

# CountyNews

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

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## Pa. counties explore legal options in budget battle

By CHARLIE BAN  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

As Pennsylvania's governor and Legislature start budget negotiations anew after yet another breakdown, lawyers for the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) are exploring legal options to fund human services, which have been starved by the five-month impasse.

The two strongest contenders include suing the state for access to the funds due counties or refusing to remit funds collected by counties on the state's behalf and using that money to pay providers. Those services include mental health, intellectual disability, drug and alcohol, and older adult and child protective services.

A decision is expected by the

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# CLASS IS IN SESSION

College courses reduce repeat offender rates in county jails  
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Imperial County, Calif. jail inmates (in maroon) work alongside Imperial Valley College students (in blue) through the Inside/Out College Program. Photo courtesy of Imperial County

## Coal industry contractions give birth to transforming economies

By CHARLES TAYLOR  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Coal-reliant communities come in many forms — a region needn't

have a shuttered mine to fit the definition. Waning reliance on coal-fired power generation is also taking a toll in regions where plant shutdowns strike a blow to the economy. While

largely an Appalachian issue, the decline of coal can also adversely impact related industries in regions from New Mexico to Michigan's lakeshores.

The Innovation Challenge Workshop for Coal-Reliant Communities, held in Charleston (Kanawha County), W.Va. Nov. 18-20, made that abundantly clear. It also illuminated strategies that have worked in communities which have lost other types of industries and jobs, and how they charted a course to economic recovery.

"We need to be prepared for the future, because we don't know what that holds for the coal industry," said Rich Fink, a former coal miner



David Hinkle, Gallup-McKinley, N.M. Chamber of Commerce, makes a point during a workshop on coal-reliant communities. Photo By Charles Taylor

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## 'No thanks' to Thanksgiving deal

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first week of December.

Lawmakers had targeted a Thanksgiving compromise, but disagreements over the proposal to increase the sales tax and reduce property taxes fell through.

"The soonest we could possibly see something work would be mid-December," said CCAP Deputy Director Brinda Penyak. "By then, counties will be well into where they should be putting together their budgets for the next year."

The state has been operating without a budget since July 1, and without state funding for human service programs, counties have been taken a variety of steps including supporting some service providers from their reserves and cutting off payments to others. Others are taking on debt that will eventually involve interest payments that will exceed the eventual reimbursement from the state once the budget is passed.

"One reason this isn't viewed as a crisis is that counties aren't going to drop the ball and stop providing these services," Penyak said. "Without some kind of crises, we continue to be stuck in this holding pattern. Legal action at least starts a conversation about this, because counties won't create a crisis by threatening to withhold services."

The movement to take action came to a head at CCAP's fall conference.

"We knew during the 2009 budget impasse that some expenses were considered essential and funding for county human services was not among them," Penyak said. "The

Legislature doesn't understand that more and more counties are getting to the point where they won't be able to make payroll soon. They just can't sustain this much longer," she added.

The Luzerne County Council voted Nov. 24 to take out a \$20 million loan so the county could avoid mass layoffs, default on debt repayment and a possible government shutdown, all of which was exacerbated by the absence of \$22 million of state funding for services the county was covering.

Without a state budget, counties are making their best effort while formulating their budgets. York County Administrator Mark Derr said anticipated revenues would have to do, but acknowledged that it's all guesswork. Like Luzerne, York County took out a \$20 million line of credit to get it through the end of 2015.

"If we don't have a state budget in time for counties to start receiving money by Jan. 1, then we're going to have trouble," Derr said.

Regardless of what specific strategy for getting funding the association pursues, members hope to work toward some legislative change that prevents a prolonged stalemate from happening again.

CCAP Board President Jeff Haste, a Dauphin County commissioner, said,

"The clear sentiment of our Board... is that this must end, that our counties and those vulnerable citizens we represent and our local taxpayers must be made whole, and that this must never—never—happen again," he said.

# National recognition could surface for Md. county park

By CHARLIE BAN  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Nothing is going to save the dozens of boats that were sunk in Mallows Bay; it's far too late for that.

But Charles County, Md. and its partners are hoping to get some long-term protection for their remains, if that part of the Potomac River can become the 14th national marine sanctuary.

Mallows Bay, on the eastern shore of the river, is the site of the largest collection of shipwrecks in the Western Hemisphere, the graveyard for almost 200 ships over 14 square miles, some dating back to the Revolutionary War. The centerpiece is the nearly 100 World War I-era wooden steamships that were rushed into service but discovered to be riddled with problems. They were sunk in the bay, and many peek — or tower — above the surface of the water. That is what the county, along with the state of Maryland and the Chesapeake Conservancy and other organizations, is trying to have recognized. Those entities form the steering committee behind the campaign, which has a target date of April 2, 2017, the centennial of the United States' entry into World War I.

"The emphasis would be on enhanced protection of the wrecks themselves," said Sammy Orlando, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's regional coordinator for the Northeast and Great Lakes. "We'd indirectly be protecting the habitat."

On top of the archeological interest the shipwrecks offer, they've created an artificial reef that has become a vital part of the aquatic ecosystem. The designation would open the site up to NOAA funding for protection and educational improvements, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2015.

"It would make the site much more accessible to the public and protect the resources in the area," said Tom Roland, chief of Charles County's parks. "We believe it has a strong possibility of being the 14th marine sanctuary. This nomination has a good shot."

The county and state purchased 350 acres of riverfront property in the mid-2000s, which became Mallows Bay Park. The county maintains 185 of those acres, including boat launches and trails. If the project is successful, the county and state will maintain ownership of the site.

Mallows Bay Park gave the public a much-closer access point to the



Ship wreck on Mallows Bay. Photo By allicat1881

graveyard, which was once only accessible from 10 miles up and down river or four miles across the river, from Virginia.

"It wasn't a trip that novice kayakers could easily make," Roland said.

NOAA's public scoping period ends Jan. 15, 2016 followed by draft environmental impact and management reports, then a public comment period. Then Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) and Congress will have input into the plan, which was largely developed by the steering committee.

"The scoping period is a chance for us to make the designation even wider," Orlando said. "That's where we'll see what people want from the project, and it might offer ideas that weren't part of the original nomination."

At this stage, it is too early for Orlando to predict the amount of NOAA funding that would result from the project's success.

"We're still figuring out what being a sanctuary would mean," he said. "That's why the public scoping period is so important."

Roland's wish list includes money to build a visitor's center and maintain interpretive signage.

On top of the goal of getting enhanced protection, Charles County sees the opportunity for economic development.

"The tourism the bay could generate would be great for Charles County," Roland said. "With the site built up, it will attract history buffs, but also expose people to the rest of what the area has to offer. It's easy to spot a bald eagle here, and it's great for birding in general. We have great large-mouth bass fishing here, and the area has become very popular with kayakers.

"The graveyard is a big draw, but it can be a catalyst for showing what Charles County has to offer," Roland said.

The county already has interest from area schools to establish the

area as a field trip destination.

Orlando said since the project's notice of intent was posted a month and a half ago, it's received a great reception: more than 40 responses, nearly all in support, he said, a result of the strength of Charles County's preparation.

"They've wanted this since 2007, and the education effort they've made in the area is the reason they have such support," he said. "There just isn't a lot of opposition to this, and that's the strength of this process."

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## QUICK TAKES

### STATES WITH MOST REFUGEE ARRIVALS

FY2013

STATE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Texas	7,466	10.7
California	6,379	9.1
Michigan	4,651	6.7
New York	3,965	5.7
Florida	3,613	5.2
Arizona	3,052	4.4
Ohio	2,788	4.0
Georgia	2,710	3.9
Pennsylvania	2,507	3.6
Illinois	2,452	3.5



Source: Annual Flow Report, August 2014,  
Department of Homeland Security

# Sitting pretty:

## Special needs children ride high in saddle, thanks to Benton County, Ore. posse

By Rick Osborn  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER  
BENTON COUNTY, ORE.  
*Special to County News*

Amie Wise Mendez has five children, and three of them have special needs. With one child who is medically fragile, another on the autism spectrum and a third with a rare genetic condition, there are numerous meetings, medical appointments and trips to Doernbecher's Children's Hospital in Portland.

