceration.

Through Project RIO and an already active Crisis Intervention Team program, Social Detox Center and Mental Health Court, policies, programs and practices now exist at each intercept point to help reduce the number of people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders in jails.

One challenge Salt Lake County faced when trying to implement these practices was funding. Recognizing the savings that alternatives to incarceration programs offer and the positive impact to individuals and families, the mayor and County Council chose to match the state general fund dollars they receive for behavioral health services at a rate of 80 percent, rather than the required 20 percent. These investments have yielded great returns through the years:

- a 90 percent emergency department diversion rate through the Receiving Center and Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams

SpeedRead » » »

- » Salt Lake County's 10-year journey with jail diversion programs nets reduced bookings and fewer emergency room visits
- » Recent state Legislation sparks three new pilot projects including a residential treatment program for women
- » Next on the horizon: data collection and outcome measures

- 972 admissions into the social detox center in FY13 that otherwise would have been jail bookings, and
- a jail diversion outreach team and dual diagnosis residential program that saw a 48 percent reduction in new charge bookings and a 70 percent reduction in length of stay for those in Salt Lake County housing.

Despite these successes, Salt Lake County continues to seek ways to implement new policies and practices to better serve this population.

In 2015, the state passed a comprehensive Justice Reinvestment Initiative that allowed the county to build upon its model. The new legislation allocated funding to counties to provide additional community treatment and to implement risk and need screens for all individuals booked into the jail on Class B misdemeanor offenses or higher.

Salt Lake County plans to implement a risk-and-needs screening process in its jail this month. The process helps predict a person's likelihood of reoffending and identifies individuals who may benefit from

further assessments for mental health or substance use disorders.

It also assists with classification and placement of individuals in the jail and in the community. Research has shown that people identified as low-risk to reoffend pose little risk to public safety and generally benefit from minimal intervention. Research also confirms that mixing low-risk offenders with high-risk offenders can increase recidivism among low-risk offenders.

To address these evolving issues, Salt Lake County began implementation of three new pilot programs. These programs include:

- a prosecutorial pre-diversion pilot focusing on individuals designated as low-risk who also have a substance use disorder and who are charged with a nonviolent Class A misdemeanor. For those who successfully complete this program and associated treatment requirements, the District Attorney's office will file no charges.

• CORE II, a residential treatment facility for women with both serious mental illness and possible substance use disorders, which includes access to housing resources upon graduation.

- an Intensive Supervision Program that marries treatment dollars with a close collaboration between county probation case management staff and sheriff's office probation officers overseeing high risk offender caseloads.

Collaboration between the sheriff's, district attorney's and legal defender's offices, and the county's behavioral health and criminal justice services, is the key element marking each of the new pilot programs. Efforts are now focused on data collection and outcome measures to

evaluate the effectiveness and future of these new programs as the latest additions to the county's Sequential Intercept Model.

(Jeannie Edens is a health policy planner, with Salt Lake County's Behavioral Health Services, and Nastassia Walsh is a NACo program manager.)

JAIL DIVERSION JUNCTURES



- INTERCEPT 1 ARREST**
- Receiving Center
 - Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams
 - Social Detox Center
 - Wellness Recovery Center
 - CIT Trained Officers
 - Crisis Line and Warm Line



- INTERCEPT 2 JAIL**
- Jail In-reach and Coordinated Discharge Planning
 - Mental Health Releases
 - Vivitrol Pilot



- INTERCEPT 3 COURTS**
- Specialty Courts
 - Coordinating Attorney
 - Jail Diversion Junctures
 - A Mental Health Liaison in the Legal Defenders Office



- INTERCEPT 4 REENTRY**
- A "Top Ten" Staffing of the Most Frequently Booked "Seriously And Persistently Mentally Ill" Individuals
 - Transportation from the Jail to Behavioral Health Providers
 - Jail Diversion Assertive Community Outreach Teams
 - A Dual-Diagnosis Residential Program for Men
 - Medicaid Eligibility Specialists



- INTERCEPT 5 COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**
- Housing First Programs
 - Rep Payee Services and Others.



House transportation bill edges county priorities forward

By **JESSICA MONAHAN**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

On Nov. 5, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform (STRR) Act of 2015 by a vote of 363–64.

The House introduced the STRR Act in October as the current surface transportation law — the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) — faced another looming deadline. MAP-21 passed Congress in July of 2012 and was originally set to expire Sept. 30, 2014. Rather than allowing MAP-21 to expire, Congress has opted to extend its authorization four times, with the most recent extension set to expire Nov. 20, 2015.

Over the course of those extensions, both the House and Senate have worked to advance a long-term reauthorization bill. However, the biggest challenge has long been how to pay for a multi-year policy and spending framework given the declining solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. Rather than working toward a long-term solution for the trust fund, the reauthorization process has proceeded with

a different funding goal: finding enough money to partially or fully fund a five- or six-year bill.

In July, the Senate passed the Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act, which authorized six years of policy and spending, but only provided enough revenue to pay for the first half of the bill. Like the DRIVE Act, the STRR Act is a six-year authorization of federal surface transportation policy and spending authority that addresses several county transportation priorities.

Specifically, the STRR Act recognizes the critical role counties and other local governments play in the nation's transportation system by increasing the amount of funding available for locally owned infrastructure and putting more federal highway dollars in the hands of local decision-makers. In addition, the bill addresses safety issues on high-risk rural roads and provides funding for public transportation systems of all sizes.

While both the House and Senate bills include a number of the critical priorities NACo has worked to advance over the past two years, the two pieces of legislation take slightly different

SpeedRead » » »

- » Funding for local transportation assets gets bigger boost in House STRR Act
- » Bridge funding gap from Map-21 repaired in STRR Act
- » Another short-term extension of Map-21 is possible

approaches to addressing the needs and investment of county-owned infrastructure.

While both bills provide more funding for county-owned highways and bridges when compared to current law, the STRR Act authorizes \$800 million more than the DRIVE Act for the key highway program that principally funds county projects.

The STRR Act also makes certain county-owned bridges eligible for an additional \$140.2 billion, which more than repairs the 30 percent reduction in available funding that locally owned infrastructure suffered under MAP-21. The DRIVE Act fails to completely repair these funding

cuts but is an improvement from current law.

In comparison to the DRIVE Act, the STRR Act sub-allocates \$5 billion more in flexible highway funding, putting more money in the hands of local decision-makers and increasing the amount of funding that states have to obligate in rural, mid-sized and urban areas.

Now that the House and Senate have passed their own authorization bills, the two chambers have begun to negotiate a final reauthorization bill through a conference process. Congress must reconcile

the differences between these two bills and come to a compromise by Nov. 20, when the current extension of MAP-21 expires.

While the 41 appointed conferees are attempting to complete their work and get a final authorization bill passed by that deadline, it is possible that the congressional calendar and Thanksgiving recess could require another short-term extension of MAP-21.

(For a comprehensive view of the differences between the House and Senate bills, go to www.naco.org/MAP21)

What's in a Seal?

Forsyth County, Ga.



Forsyth County adopted a new logo, designed by the Thoroughbred Design Group, Aug. 20, 2015 along with the tagline, “Your Community. Your Future.”

The new county logo and tagline were the culmination of a process that included an online community survey in 2014. The survey results identified the county's most valuable physical asset as Lake Lanier; ranked quality of life as the most important among all that Forsyth County offers; and identified “family-friendly” as the term that perfectly described the county.

“Strong contrasting colors and the overlapping tree invite the viewer to enter the scene and imagine the grandeur of our county,” said Peter Carpenter of Thoroughbred Design Group.

Lake Lanier, Sawnee Mountain and a family

enjoying the Big Creek Greenway are all represented on the logo.

“We are proud to adopt a logo and tag line that showcase the things for which Forsyth County is well known — our great natural resources like our parks and Lake Lanier, and being a family-friendly community that offers great quality of life and unparalleled opportunities,” said Commission Chairman R.J. (Pete) Amos. “The logo also includes 1832, the year Forsyth County was incorporated. Forsyth County is a great place to call home, and I think the new logo and tagline really capture and represent that.”

Jodi B. Gardner, department of communications for Forsyth County, assisted.

WORD SEARCH

Forsyth County, Ga. Facts

Learn more about this featured county in 'What's in a Seal?'