But on Nov. 14, the Corvallis resident was among many others able to find forgetfulness from day-to-day stresses thanks to the Benton County Sheriff's Office Mounted Posse. The posse was hosting its sixth-annual horseback ride event for children with special needs and their siblings at the Benton County Fairgrounds indoor arena.

"Three of my children are special needs," Wise Mendez said. "It's been an amazing experience for them, just being out with the people and the animals."

Participants were helped up onto the horses and led around the arena. Special accommodations were made for mounting,

dismounting and safety while on horseback. Riders between 3 and 18 years old who were able to hang on by themselves were allowed to participate. Benton County Sheriff Scott Jackson sponsored the event. County Emergency Services Program Specialist and Posse Capt. Lacey Duncan coordinated the activities.

"A few other counties with pos-

"We'll stay until everybody gets to ride"

— Capt. Lacey Duncan

ses around the state do this, too, and it's become a really popular thing," Duncan said. "We have seven posse members here right now and over 40 volunteers from the horse community who love to help out."

The event, which typically

draws between 45 and 50 participants, accommodated nearly 100 youth this year. This year's ride was the biggest ever, and when volunteers saw the line growing longer during the 9:30 a.m. check-in they decided to get the rides started early to accommodate everyone.

"We'll stay until everybody gets to ride," Duncan said.

There was a coloring area and brushing and petting station with miniature ponies, as well. Photographs were taken in front of a green screen and printed onsite to give to the children. The green screen allowed for computer generated western style backgrounds for the photos.

This year, a pony was provided for those who were intimidated to hop on a full-sized horse to ride around the arena. Free hot chocolate was provided by Elmer's restaurant, as well as coloring crayons.

One of the volunteers was Katie Schrock. The 23-year-old from Corvallis is just finishing up her studies at Oregon State University and she's going to be next year's Miss Rodeo Oregon. Schrock was giving her personal time in an unofficial capacity, though. Instead of the typically ornate hat and Western attire, she came in a baseball cap and hoodie sweatshirt to walk the children around the arena on horseback.

"I actually brought my horse last year," she said. "They do an amazing job here. One of my best friends is on the posse here, and her horse is the same breed as the horse from (the movie) *Frozen* so the kids are loving that. Basically I'm just being a personality and showing them around."

Other members of local rodeo royalty were on hand, as well, dressed for the part in their Western garb and ceremonial hats. Philomath Frolic Rodeo Queens Darian Anderton and Rachel Cihak and Benton County Fair and Rodeo Queens Gracie Kulonis and Adrienne Foster both were in attendance.

Jennifer Woolley, of Corvallis, eagerly snapped pictures of her daughter, Abby, as she gleefully mounted the horse with assistance and began trotting around



DJ Taphouse helps Abby Woolley into the saddle. Taphouse is the husband of a member of the Benton County Sheriff's posse, and Abby is a fourth-grader from Corvallis.

Photo by Stacey Mellam, Benton County, Ore. Sheriff's Office

the loop. They found out about the event through a flyer at Jefferson Elementary School, where Abby is a fourth-grader.

"I think it's fabulous," Woolley said. "There are not a lot of community things for this population so any time we can find something that kind of reaches out to this group, it is awesome."

Abby is no novice when it comes to horseback riding. She's in a program that allows her adaptive horseback riding opportunities and she also takes riding lessons.

"She loves being around the horses," Woolley said.

The siblings of special needs children got to ride, as well. One of them was Emilio Mendez, also a Jefferson student and the son of Wise Mendez.

He said the best part was being on the horse and being up high in the air atop the animal. He reported riding twice that day.

"I came last year and the year before that," he said shyly.

The idea was inspired by the Linn County, Ore. Sheriff's Mounted Posse, which had been holding a similar event for several years. Initially the special needs ride was conducted twice a year, but volunteers decided recently to trim it back to an annual event and make it more action-packed.

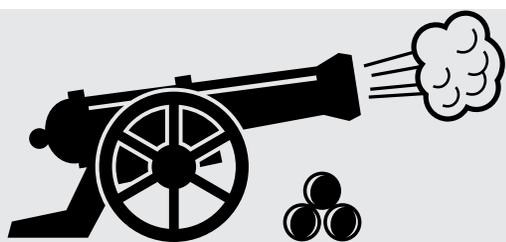
Parents and children came, rode and left with smiles on their faces. It's not every day many children get to be around horses, let alone ride one in a safe environment. It's also a pleasant distraction for many families to just enjoy life.

"This is a nice break away because we just got back from Doernbecher (hospital)," Wise Mendez said. "This is a nice way to forget everything and the kids can be kids."

### CORRECTION

Pueblo County, Colo. voters approved a marijuana tax on Nov. 2. An *Election Follow Up* article in the Nov. 16 issue, misidentified the county.

### GET TO KNOW...



### Hardin County, Tenn.



Welcome to NACo's newest member, **Hardin County, Tenn.** The **Battle of Shiloh** was fought in the county. The two-day confrontation — April 6–7, 1862 — produced more than 23,000 casualties and was the bloodiest battle in American history at its time. Also noteworthy, but on a less historical note: the county claims to be the **Catfish Capital of the World**.



**FEBRUARY 20–24**  
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FEDERAL POLICIES MATTER TO  
**COUNTIES**  
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# IN SEBRING, TREADS ARE TRENDING

## Tire buyback gains traction in storied Florida county

By CHARLES TAYLOR  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Sebring, Fla. is known for fast cars. It's home to the "12 Hours of Sebring" endurance race, held annually at Sebring International Raceway in Highlands County.

But during eight hours in Sebring on a recent Saturday, vehicles inched along rather than sped, as their drivers waited to drop off scrap tires at the county's first tire buyback.

The county was paying \$2 per tire — for a load of up to 25 tires — to address a persistent problem: illegal dumping of tires, which County Engineer Ramon Gavarette called a "huge" nuisance.

"We have hundreds of miles of road that are not maintained... so people just go and dump tires everywhere," he said.

The event, held on Nov. 7, far exceeded expectations. The county was prepared to accept 10,000 tires, with \$20,000 to pay county residents.

"We honestly thought that was going to be enough," he said, "but boy, were we wrong. It ended up being almost twice as much."

All told, 17,695 tires were dropped off, and the payout was more than \$35,000. To put that in perspective, Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio has been holding tire buybacks for the past three years. In its first year (2013), the county — with a population nearly five times that of Highlands County's 98,000 residents — collected 15,488 tires. The Ohio program also pays \$2 per tire, but only for up to 10 tires (It won a NACo Achievement Award in 2014).

Gavarette said the annual cost to the county of picking up illegally dumped tires averages about \$38,000, so the expense proved to be a bargain. The money paid out above \$20,000 will be replenished from the county's solid waste trust



Scrap tires destined for shredding in Highlands County, Fla. Photo courtesy of Highlands Today

fund, he added.

Discarded tires are a problem nationwide. In 2013, according to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, about 75 million scrap tires were stockpiled in the United States. In 1990, there were 1 billion.

Recycling and reuse has contributed to the decline, according to the EPA, but almost 25 percent of scrap tires end up in landfills each year. About 84 percent of them come from passenger cars; 15 percent from light and heavy trucks, states an Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries fact sheet.

Recycled rubber from scrap tires is used in the manufacture of new tires, as rubberized asphalt and for equestrian mats and playground surfaces. A contractor for Highlands County will chip the tires into material that can be used for landfill lining instead of rocks.

County commissioners approved the tire buyback in May of this year. At the same time, Gavarette said, they authorized funding for a sheriff's deputy devoted to enforcing the county's dumping laws.

Though the buyback was a success, he says there were some glitches along the way that will need to be addressed before doing it again. Florida law limits the number of tires that can be hauled

without a permit to 25, and some people brought more than that. But they weren't turned away.

"The decision was made to go on and take them because if we would have turned them away, they would have just gone and dumped the tires everywhere again," he explained.