E N A D L I K F B F B P D U P V N S V L
P C A N D O N G P R E Z F T R Z N N A U
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ATLANTA (Metro area of which Forsyth County is a part)

BELL RESEARCH CENTER (Historical and genealogical research library)

CHATTAHOOCHEE (River along county's eastern border)

CHEROKEE INDIANS (Early inhabitants of the area,

COTTON (Cash crop key to post-Civil War economy)

CUMMING (County seat)

FULTON COUNTY (Neighboring county to the south)

GOLD MINING (Sparked by 1830s Gold Rush in Georgia)

HALL COUNTY (Northeast adjacent county)

JOHN FORSYTH (Former Georgia governor, federal official and county's namesake)

LAKE LANIER (Reservoir created by impoundment of the Chattahoochee River)

SAWNEE MOUNTAIN (Among the highest peaks – 1,946 ft. -in the metro Atlanta area)

TRAIL OF TEARS (Federally forced relocation of Native American tribes to west of the Mississippi)



News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

Slowing child sex trafficking is the goal of a “john-shaming” initiative that **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** supervisors are considering. A demand-side approach, it would publicly post online the names and police mug shots of customers convicted of paying for sex.

This comes as part of a larger effort that would consider minors involved in the sex trade to be statutory rape victims, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, rather than delinquents.

Current law doesn't distinguish between whether the adult is seeking sex with a minor or an adult, a district attorney's office spokesperson told the newspaper. However, a bill pending in the state Legislature would.

► COLORADO

Starting Jan. 1, new homes in unincorporated **BOULDER COUNTY** — those 5,000 square feet or larger — will have to offset their energy consumption with their energy production.

County commissioners voted recently to expand the number of homes required to comply with its **net zero mandate**. Previously, it only applied to homes 6,000 square feet or larger, the *Daily Camera* reported.

The net zero initiative is part of the county's BuildSmart program, wherein a home must produce as much energy as it consumes, usually through a mix of high efficiency and clean, onsite power generation.

► FLORIDA

BAY COUNTY will be more than half a million dollars richer, now that it's prevailed in a **lawsuit against the Tyndall Air Force Base**. In 2009, the base refused to recognize an increase in the county's water and sewer rates, contending that it had the final say on the rates it would pay under the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations.

The county disagreed and filed suit in the Court of Federal Claims for \$548,555. It won there and again in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

County Attorney Terrell K. Arline said the case significantly clarifies an area of federal acquisition law which pertains to local governments that provide utilities to federal installations in their jurisdictions.



► NEW JERSEY

OCEAN COUNTY Library System staff show off some of the nearly **5.4 tons of food** the system collected for the FoodBank of **MONMOUTH** and Ocean counties. That adds up to about 9,000 meals for the food bank to provide to people in need through the Food for Fines program.

The program allowed people to pay off up to \$20 of outstanding fines on each library card by donating a can or package of non-perishable food donated worth 50 cents each. Photo courtesy of Ocean County, N.J.

► LOUISIANA

LAFAYETTE CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT (LCG) lost its appeal of a **border dispute** with neighboring **VERMILION PARISH**.

Previously, the two had accepted boundaries established by State Land Office surveys in 2003. Ten years later, LCG challenged that determination, alleging that the earlier surveys were erroneous, *The Advocate* reported.

Vermillion Parish was carved out of Lafayette Parish in 1844. Back then, the Legislature used trees — now long gone — as landmarks.

► MARYLAND

• Carroll Community College and **CARROLL COUNTY** Government have expanded their partnership to **help small companies and start-ups** to grow and develop.

The college — with funding from the county's Carroll Business Path program — will take the lead on small business development. “Path” is collaboration involving the county, its Small Business Development Center and other economic development entities.

The initiative is an effort to streamline and enhance services for small businesses through a single point of entry.

• **HOWARD COUNTY** has changed its procurement practices in hopes of benefiting more local businesses. County Executive Allan Kittleman issued an executive order establishing the **Howard County Local Business Initiative**.

Among other provisions, it encourages county departments and agencies to select from certified local businesses when purchasing goods or services that cost less than \$10,000. It also allows for solicitations conducted under the formal competitive sealed bid process to contain an evaluation factor for a local business, when appropriate, based on the goods or services being procured.

► NEVADA

County commissioners may send a letter to Gov. Brian Sandoval (R) asking him to support the lawsuit against the federal government's Sept. 22 decision on land use restrictions in **sage grouse habitat**.

Western Exploration LLC, **ELKO** and **EUREKA counties**, and Quantum Minerals LLC filed the lawsuit Sept. 23 in U.S. District Court. The injunction was set for a hearing in Reno on Nov. 12. Subsequently, **LANDER, WHITE PINE, LINCOLN, HUMBOLDT, WASHOE, CHURCHILL** and **PERSHING**

counties joined the suit, along with Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt.

The plaintiffs are challenging the legality of the “draconian land use prohibitions and restrictions in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's and U.S. Forest Service's Nevada Land Management Plans for Greater Sage Grouse.”

The *Elko Daily* reported the land use prohibitions and restrictions affect 20 million acres in Nevada, according to the plaintiffs.

► VIRGINIA

• For six days, the **HENRICO COUNTY** Police Animal Shelter and Ring Dog Rescue **offered veterans free dog and cat adoptions**. They participated in the “Buddy Up” program, which is offering free pet adoptions to active duty and retired members of the military.

• The **LOUDOUN COUNTY** Board of Supervisors is appealing a long-running case over **road tolls** to the Virginia Supreme Court.

The State Corporation Commission ruled in September that the rates the commission has approved are reasonable in comparison to the benefit obtained by drivers who use the Dulles Greenway and in relation to costs for the private road's operators,

WTOP News reported.

The county feels they are too high. The flat rates, which state law allows to increase with inflation each year through 2020, are \$6.20 at rush hour and \$5.30 at other times.

• Virginia Telecommunication Planning Initiative grants will help nine counties get **better access to the Internet**.

ALBEMARLE, CULPEPER and **NEW KENT counties** will receive up to \$75,000. **BLAND** and **PULASKI counties** will receive \$50,000 and \$40,000, respectively. A regional project for **ALLEGHANY, BOTETOURT** and **CRAIG counties** is getting a grant for \$50,000.

► WASHINGTON

• Seattle and **KING COUNTY** have declared a state of **emergency regarding homelessness** in the region in hopes of gaining more administrative authority and flexibility in contracting for services and distributing resources.

County Executive Dow Constantine said the situation county-wide has become “just as devastating to thousands as flood or fire,” exacerbated by the changing weather conditions, the *Seattle Times* reported. As of September, 66 homeless people had died in King County, according to the county Medical Examiner's Office.

Last winter's count of the homeless found 3,772 people without shelter in the county. There were 2,993 people in transitional housing and 3,282 in homeless shelters in the county, for a total of more than 10,000 overall. State public-assistance records indicate about 3,000 people become newly homeless in the county monthly.

Los Angeles and Portland, Ore., declared emergencies in September, and the state of Hawaii did so in October.

• Playing host to the **U.S. Open golf tournament** netted **PIERCE COUNTY** \$1.1 million.

The county's financial summary shows \$5 million in revenue against \$3.9 million in expenses for the event, held in June at the county's Chambers Bay course, which was designed specifically to hold the tournament.

The county will likely use the proceeds to pay down the roughly \$3.7 million in debt Chambers Bay incurred during the Great Recession.

Fish ladder proposed in budget

NEWS FROM *from page 11*

► WISCONSIN

Fish might get their own transportation infrastructure in **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** if the Board of Supervisors approves a last-minute budget amendment.

Chairman Theodore Lipscomb Sr.'s amendment would spend \$3.4 million renovating a 1930s-era dam on the Milwaukee River to include **construction of a fish passage**. He said some county residents had complained that a closed dam blocks all fish from swimming up the river, the *Journal-Sentinel* reported.

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

FCC caps rates on jail inmate phone calls

By **HADI SEDIGH**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved new rate caps that limit how much inmates—including those in county jails—can be charged for making phone calls.

Under the FCC's new regulations, inmates in county jails can be charged, at most, between 14 cents and 22 cents per minute, depending on the size of their jail. (Smaller jails can charge more since they typically face relatively higher costs for operating phone systems.)

Inmates in federal and state prisons will be charged no more than 11 cents per minute. The new regulations also cap ancillary fees that inmates incur such as automated payment of their phone bills.

Many jails throughout the country receive a portion of the profits made by the companies that provide phone services in jails

through arrangements referred to as “commissions.” As a result, caps that limit how much inmates can pay in per-minute rates and ancillary fees could have a direct impact on county budgets. Oklahoma County, Okla., for example, adds \$500,000 per year to its jail revenue through phone charges.