"Next time, we're going to have to advertise the penalties, and we're going to have deputies out there enforcing the law."

The event was scheduled from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., but Gavarette said lines began to form as early as 5:30 a.m., and the last truck left the landfill's scale house at 4 p.m.

"It was successful — 17,000-plus tires; that's definitely successful," he said, "and we're going to do it again."

## Booming industries do not mean safe economies forever

COAL from page 1

and retiring Armstrong County, Pa. commissioner. George Skamai, who will succeed Fink, said he'll take home lessons that are "applicable throughout many of the industries that we have in our county."

Third in a series of three, the Charleston workshop — like the others in Pikesville, Ky. and Grand Junction, Colo. earlier this year — was organized by NACo, the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation and the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Participating teams included county elected officials and staff, local and regional economic development professionals, and private sector representatives.

In one session, Chuck Fluharty, president and CEO of the Rural Policy Research Institute, said that in natural resource extraction regions — be it coal, oil or natural gas — communities must prepare for the "natural resource curse" ... because at some point, the last tree is cut down and at some point, the last ton of coal has been mined." Even when an industry is booming, host communities should be planning for the future by asking three questions, he said: innovating what, diversifying how, transitioning where? "These are tectonic 25-year questions, and they should happen before we've got some major wicked problems that regions are going to have to deal with."

Taylor Stuckert, executive director of the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission in Ohio, shared his region's recovery experience, not from coal gone bust, but from the economically devastating closure of a DHL shipping facility in 2008 and the loss of almost 10,000 jobs. It was a disaster as real as any ice storm or tornado, he said.

"We were very intoxicated on this facility, on this employer. So

for many years we lacked an identity or a vision for the future," he said.

In 2008, he and a friend co-founded Energize Clinton County with an eye toward "re-localizing" rural communities using community-based solutions. Seven years on, its initiatives have focused on a buy-local movement, environmental sustainability and developing young leaders.

Common themes echoed by presenters throughout the three-day workshop were transition planning for economic recovery, the value of public-private-nonprofit partnerships, the need for broadband expansion and how to use data effectively.

Brian Kelsey, economic development consultant for NADO, led a session on using data to develop and visualize economic diversification strategies, free access to which has exploded in recent years.

"Fifteen years ago," he said, "we were all kind of wringing our hands about not enough data. Now the challenge is ... sifting through the noise and finding the signal. Open data, big data — hone in on what matters and is useful."

For the home team from Kanawha County, the challenge they face includes an idled coal-burning power plant, which cost the county 100 jobs. Related industries are also suffering; one of the county's biggest trucking companies went bankrupt. The county is the second largest coal producer in the state.

A team led by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission has a similar problem that could affect a regional port in Muskegon County. A decrease in coal shipments, due to a closed power plant, threatens a drop in tonnage below the Army Corps of Engineers' threshold for dredging shipping channels.

Participants from Virginia's New River Valley region, including Giles County — another power plant closing victim — are exploring an adaptive reuse of the facility. The region is also capitalizing on being an outdoor recreation destination; 50 miles of the Appalachian Trail runs through the county.

Doug Lynott of EDA touted the availability of grants from the Obama Administration's POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) Initiative. He manages the program that makes planning and implementation grants to aid communities adversely affected by changes in the coal industry and power sector.



See COAL page 7

# Stepping up to the challenge of helping mentally ill persons move away from jail

By **DR. FRED OSHER**

DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SYSTEMS AND SERVICES  
POLICY, COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS  
JUSTICE CENTER

*Jim is a 37-year-old male who asked to see a psychiatrist (the author) at the homeless shelter where he was staying. He had been released from jail a week ago and didn't have any medications for his bipolar disorder. Without sleep for the past four nights he appeared disheveled and desperate. Jim had a history of multiple arrests for misdemeanor offenses, but now faces felony drug charges for possession*

*and sale of methamphetamine. While medications were his primary reason for seeking help, his most important goal was expressed in his plea "I don't want to go back to jail."*

The overrepresentation of persons with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system is a well documented American tragedy: Law enforcement agencies around the country are swamped with calls to respond to "emotionally disturbed persons;" county jails are regularly cited as having the largest number of persons with mental illnesses of any public institutions;

and sheriffs rightfully complain about running the de facto mental health facility in their community. Over 1 million times a year, an adult with a serious mental illness is arrested in this country and spirals through ill-prepared systems.

As a community psychiatrist providing services to individuals with serious mental illnesses for almost 40 years,



OSHER

I've had a front row seat to this evolving dilemma. An underfunded, eroding behavioral health infrastructure has made it difficult for families and patients to find treatment and supports. When law enforcement is called to assist a person with mental

illness in crisis and has no alternatives, booking into the local jail may be the only option. Most criminal justice personnel and behavioral health treatment personnel agree that jail and prison environments are not the best treatment setting for individuals with mental illnesses.

The pathways to incarceration for these individuals are varied, yet when they get involved in the criminal justice system, the symptoms of

nobody wants to return to jail. Yet, having a criminal history makes life complicated. Landlords don't want to rent to you; employers are reluctant to hire you, and even providers are leery of serving you.

So what can be done? Innovative practices exist in counties around the United States, and we have learned key lessons needed to drive down the number of people with mental illnesses in our jails. Our objectives are to avoid incarcerations for those individuals that don't pose a public safety risk, minimize the time in custody for those that are arrested, connect them to effective care upon release, and support them in the community so they don't get arrested again.

To advance these objectives, law enforcement needs training and crisis alternatives need to be available. By the same token, relevant clinical information needs to be

NEW IN DECEMBER FROM NACo's  
**COUNTY EXPLORER**

**93%** of counties have at least one nursing home located within their boundaries.

## THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE

their mental illnesses and substance use disorders ensnare them. Once arrested, they are less likely to make bail, spend longer periods of time on pre-trial status, experience longer lengths of stay within jail and prison (controlling for charges and sentences) and have higher recidivism rates on release—compared to those without these disorders.

For individuals with mental illnesses, contact with the criminal justice system can start a cycle of arrest, incarceration, release and re-arrest that can pose nearly insurmountable challenges to recovery.

Stigma is a powerful force at the criminal justice-behavioral health intersection — on both sides. Professionals in the criminal justice field often fear contact with people who have mental illnesses. So too, professionals in behavioral health are leery of working with "criminals," even though so many of their clients have criminal justice backgrounds.

I work in homeless service settings where a significant proportion of people have serious mental illnesses, have been previously arrested, and like Jim,

shared. Confidentiality and privacy laws are too often misinterpreted by behavioral treatment personnel preventing this essential flow of information. Providing case management services to those with complex psychiatric, physical, legal and social needs should also be a part of the service package. And all of these interventions should be guided by the available research to ensure positive outcomes are realized.

The status quo is not acceptable, nor is it immutable. First we must recognize that jails and prisons, and the people they serve, are part of our community. Arrest and incarceration are never acceptable substitutes for the provision of appropriate treatment for individuals with behavioral health needs.

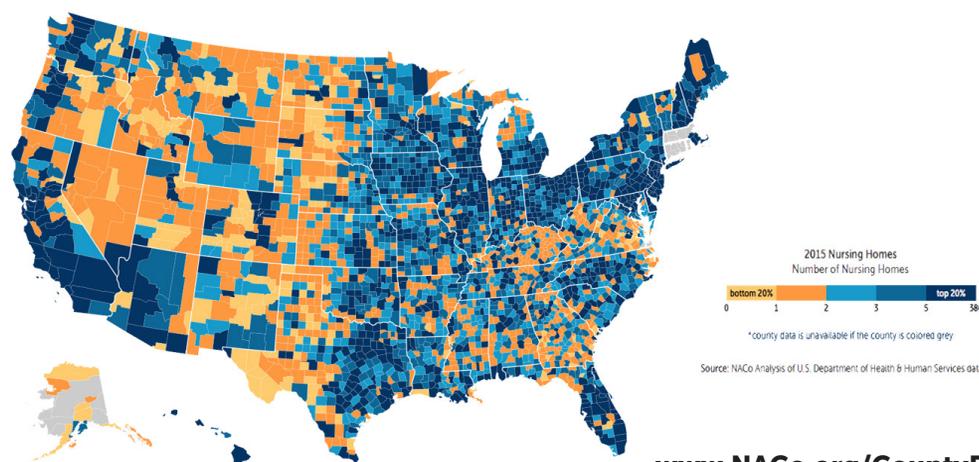
No one system can provide the range of services, supervision and supports that are needed to address the complex needs of justice-involved individuals. That is precisely why county leadership is required to bring stakeholders together, set expectations, and track progress. Counties around this country are stepping up to make a difference. Jim deserves no less.

**714** nursing homes are county supported facilities, either owned by the county, with a city or by a hospital district.

**424** counties have over 75 percent occupied beds in their county supported nursing home facilities.

**30%** of county jails supervise inmates outside of confinement using one or more community supervision programs, as of June 2013.

**20%** of county jails use an electronic monitoring program to supervise inmates outside of confinement, as of June 2013. Electronic monitoring is the most commonly used community supervision program by jails to supervise inmates outside of confinement.



[www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer](http://www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer)

## Governance, not government needed most

COAL from page 5

The Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments Economic Development District, whose team attended the workshop, was recently awarded \$327,300 for a study in the Four Corners region (where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado meet) to study the impacts of the coal industry in and around the San Juan Basin, and assess opportunities and barriers to regional economic diversification. Cibola, McKinley and San Juan counties are members of the district.

“This is not a zero-sum proposition we’re talking about. This is not one industry versus another; it’s not one region versus another,” Lynott said. “This is a real opportunity to understand and then implement strategies and projects that reflect the fact that a healthy economy in West Virginia doesn’t have to come at the expense of a healthy economy in Ohio or Pennsylvania — that we have regional assets that we can identify, and work together ... to the benefit of all.”

Earlier, Fluharty said regional governance is critical to innovation — “not government, governance” — including the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations and philanthropies. “If one of those is missing you have not assessed your assets well. If they aren’t together, you’re not doing it right.”

Participants learned about economic diversification and community leadership strategies through presentations and small-group breakout sessions on topics such as entrepreneurship, cultivating arts and cultural assets, and workforce development tools. Between sessions, teams outlined their short-term goals and how to achieve them in the next 100 days — which they shared with other participants on the final day — known as their Implementation Roadmaps.

One early assessment of the workshop was positive. Bruce Riffle, a West Virginia Development Authority Board member from Mason County, left Charleston energized. A power plant and related coal mine closed in his county.

“The breakout about the ‘ag’ business, the buy local programs, that really hit home to a lot of our team because we are in primarily an ag county. We’re going to really work on promoting buy-local, get that whole concept on the ground. We want to have it running by produce season next year, so we’ve got kind of a tall order, but we can do this.”

### IN MY OPINION

# Better management needed for public lands

By Commissioner Jim Chmelik  
IDAHO COUNTY, IDAHO

In the midst of abundance why are we, in the West, smothering in an airtight cage of poverty and ecological destruction?

The western United States has become a welfare state dependent on federal handouts in the form of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funds. Eastern politicians refer to PILT-SRS as “Western Welfare” and with good reason. Our government has removed our ability to support ourselves. There is no reason for this. We want to contribute to America’s success and it is high time we did.

Fires have raged across the western landscape and needlessly consumed millions of acres. Human lives and personal property have been lost. Critical habitat for animals and endangered species has been destroyed. Billions of tons of green house gases are released into the atmosphere and our water is becoming more polluted from the ensuing mismanagement practices forced upon the federal government by the environmental lobby and its litigation strategies.

In 2012, 246,000 acres burned in Idaho County. Conservatively using just 20 percent of what actually burned reveals some staggering numbers: 1.23 billion board feet (BDFT) of timber burned. The value at \$300 per thousand BDFT equates to \$369 million. The multiplier in a timber manufacturing economy is five to seven, but if we use only three this equates to over \$1 billion in lost economic activity within Idaho County and its surrounding neighboring counties.

That’s lost salaries, which pay taxes to fund schools, county governments, social security, Medicare, Medicaid, workman’s compensation and unemployment taxes. Twenty-five percent of this resource value used to be returned to the county to fund education and roads. That would have been \$92.25 million to Idaho County. Almost 13 million tons of greenhouse gases were released into the atmosphere and over 750,000 dead animals were also left in the wake of this destruction. All this now rots on the ground. This year, another 250,000-acres-plus burned on federally managed lands in Idaho County. Much of this could have been prevented.

In an attempt to build cooperation, several collaborative attempts have

been organized across the West. Idaho and Clearwater counties have been engaged in a process of collaboration for eight years known, nationwide, as the Clearwater Basin Collaborative.

With respect to environmental organizations like the Idaho Conservation League and the Idaho Wilderness Society, it would appear that anything but cooperating and building trust is part of their goals. Idaho County Commissioner Skip Brandt expressed his frustration stating, “Through the collaborative process, conservation groups have worked on some projects but will not entertain any substantial changes to their stranglehold on land management policies.” Commissioner Don Ebert of Clearwater County summed it up best when he stated, “The environmentalists at the table are absolute in their resolve to determine what we should be satisfied with.”

Since this collaborative process began, 50 million acres of federally managed land in the West has gone up in smoke and 7.9 billion tons of greenhouse gases have been released into the atmosphere polluting our air and water supplies. Critical wildlife habitat is destroyed, while millions of animals are exceeding hundreds of billions of dollars. All of this because of irrational logic, litigation and junk science fostered by an over-zealous environmental community seeking their brand of management.

While we sit at tables talking, these organizations continue to pursue a legal strategy to lock up the land and us out. Ironically, when they prevail in the courts — and they do more often than not — they get paid by the American taxpayer using the Equal Access to Justice Act. The environmental community has grown from a ragtag group hanging and protesting from trees to well organized businesses complete with corporate structures and boardrooms.

They represent a portion of corporate America complete with \$80 billion in assets and an annual contribution to our nation’s GDP of \$7 billion annually. Is it really about saving the environment or making money? Our Western communities’ health, safety, welfare and economic vitality hang in the balance, and one has to wonder do they even care?

In the West we do care. Properly managed lands provide a better quality of life, a healthier ecosystem, quality habitat for wildlife, cleaner water and air, and better recreational

opportunities. It brings balance to injustices being perpetuated upon our western communities by an environmental lobby who just does not seem to care.

We must not be content with the current situation. There are better ways of managing the public lands. We have the solutions to the challenges facing us but we must unite. We need better access and better management, and as elected county officials

we are closest to the people and better understand the challenge before us. Within our counties, our state county organizations, and NACo we have the power to band together and work towards the common goal of securing a brighter future for our children and our grandchildren.

Chmelik can be reached at [jchmelik@idahocounty.org](mailto:jchmelik@idahocounty.org) or by phone at 208.983.8133.



CHMELIK

## Profiles in Service

### Daryl H. Dukart

NACo Board of Directors  
Commissioner  
Dunn County, N.D.



**Number of years active in NACo:** 2

**Years in public service:** 5

**Occupation:** rancher

**Education:** high school and three quarters of college

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** being at my oldest daughter’s side during the last minutes of her life as she lost her battle with cancer.

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** my spouse, Blake Shelton and Ed Schafer.

**A dream I have is to:** serve my community and helping build a strong vibrant community.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** training young horses for ranch horses.

**My favorite way to relax is:** hunting, fishing and spending time with grandchildren.

**I’m most proud of:** our children and our grandchildren, achievements as a pork producer and rancher, 4-H leader for 25 years and presently being a county commissioner.

**Every morning I read:** national news, local newspapers and look at the stock market, livestock, metals and oil reports

from the previous day. Plus try to cover all emails I need to read or respond to.

**My favorite meal is:** Boneless one-inch-thick pork chop cooked on a trigger grill using a mix of apple wood and hickory wood for my smoke flavor. Fresh garden green peas just adds a special touch to this wonderful meal.

**My pet peeve is:** individuals who are full of advice but provide no action.

**My motto is:** do I change the challenge or challenge the change.

**The last book I read was:** *Farming Without the Bank.*

**My favorite movie is:** I do not have a favorite movie.

**My favorite music is:** country western.

**My favorite president is:** Ronald Reagan.

**My county is a NACo member because:** I feel it is important to have some role in the National Association of Counties organization as it builds strength within our local county, allows for learning opportunities to bring back to our local county and state, which builds an even stronger relationship between the people we represent, our communities and many political subdivisions.



# COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS | IMPERIAL COUNTY, CALIF.

## County Jail College Courses Introduce Inmates to Students on the Outside

BY CHARLIE BAN  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

**PROBLEM:** Reducing jail populations by reducing recidivism rates

**SOLUTION:** Imperial County, Calif. started a series of collaborate classes joining inmates and community college students to give inmates a chance to earn college credit.

Faced with an influx of state prisoners in the jail, thanks to the California Legislature's 2011 decision to move nonviolent offenders to county jails, Imperial County wanted to stem the flow, somehow. The most realistic option was to try

to reduce recidivism. Backed up by a RAND Institute study, which showed that correctional education programs cut inmates' recidivism rates by 43 percent and helped them obtain post-release work by 13 percent, the strategy they selected would focus on education.

Imperial Valley College suggested adapting the Temple University Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, joining students and state prison inmates, a classroom blend that research had shown was particularly effective for inmates. The county's new day reporting center offered classroom space, and a trip to the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program Training Institute in Michigan in May 2014 gave staffers a seven-day training program.

Imperial County's is the first sheriff's office to adapt what was designed for state prisons to the

county level.

The classes are 30-person co-educational mixes of 15 students from Imperial Valley College who enrolled in the course and 15 inmates who had been vetted and then interviewed by program coordinators to determine whether they were suited for the classroom environment.

"None of the inmates had any violent offenses, but we had to be cognizant of whether they would be comfortable in that setting," said Jamie Clayton, the county's chief deputy for corrections. "Registering for college courses always seemed like it was beyond what they'd be able to do. We do the bulk of the hard stuff and let them focus on the schoolwork."

A burgundy polo shirt serves as a uniform that distinguishes them from "outside" students, who wear blue shirts. Students only use each

other's first names to protect their privacy.

Three semesters in, the program has offered classes on alcoholism and an introduction to psychology.

"These are foundation classes that could help these inmates start toward a career in substance abuse counseling," Clayton said. "Unfortunately, many of them have familiarity with it in their lives, but we see a lot of potential to take that experience, pair it with education and help them get on the path to helping people someday."

For "outside" students, many of whom are exploring careers in counseling, working with inmates gives them valuable experience early in the careers.

And one "inside" student has amassed 10 college credits. That student, along with others, gets help from the county probation depart-

ment in continuing educational and professional development after their release.

The program's startup costs were limited because the day-reporting center offered the classroom space and the sheriff's office could transport the "inside" students, but the county paid \$3,000 for each staffer to attend training. Staff expenses per semester total roughly \$5,300 and each "inside" student's polo shirt, supplies, textbooks and fees total \$170. The sheriff's office's inmate trust fund pays for the "inside" student fees.

"We deal with a very hopeless population," Clayton said. "To be able to give them a chance is what makes this so great."

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

### WORD SEARCH

#### Orange County, Va. Facts

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

R T X H V O B M Q H O D H P A U I T D T  
A U Y T Q B W L L F X D G M E H D C A J  
P R O M W J K H Y K A U M N B H H R X Z  
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**CHARLOTTESVILLE** (Nearest major city, in Albemarle County)

**CULPEPER COUNTY** (Adjacent county to the north)

**GERMANNA** (German settlement in Colonial era)

**GORDONSVILLE** (Town in county with bicentennial in 2013)

**JAMES MADISON** (One of two U.S. presidents born in county; the other was Zachary Taylor)

**JEAN LOVE** (Designed color rendering of county seal)

**LION** (Central image of county's seal)

**LOUISA COUNTY** (Neighboring county to the south)

**MONTPELIER** (Home of James Madison)

**PIEDMONT** (Hilly region where county is located)

**RAPIDAN RIVER** (Forms county's northern border)

**SEVENTEEN SEVENTY FOUR** (Year original seal was commissioned)

**WILLIAM IV** (Dutch prince of Orange-Nassau for whom county is named.)

### NACo on the Move

#### ► NACo Officers, County Officials

It's been a busy travel season for NACo's executive team. President **Sallie Clark** took her Safe and Secure initiative message to state association meetings in Missouri (the Missouri Association of Counties Annual Conference in Camden County) Nov. 15–17 and Washington (Washington State Association of Counties conference in Skamania County) Nov. 17–19.

• Immediate Past President **Riki Hokama** was a featured speaker at the Alaska Municipal League's Annual Conference in Anchorage Nov. 18 and at the Association of Oregon Counties conference in Lane County Nov. 19.

• Cook County, Ill. Clerk **David Orr** received two awards from the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies at its International Electoral Affairs Symposium: one for outstanding work in electoral reform; the other in recognition for outstanding achievements in election management.

#### ► NACo Staff

• *Exploring the Rural West — The Economic Recovery of Rural Western Counties*, an article by **Emilia Istrate**, research director, was published in *Rural Connec-*

*tions*, a publication of the Western Rural Development Center, hosted by the Utah Cooperative Extension. *Rural Connections* is its bi-annual magazine on research on western rural communities.

• **Arthur Scott**, associate legislative director, was a featured speaker at the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) Fall School Nov. 18–20 in Linn County. Scott spoke about the economic impact of public lands on Iowa counties and NACo's "Stepping Up" initiative aimed at reducing the number of mental health patients in county jails. Additionally, Scott worked with ISAC staff to produce new materials for NACo's 2016 presidential campaign initiative, "Counties Connect America."

• **Jenna Moran** and **Jack Morgan** have joined NACo as new program managers handling community and economic development, resilience and transportation grants and programs.

Before joining NACo, Moran served as design programs assistant at the National Endowment for the Arts, where she focused on creative place-making and managed the Our Town grants

program. She holds an M.P.A. from The George Washington University and a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame.



Morgan

• A native of southwest Virginia, Morgan most recently served as a policy analyst at Friends of Southwest Virginia, where he focused on economic development and tourism programs. He holds an M.A. in geography from Appalachian State University and a B.A. from Emory and Henry College.

#### ► Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, membership marketing director, will represent NACo at the County Commission's Association of Ohio's Winter Conference in Franklin County Dec. 6–8 and at the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference in Dorchester County Dec. 9–11.

• **Sarah Lindsay**, NACo FSC program manager, will attend the Association of Minnesota Counties Conference in Stearns County, Dec. 6–8.

• **Caitlin Myers**, membership services associate, will represent NACo at the Nebraska Association of County Officials Annual Conference in Buffalo County, Dec. 8–11.



Moran

# Financial Services News

## Rising Rates Likely to Impact County Finances

By JOEL GRIFFITH  
FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTER

Rock-bottom interest rates and easy money may be coming to an end, as the Federal Reserve prepares to hike rates as early as next month.

Long-term interest rates have remained historically low for an unprecedented stretch of time. Take a look at the 10-year Treasury rate, typically considered the standard reflection of a risk-free rate of return.

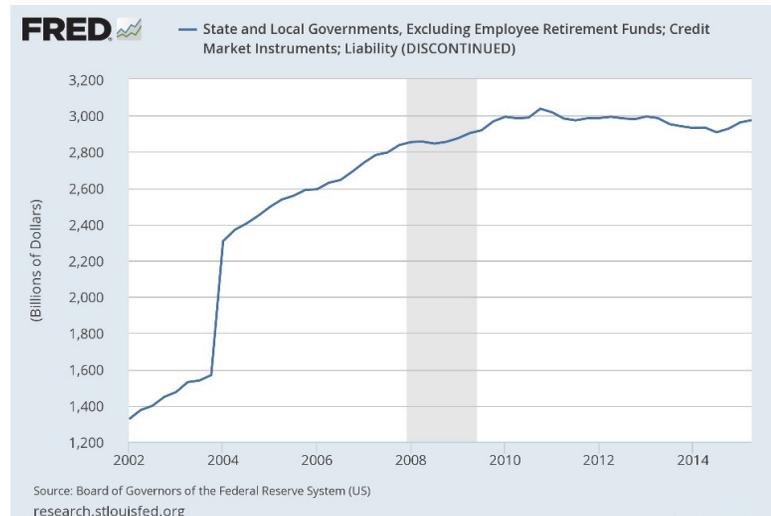
After rarely dipping below 4 percent over the prior five decades, rates plunged to 2.5 percent during the financial crisis. Now, six years into the recovery, the rate remains stuck in a narrow range just under 2.5 percent. Likewise, the effective federal funds rate which indirectly influences debt pricing nationally, rapidly dropped to near zero in late 2008 in the midst of the financial meltdown. For seven years, it has barely budged.

### Unemployment Trending Down

Employment growth remains subdued compared to past recoveries; however, persistent jobs growth combined with a shrinking labor force participation rate has driven the unemployment rate down to near 5 percent—a level considered close to full employment by many economists. Meanwhile, economic growth has also been quite tepid compared to other post-WWII recoveries, hovering close to 2 percent annually; yet, this too has been of a prolonged, steady nature.

With dramatically lower energy prices potentially bottoming, any increases in other production inputs

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEBT CHART



may quickly ripple throughout the broader economy. Indeed, the recent uptick in real wage growth (2.7 percent over past 12 months) suggests this period of steady growth, cheap money and ultra-low inflation could be coming to an end. As such, the Federal Reserve needs to get in front of any inflationary pressures before it gets out of control.

### Local Governments Benefit

This policy change will impact local government budgets for numerous reasons.

Perhaps most importantly, state and local governments have taken advantage of these low rates. Total liabilities (excluding employee retirement funds) nearly doubled from \$1.6 trillion in late 2003 to more than \$3 trillion in 2010 before leveling off. Interest payments on this debt could dramatically increase as debt is refinanced—particularly if the initial debt were financed with short-term loans.

Prudence suggests officials lock in this debt at the current low long-term rates before the increase.

### Interest Rates Likely to Rise

For many local governments, the powerful bull market has replenished defined-benefit pension funds. This market has also inflated price-to-earning ratios in many sectors. As earnings cool and debt becomes more attractive as an investment, equities markets will possibly generate far more tame returns. In fact, the broad U.S. equities market is on track for a negative return in 2015. If this plays out, expect increased calls to shore up pension portfolios and to adjust expected long-term returns downward.

The expected increase in interest rates will also likely dent consumer spending as debt servicing swallows a larger proportion of family budgets. And the higher financing costs will deter larger purchases. Financial officers should anticipate marginally lower sales tax revenues as a result.

### Some Help for 'Savers'

In addition, the increase in rates could also cool the brisk housing market recovery. As rates rise, housing demand slows as increasing mortgage rates diminish affordability. The housing recovery has been uneven across the country; but since the depth of the housing collapse, prices have rebounded by nearly 30 percent in real terms. Although not quite rivaling the peak of the bubble, these prices are still significantly above long-term trend lines. Property tax revenue forecasts should take these factors into account.

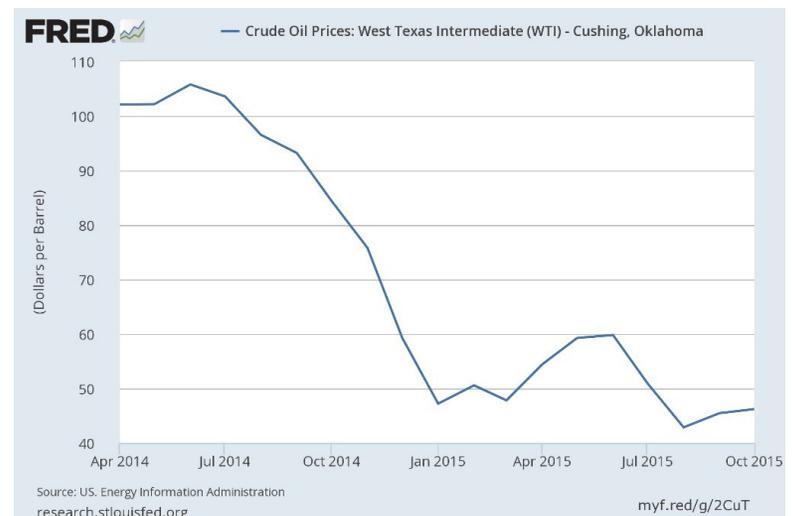
Fortunately, it's not all negative news. Although the initial impacts

from these rate increases may not be welcomed, longer-term a return to normalcy will spur growth by allowing capital to more freely flow to those most adept at creating wealth. As economist David Malpass explains, "Persistent near-zero interest rates punish savers and hurt income growth for average U.S. households. Meanwhile, income inequality worsens as credit flows up the pyramid from middle-class savers earning paltry returns to the upper crust leveraging itself with cheap credit

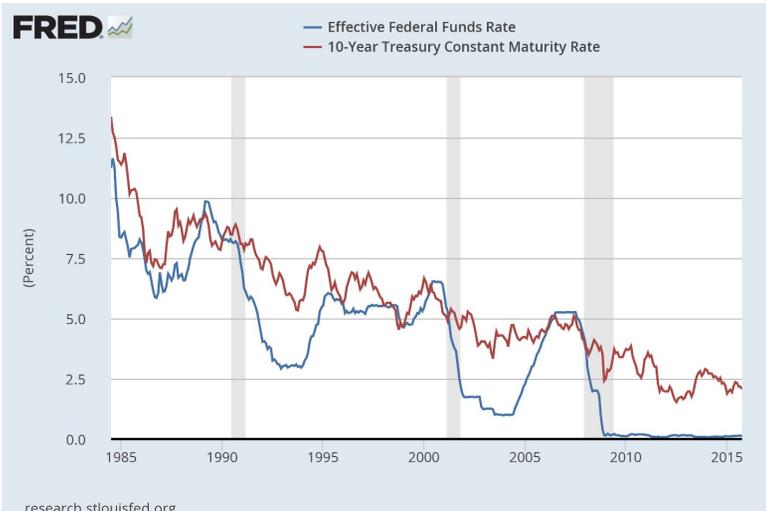
and stock gains." As the changes sort out, maintaining a "rainy day fund" with excess cash or short-term fixed investments may be the wisest course of action. This liquidity mitigates the need for painful tax hikes or draconian spending cuts should economic conditions rapidly change as interest rates rise.

(Griffith is a general program manager with NACo's Financial Services Center. You may reach him at 202.942.4238 or jgriffith@naco.org)

### OIL POLICY IMPACT CHART



### LONG TERM RATES CHART



## What's in a Seal?



### Orange County, Va.

Forty years after Orange County, Va. was formed, the County Court ordered the sheriff to pay 50 shillings for a seal.

The lion on the seal was considered appropriately symbolic and in spirit with the times. In heraldry, historian W.W. Scott wrote, a lion rearing up signals angry defiance. In On July 1774, when the seal was commissioned, delegates from Virginia's counties were about to elect the colony's delegates to the First Continental Congress. Emotions against England were high and the First Continental Congress had been called to decide what should be done to defend the rights of the colonies.

In 1975, the Orange County Bicentennial Commission commissioned Jean Love, of Orange, to design a conjectural rendering of the seal in color, and it was adopted, as the current seal, on March 11. The colors are from the coat of arms of The Honorable Alexander Spotswood, Esq. Her Majesty's Lieutenant Governor and Commander in Chief of Virginia—a principal figure in the early history of what became Orange County.

Orange County Administrative Assistant Kate Lovell assisted.



# News From the Nation's Counties

## ► CALIFORNIA

• Some folks are looking to pull the cork on new wineries in **SONOMA COUNTY**. County officials are gathering input from residents, and business and agriculture interests on possible new **regulations on winery development** in the county.

Supporters say the growth of wineries, tasting rooms and wineries that double as event venues is out of hand — and is threatening their rural way of life. Representatives of the wine industry say their facilities are helping to preserve open space, according to *The Press Democrat*.

Critics say the proliferating operations are drawing unruly crowds, increased traffic and noise. Some in the wine industry said existing regulations are sufficient, and the county should step up enforcement.

• One of the first counties in the state to craft a **Climate Action Plan** to reduce greenhouse gases just set the bar higher. **MARIN COUNTY** has updated its targets with a goal of reducing emissions 30 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. The Board of Supervisors adopted it Nov. 10.

The county has already met its goal, set in 2006, of reducing emissions 15 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. The goal was reached by 2012, eight years early.

To achieve its stretch goal, the county plans to encourage the use of energy from renewable sources; identify and act on power-saving efficiencies; support alternative transportation programs; promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs; and push for water conservation.

## ► COLORADO

**LARIMER COUNTY** is in the process of modifying its **public solicitation ordinance** with the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado peering over its shoulder.

The new ordinance would ban solicitations — such as panhandling — that are threatening or obscene, involve touching or that occur in a way that conflicts with roadway travel. This includes solicitation in the median of a public roadway, at highway exits or on a state or interstate highway system. It would apply to unincorporated areas of the county.

Mark Silverstein, ACLU of Colorado legal director, raised concerns about an apparent conflict with another provision of the ordinance that permits the solicitation of vehicles if drivers are able to legally park and safely make the transaction. A federal judge struck down a Grand Junction ordinance in September that was



Mitchell Pass -- Oregon Trail, Scotts Bluff County

## ► NEBRASKA

An artist has embarked on a project to create one **painting** of each of the state's 93 counties in honor of the state's 2017 sesquicentennial.

Todd Williams's paintings will be displayed in their county of origin until 2017, when they will be displayed at the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln.

So far, he has painted about 50 of the state's 93 counties. In the end, all of Nebraska's counties will be represented, even if no sponsor is found. And some counties might have two or more paintings, depending on the number of sponsors who are interested, according to the *World-Herald*.

similar to Larimer County's.

## ► KENTUCKY

County budgets throughout the Blue Grass State are getting squeezed by **911 services** because of an outdated funding model, a state association of counties official told state lawmakers recently.

The state experienced a 17 percent decline in landline usage and a 263 percent increase for mobile phones from 2000 to 2010, according to the Federal Communications Commission.

Emergency call systems in Kentucky are funded through surcharges on landlines and wireless phones. Counties can change the landline fee but not the wireless surcharge. The latter has been 70 cents per month since 1998, WFPL-FM News reported.

Jim Henderson, president-elect of the **KENTUCKY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**, asked state legislators to increase the wireless surcharge from 70 cents per month to just north of \$1 monthly.

## ► MARYLAND

• Opponents of **BALTIMORE COUNTY**'s "rain tax" got what they wanted when the County Council voted 7-0 to do away with the **storm water remediation** fee, according to *The Baltimore Sun*. The county will reduce the fees on 2016 property tax bills and eliminate the fees in 2017.

State lawmakers passed legislation in 2012 that required Maryland's 10 largest jurisdictions to collect the fee to reduce pollution from storm water runoff.

This year, the Legislature voted to allow the jurisdictions to drop the fee if they could find other money to address the problem.

• **PRINCE GEORGE'S** County Council has approved an ordinance that would **ban the use of electronic cigarettes** anywhere smoking is prohibited — except at a casino resort currently under construction.

The county will allow "vaping" at any "facility awarded a video lottery operation license," *The Washington Post* reported.

The MGM National Harbor casino will be the second casino in the state — after one in Baltimore city — to allow the use of e-cigarettes. Three of the state's five casinos ban vaping outright.

## ► MISSISSIPPI

Voters in **HARRISON COUNTY** made history Nov. 2 when they **elected three women** to the county's five-member Board of Supervisors.

It will be Mississippi's first-ever female majority board, according to *The Sun Herald*.

Thirteen of the state's 82 counties currently have women on their

Boards of Supervisors, according to the Mississippi Association of Supervisors, however no county has more than one.

Mississippi was the last state in the U.S. to ratify the 19th amendment — in 1984. Supervisor Connie Rockco, the board's current president, said having three women on the board "speaks volumes for the state of Mississippi and how far we've come...."

## ► NORTH CAROLINA

• Charlotte business leaders and charities that serve the **homeless** may call in **MECKLENBURG COUNTY** to intervene in a dispute over the future of a downtown corridor.

Commissioner George Dunlap asked County Manager Dena Diorio to mediate in discussions between North End Partners, a nonprofit promoting North Tryon Street's revitalization, and the Men's Shelter of Charlotte and Urban Ministry Center, two charities that some want to move to make way for redevelopment.

Development supporters say the hundreds of homeless people who frequent the shelters will discourage developers and homebuyers, and frighten customers of new businesses, according to the *Charlotte Observer*. The charities, including a men's shelter that just launched a \$7 million renovation campaign, say they have no plans to move.

• Beginning in December, **WAKE COUNTY** workers will receive a minimum of \$13.50 per hour for a minimum annual salary of \$28,080 per year, following a **living wage vote** by the Board of Commissioners. That will give 75 county employees a pay increase and cost the county \$93,000 a year to implement.

Commissioner Matt Calabria said the \$13.50 rate was calculated using national best practices to determine what it would take to make ends meet in Wake County, based on the local cost of living. The county manager will review the living wage calculation in conjunction with the annual budget each year, and adjust it as needed, according to *Indy Week*.

## ► NORTH DAKOTA

Juvenile offenders from **RICHLAND COUNTY** will be sent across the South Dakota border to **ROBERTS COUNTY**, following an agreement between the counties to provide a **detention program**.

The Richland County youth had been going to regional centers that required monthly fees to reserve beds. The Roberts County center only charges per day, and only when the bed is used, WDAY News reported.

## ► OHIO

Opiate-addicted offenders in **ATHENS COUNTY** will now be given Vivitrol to help **fight their addictions** and reduce drug-related crimes.

The monthly, extended-release injection is less likely than synthetic opiates to cause dependence. In the first month and a half, 15 people had enrolled in the program, which will be divert addicts to treatment rather than jail, the *Columbus Dispatch* reported. The current two-year state budget includes \$5.5 million a year to be divided among 15 counties for medicine, counseling and outpatient treatment. The results from the counties participating will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of medication-assisted drug courts.

• **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** has set up a hotline for tips relating to **illegal firearms** used to commit a crime. The Crime Stoppers Gun Initiative will allow for anonymous tips, and cash rewards of up to \$250 for a tip that leads to an arrest or indictment, WKYC News reported.

## ► PENNSYLVANIA

"Going away" to the big house in **WESTMORELAND COUNTY** will seem like going to the airport,

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

once the jail installs its **full-body scanner**.

The county will lease a scanner to detect hidden drugs, weapons and tobacco on and in inmates' bodies. The guards strip-search inmates, but are not allowed to perform "deep cavity" searches. That has allowed some inmates to bring in contraband.

The scanner will be used on inmates who enter the jail for the first time, and those who are returning from another lockup, court or a work-release program. The lease and maintenance for the scanner will cost roughly \$167,000 over seven years, according to *The Tribune Review*.

► **TEXAS**

Add **EL PASO COUNTY** to the list of **counties suing Volkswagen**. The county's commissioners joined their colleagues in Harris County when they voted to sue Volkswagen for emissions violations.

The company installed illegal software to bypass stringent diesel emissions tests. County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal said the Texas Water Code grants counties the authority to seek civil penalties for violating the code. If successful, the county could assess daily fines of \$50 to \$25,000, possibly going back to 2009, KVIA News reported.

► **VIRGINIA**

The **ARLINGTON COUNTY** manager will appoint a **Military and Veterans Affairs Committee** to identify, prioritize and implement programs and initiatives to recognize and support the active duty military population, veterans and their families.

The committee will include representatives from county government, local military commands, the *U.S.S. Arlington*, the business community, local, regional and national service organizations and other stakeholders.

► **WASHINGTON**

Contractors now owe **\$144 million** to **KING COUNTY**, after the Washington State Court of Appeals upheld a 2012 jury verdict in the county's favor.

The contractors' cost overruns resulted from a stalled tunnel-boring machine that was drilling a 13-mile path to a new sewage treatment plant. The appeals court rejected contractors' arguments that the county should pay for unpredictable and frequent variations in soil types and groundwater pressures, the *Seattle Times* 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.)*

## The H.R. Doctor Is In

# No Waistline Left Behind

Staying fit is a health mantra of our society. Drug commercials seem to be everywhere, along with lawyer commercials about suing the drug companies. "Heroes," such as athletes, actors and other "personalities" peddle high-tech food gadgets. Although fitness commercials abound, along with weight loss and diabetes control drugs, we are essentially the chubbiest society in the history of the universe.

As I dictate this article, I am sitting at a major airport waiting to meet a flight. This is a perfect spot for people-watching. In the case of this particularly friendly airport, a local furniture merchant has kindly donated a dozen extremely comfortable "stress free" reclining chairs. I know they are extremely comfortable because my body is now sitting in one as I struggle not to simply drift off into a pleasure-induced coma.

One of the great ironies of our fitness craze, besides the fact that we love fitness but are clinically obese as a society, is all the emphasis we place on measuring and counting. Perhaps this is why we subject our children to the torture of annual comprehensive assessment tests. This could be why teachers get frustrated about having to "teach to the test," where the emphasis seems as much on scoring well as learning well. The clash of the imperatives to score better and be more healthy peaks in our retail stores as holiday gifts begin to flow out past the check stands.

Case in point, what to get the incredibly beautiful HR Spouse Charlotte for her birthday. There are so many choices, so many gifts. I know that she would love any gift I got for her, while proclaiming that she is not driven by material gifts as much as by family and experiences.

However, to Charlotte the health hobbyist, Charlotte the weight watcher, who lost 70 pounds more than a decade ago and has never seen those pounds return; clearly the consummate gift will be one of the fitness techy measuring devices. It takes little to get me to agree to a trip to Best Buy. So armed with the idea that Charlotte would love a new fitness tool, and in the company of my new friend, Mark, the manager at Best Buy, we explore this brave

new world.

There are bunches of different models, of course, to measure movement and effort. They perform similar functions — all associated with accounting, measuring and testing. While these many colorful gadgets do essentially the same thing, there are substantial price and "cool" differences, of course. They count steps. They count miles or kilometers walked. They differentiate between running, walking and climbing stairs. As an aside, they even can tell you what time it is. Does it really matter, I ask myself, that you know exactly the number of calories you burned in the last hour? Does it really matter that you have a second by second measurement of your heart rate? This doesn't even matter to

cardiologists.

So knowing what I wanted to buy for Charlotte as well as how much she would enjoy a fitness toy, I found myself suddenly confused and a bit frightened at the prospect of too many choices. Therefore, the answer was obvious: invite Charlotte to come to Best Buy with me. Such an invitation is fraught with danger. She correctly notes that usually when we go there the result is something which requires me to go home and come back driving my big truck instead of my Jeep for heavy hauling.

However, this time we both found ourselves staring at the fitness counting devices, looking befuddled, as we were joined by the store manager who also appeared to be slightly overwhelmed. At the end of the day, however, we

jointly chose, not surprisingly, the most expensive and one of the very newest of these toys, a Fitbit Surge.

This device not only counts things, but it sends Charlotte a congratulatory vibration and happy icons as she passes daily milestones such as 10,000 steps of walking per day.

She is now a daily Fitbit Surge user and has even figured out the mechanics of how to get most of the functions properly working.

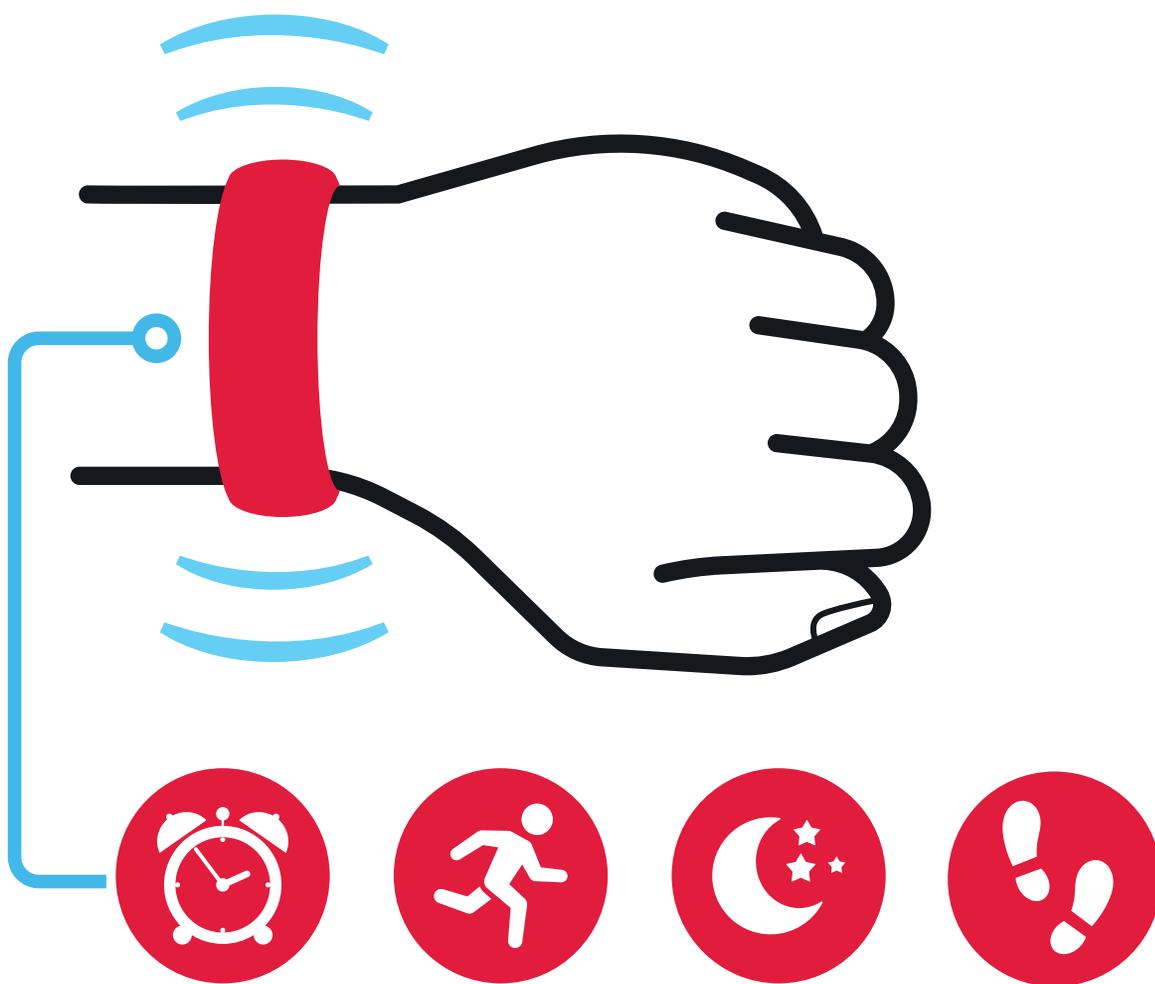
Dear Charlotte, I know you have had a wonderful birthday because I saw it not only on the screen of your fitness measurement device, but in your eyes and in your smile.

Stay with the passion and pride of your fitness hobby, just as I do with my hobbies. Just don't let the hobby become an obsession. Don't be so concerned about dieting and weight loss that you forget the joys of chocolate and the occasional piece of pie for breakfast. Know that I care very deeply for you and that I respect and celebrate the fact that you care very deeply about your own well being.

Phil Rosenberg  
The HR Doctor



Stay with the passion and pride of your fitness hobby, just as I do with my hobbies. Just don't let the hobby become an obsession.





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