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), whose members operate approximately 80 percent of the nation's jails, say jails incur significant

costs in providing phone services to inmates due to factors ranging from taking security measures to ensure that phone calls aren't used to engage in criminal activities to recording and storing phone calls to be provided to courts. In a letter to the FCC, the Sheriff's Office of Greene County, Mo. lists 25 instances of costs associated with inmate calls.

As the new rate caps are phased in for jails through mid-2016, their financial impact on county jails will

become clearer. In the meantime, the potential impact on jail budgets would have been more severe had the FCC heeded calls to ban commissions altogether.

Several states, among them Michigan, New Mexico, New York and South Carolina, have banned commissions through their state Legislatures. The new FCC regulations haven't taken that step, but do encourage states to take action in that direction.

INMATES IN FEDERAL AND STATE PRISONS WILL BE CHARGED NO MORE THAN 11 CENTS PER MINUTE.



The H.R. Doctor Is In

'For I shall have some peace there...'

“...For peace comes dropping slow, dropping from the veil of the morning to where the crickets sing.” So said William Butler Yeats in his wonderful 1888 poem, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*.

There is and there will continue to be a growing sense of being overwhelmed in our daily lives at work and at home by an onslaught of interruptions, which destroy our peace. These interruptions are increasingly unwanted and harmful. They are intrusions slammed into our ears, into our eyes and into our brains by the media, billboards, excessive decibels coming from the car next to us, and throughout our workday. It is increasingly hard to escape even for a few minutes.

These intrusions affect our sleep patterns, our ability to focus on important decisions or issues in our family lives, and in our work. They may get us so tired—certainly a crowded and long commute does—that the first thing we want to do when we get home is to turn on our giant screen, “smart” 4K super TVs.

We will sit without exercise staring at the screen for hours. A recent study tragically highlighted



that teenagers now spend on average about nine hours a day staring at screens, including their ubiquitous smartphones, video games and TV.

The price these intrusions exact includes less direct social interaction with family and friends. Sitting across the table at dinner from a family member, yet “communicating” via Twitter or text messages is a poor substitute indeed for looking into their eyes

directly.

Is it any wonder then that a slow developing movement is being created, reminiscent of a search for the peace of Innisfree? It is generally known as “mindfulness,” but also relates to solitude or meditation. It involves conscious efforts to shelter ourselves at least a bit from the “battle of the brains”—the willful efforts in our society to determine which media outlets can spend the most time polluting

our minds.

How ironic that even the wonderful technology of “noise cancelling” headphones helps us exclude intrusions by creating an electronic shield cancelling other electronic pulses. It is hard to find a noise-cancelling environment in our lives anymore. It is hard to spend some time alone in our houses or apartments in the face of traffic noise, the neighbors' TV, loud voices or the periodic sounds of gunfire outside our windows.

Yet we need peace and solitude in our lives more than ever before. We need to teach our colleagues at work and certainly our family members that their lives and their productivity will be greatly enhanced when they create environments which allow them to focus and to think while avoiding unwanted intrusions.

In a prior article and in the HR Doctor's book, *Don't Walk by Something Wrong!*, there is a discussion about how important it is for our most important citizens—such as presidents, prime ministers, moms and dads and every one of us who helps fashion lives and futures of others to find sanctuary—a place of peace. The HR Doctor's country acres are aptly named “Sanctuary” in honor of this compelling need

for peace in our lives. It is a place that is green, that is full of flowers, pastures and meadows. It is a place to watch the sunrise in the morning and to walk my canine friends a quarter-mile to the gate so they can fetch the morning paper.

One need not have property like “Sanctuary” to have a personal sanctuary. Remember the Beach Boys song, *In My Room*. Remember that even in the very most horrendous circumstances, like those faced by Elie Wiesel during the Holocaust, you can find a sanctuary inside your own mind.

The search for solitude in regular doses will make every elected and appointed official, every steward of the trust of the public, a spouse or a child—every human in fact—move closer to realizing their full potential. The mayhem of intrusion in constant and growing amounts has the opposite effect. It depresses the soul and reduces our ability to achieve.

Don't walk by the chance to act to counter the lack of peace, which threatens us.

Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor