



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND:
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**COUNTY OFFICIALS
HOLD CAPITOL HILL
RALLY ON PUBLIC LANDS
ISSUES. PG. 7**



NACo President Roy Charles Brooks takes the stage to open NACo's 2018 Legislative Conference. *County News*' conference coverage begins on page 3. Photo by Jason Dixon

2018 County Health Rankings: Gaps due to race, ethnicity

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

Place, race and ethnicity play a role in healthy lifestyles, according to the 2018 County Health Rankings. Meaningful health gaps persist due to differences in opportunities that affect people of color, such as access to quality education, jobs and safe affordable housing, according to the study.

This year's study shows that the nation is seeing 8.2 percent of babies born at low birth-weight, a 2 percent increase from 2014 and a key indicator

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FCC could ax environmental, historic reviews to speed 5G

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is set to vote March 22 on doing away with environmental assessments and historic preservation reviews in order to speed up the deployment of the 5G network, according to the FCC meeting agenda.

Fifth-generation wireless systems or 5G "small cells" are improved networks deploying the newest mobile wireless; a formal standard is yet to be set. Telecom firms want to locate the next generation of wireless technology on utility poles and street light poles in counties across the

country. The "small cells" include antennas, meters, cables and power boxes.

"Our federal historic and environmental review procedures are not suited to support 5G deployments, which can be smaller than a backpack and attach to existing structures," FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr said recently at the Consumer Technology Association's 5G Day.

The FCC projects that by doing away with the reviews, it will reduce the regulatory costs of small cell deployment by 80 percent, cut deployment timelines in half and expand 5G deployments.

The FCC commissioners will vote on declaring the citing of such wireless facilities as neither the "federal undertakings" or "major federal actions" that trigger reviews.

"The Commission is using the wrong standard in deciding whether this is a major federal undertaking," said Gerard Lederer, partner, Best Best & Krieger, who specializes in telecom, cable and small cell law. "The whole point of the pleading is that the FCC is streamlining a process without regard to consideration of impacts. That process, combined

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2018 County Health Rankings show disparities

From HEALTH page 1

of quality of life for mothers and babies. Black babies are twice as likely to be born at low birthweight and twice as likely to die before they turn 1, according to the study.

“We can’t be a healthy, thriving nation if we continue to leave entire communities and populations behind,” said Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “Every community should use their County Health Rankings data, work together, and find solutions so that all babies, kids, and adults — regardless of their race or ethnicity — have the same opportunities to be healthy.”

“As an organization committed to improving health

“We can’t be a healthy, thriving nation if we continue to leave entire communities and populations behind.”

and well-being, we can’t tolerate the reality that some Americans don’t have the same opportunity to be healthy because of where they live, how much money they make, or the color of their skin,” said Besser. “As a nation, we will be healthier and stronger together when we remove barriers to

opportunity for everyone in America.”

This year’s report shows blacks in more segregated counties fare worse in rates of child poverty, infant mortality, and high school graduation than those in less segregated counties.

According to the study, segregated communities of color are more likely to be cut off from investments that promote good schools, affordable housing and other opportunities for health. Some of the practices that have led to the disparities, according to the study, include discriminatory policies that have limited the opportunities of people of color in choosing where to live, including denying housing loans.

This year’s rankings also explore trends happening among the nation’s children and youth:

Teen Births: Teen birth rates have been declining across community types and racial groups for more than a decade, with most recent data showing a U.S. rate of 27 per 1,000 females, ages 15-19. Hispanic teens have seen the most improvement in birth rates, falling from 77.7 to 31.9 births per 1,000 females — ages 15-19, from 2006 to 2016. Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native teens have also seen notable improvements. Teen birth rates are highest among counties in the Southwest and Southeast as well as parts of Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, and the Plains regions. These regions have seen little change over the last decade, while the East and West coasts have seen improvements.

Children in Poverty: Available data show that, for the

majority of U.S. counties, child poverty rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black or Hispanic children are higher than rates for White children, and these rates are often twice as high.

“The time is now to address long-standing challenges like child poverty and residential segregation,” said Julie Willems Van Dijk, PhD, RN, director of County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. “This year’s Rankings are a call to action to see how these persistent health gaps play out locally, take an honest look at their root causes, and work together to give everyone a fair shot at a healthier life.”

The rankings website also features “What Works for Health,” a database of nearly 400 evidence-informed strategies to support local change-makers as they take steps toward building healthy communities. Each strategy is rated for its evidence of effectiveness and likely impact on health disparities. The Rankings’ Take Action Center and Community Coaches also provide guidance for local leaders and community partners to move with data to action. Visit countyhealthrankings.org to learn more. **CN**

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), compares counties within each state on more than 30 health-influencing factors such as education, jobs and access to quality health care. The rankings are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

FCC action: ‘Land grab’

From FCC page 1

with limits on local and state authority ... can easily result in construction of facilities that are quite large and intrusive, and that, as the Commission suggests, number in the thousands.

“There is no question that these facilities could not be built without a federal license; that the issuance of that license, combined with preemptive rules means that local and state control is limited; and that numerically, the licensed facilities are intended to be placed frequently and throughout areas that may be historically significant or environmentally sensitive.”

Montgomery County, Md. Councilmember Hans Riemer, who sits on NACo’s Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee and was appointed to the FCC’s Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, described the possibility of the FCC doing away with the reviews as “...just a good old fashioned land grab, that’s all it is — there are a lot of problems.”

Ken Schmidt, president of Steel in the Air Inc., which represents property owners and cities in negotiations over cell-tower lease fees with telecommunications companies, told the Center for Public Integrity that wireless carriers want to receive lower annual charges for attachments to public property similar to what utilities receive but without the obligation to provide universal service that cities typically require of utilities.

If wireless carriers want low fees like utilities receive, “then great, act like a utility, and build out to the poor areas, provide subsidized coverage to poor constituents,” Schmidt said. **CN**



SNAP/STATS

TOP COUNTY TRANSPORTATION EXPENDITURES

New York City, N.Y.....	\$17.2 billion
San Francisco City & County, Calif.....	\$2 billion
Miami-Dade County, Fla.	\$1.4 billion
Clark County, Nev.	\$1.1 billion
District of Columbia, D.C.	\$1 billion

Source of the data: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Surveys of State and Local Government Finances, 2015. The 2015 finance files have data for 2,026 out of the 3,069 Counties with County Government (66.01% of counties).

CountyNews

President
Roy Charles Brooks
Publisher
Matthew Chase
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Senior Staff Writer
Charlie Ban
Senior Staff Writer
Mary Ann Barton
Design Director
Leon Lawrence III

ADVERTISING STAFF
Job Market/Classifieds representative
National Accounts representative
Beverly Schlotterbeck
202.393.6226
FAX 866.752.1573

Published biweekly except August by:
National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.
660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400,
Washington, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 | FAX 866.752.1573
E-mail cnews@naco.org
Online address www.countynews.org

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Mail subscriptions are \$100 per year for non-members. \$60 per year for non-members purchasing multiple copies. Educational institution rate, \$50 per year. Member county supplemental subscriptions are \$20 each. Send payment with order and address changes to NACo, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to County News, 660 N. Capitol Street, N.W. STE. 400, Washington, D.C. 20001

(USPS 704-620) n (ISSN: 0744-9798)
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Come Hell or High Winds: Conference attendees do what it takes to reach D.C.



Several Utah county officials are far more chipper than would be expected during a 3:30 a.m. shuttle to the Detroit Airport. From left: Darin Bushman (Piute County), Randy Elliott (Davis County), Kerry Gibson (Weber County) is wearing the hat, Rodney Bennett (Box Elder County) and Mike Bleak (Iron County). Photo by Brandy Grace

By Charlie Ban
Senior staff writer

Wayne Butts' first commercial flight didn't seem like it would be so bad — a six-hour total trip to Washington, D.C. from Boise, by way of Salt Lake City.

But when the Custer County, Idaho commissioner finally landed at Ronald Reagan National Airport for NACo's Legislative Conference, he had spent 15 hours flying coast to coast, and back and forth between a few cities. That included four hours sitting on a Milwaukee tarmac.

High winds across the Eastern Seaboard created havoc for conference travelers in the days leading up to steering committee meetings and workshops. A total of 60 attendees couldn't make it because of weather-related flight mishaps, though that didn't stop the 1,553 total registrants who made it from topping last year's attendees.

"When I took the position,

I agreed to do whatever was necessary," Butts said.

On March 2, that meant traveling first to Seattle, then Detroit, then to Milwaukee because fuel was getting low and the flight couldn't land in Detroit. The Milwaukee approach saw the plane blown sideways.

"I'd never been in a plane where I couldn't grab the controls myself if we got into trouble," he said. "I've landed on a flight with skis, but nothing like this."

In the end, Butts made it, but he shared an experience with many other conference-goers that was harrowing at worst and exhausting at best.

White knuckles, wan faces

Brandy Grace's flight from Salt Lake City was a half hour ahead of schedule.

"The pilot said we were making great time, we thought we'd have time to check in to our hotel rooms before dinner that night," said Grace, director of operations at the Utah Associ-

ation of Counties.

In retrospect, that was the only time anyone could describe their trip with the words "great time."

On the approach to D.C., flight attendants were restricted to their seats.

"That's our first signal we knew it was bad," Grace said. "Then we circled a few times. I wondered when we were going to come down."

When they did try to land, the plane pulled up about 100 feet from the ground, in turbulence that made many passengers sick.

"It was like we took off again," Grace said. "It was pretty clear we wouldn't be landing in D.C."

Their plane landed in Detroit, and the Utah delegation found some hotel rooms and tried to collect their baggage. One 3 a.m. wakeup call later and they arrived to find no ticket or gate agents.

When they finally landed — for real this time — in Washington, the tension of the prior

day eased up, tempered by the gratitude that the group made it safely.

"What seems to be the most stressful is what you end up laughing about later on," Grace said. "This will be something we laugh about later, 'remember that flight?'"

By land

The husband of Oakland County, Mich. Supervisor Shelley Taub called to tell her that her flight had been cancelled.

"They put me on a new flight and it was going to take me to Minneapolis, Nashville, Texas and then to Washington at 11 p.m.," she said. "The flight from Detroit to D.C. is an hour and four minutes. That wasn't going to work."

Taub called the Michigan Association of Counties, and she heard she wasn't the only county official in that situation. Luckily for her, a group of three MAC board members were headed to D.C. in a rented van from Kent County (Grand Rap-

ids) and they had room for one more. The only catch? One pit stop.

Nine hours later, including a stop for dinner, they made it, though they came across a fallen tree on the Washington Beltway when they were close enough to see the lights of the city.

Fortunately, predictions for snow Tuesday evening did not end up disrupting air travel, as it had in 2014. Taub and her husband found themselves in an Arlington County hotel for four days waiting to get home that year.

"I didn't care if I stayed in Washington for a month, I wasn't going back to Michigan in that van," she said. "We had a good time, but I didn't want to push our luck."

Pottawattamie County, Iowa Auditor Melvyn Houser learned when to cut his losses when his flight from Omaha was rerouted through Atlanta. He and Douglas County, Neb.

Commerce Sec. Ross talks infrastructure, exports, Census

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

Infrastructure, business exports and the U.S. Census were all topics covered March 6 by U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross at NACo's Legislative Conference.

Ross was sworn in as the 39th secretary of Commerce Feb. 28, 2017. Ross is the former chairman and chief strategy officer of WL Ross & Co. LLC and has over 55 years of investment banking and private equity experience.

He started off his speech by noting unemployment rates of women and minorities are at "all-time lows."

Ross also discussed trade issues, specifically the Trump administration's controversial tariffs on imports of aluminum and steel. "You have seen the news that we're imposing a 10 percent tariff on imported aluminum and a 25 percent tariff on steel," he said. "Imports of these products threaten our national security...we're confident that any negative effects on our economy will not be substantial."

Infrastructure is on the top of many county officials' lists. The Trump administration will spend \$200 billion in federal funds to help spur more than \$1.5 trillion to build the nation's infrastructure with partners at the state and local level, Ross said. "President Trump has a real plan to fix our crumbling infrastructure."

Ross also said that the Trump administration has rolled back 22 regulations for every new regulation implemented, which was applauded by the audience. "There's more to come," Ross said.

The U.S. Census is preparing for 2020, one of his biggest challenges as Commerce secretary, Ross said. "It is a big job to check

every address in the nation."

A marketing budget of \$500 million is earmarked for an outreach program and plans are afoot to hire 1,000 local partnership specialists, he said, 214 more than in 2010. The specialists will encourage participation in the Census.

Want to help businesses in your county export to other

countries? Ross touted the U.S. Commercial Service, which helps small- and medium-sized U.S. businesses export. The service has 106 domestic offices and 76 posts in embassies around the world, he noted. (You can find detailed information on the domestic office closest to you at export.gov.) Fewer than 3 percent ever export anything, Ross said. "Our teams abroad can advocate on behalf of your local companies and help find investor and joint venture partners. If you have not worked with us yet, please reach out and work with our local offices."

"We want to advocate on behalf of your local communities," he said.

Ross also gave a plug to his department's SelectUSA Investment Summit, scheduled for June 20-22 at the Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center at National Harbor in Prince George's County, Md. The annual conference attracts thousands of investors, economic development teams, media and corporate leaders from all over the world, he said. **CN**



Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross addresses NACo members March 6 at the association's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Jason Dixon

NACo Leg attendees fought tough travel conditions to reach D.C.

From **TRAVEL** page 3

Commissioner Chris Rodgers, a NACo past president, arrived to find their connecting flight to D.C. cancelled.

"Right then, Chris knew it was smart to just go home and try the next day," Houser said. "He did enough traveling to know when to draw the line and when you're just going to spin your wheels." Houser waited it out, spending seven hours in the Atlanta airport before giving up and getting a flight home. Then he tried again the next day and got his direct flight.

"I had a Saturday morning Agriculture Committee meeting," he said. "I thought I could make it, maybe I could get on standby." Over the course of his trip, Houser developed a set of rules for his travel:

1. If you have a connecting

flight, do not check luggage,

2. Keep your car keys with you in case you end up going home,

3. If the weather is bad, go home and wait it out, and

4. If your flight is cancelled, get in line immediately to get a flight home.

His Iowa State Association of Counties President Lonny Pulkrabek, Johnson County's sheriff, on the other hand, managed to get to Charlotte, then drive the six-plus hours to D.C.

Like Houser, NACo Financial Services Corporation Regional Development Manager Kyle Cline made it to Charlotte before his connecting flight was cancelled and he turned back home to Indiana.

"I'd never gotten texts about cancelled flights so fast," he said. Another flight, through Chicago, got him to Baltimore



Utah commissioners Jerry Taylor (Garfield County), Rebecca Benally (San Juan County) and Tammy Pearson (Beaver County) wait for their luggage in Detroit. Photo by Tammy Pearson

Saturday evening — after just a four-hour layover — where he found his Amtrak trip was cancelled. He eventually got to D.C. via airport shuttle, which he

shared with Yuma County, Ariz. Recorder Robyn Stallworth Pouquette.

"As crazy as the two-day process was, I had the opportunity

to strike up a conversation with her about U.S. Communities," he said. "I think I made some headway introducing her to the program." **CN**

When disaster strikes: How volunteer, faith-based partnerships can help your county

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

Before disasters strike your county, you should be certain about which local or regional faith-based groups you can work with to help provide temporary shelter, hot meals and other types of assistance to residents, said Gregory Forrester, president and CEO, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. The national group also has state-level associations that you can contact to find faith-based groups in your area that help during disasters.

Forrester was part of a panel March 5 that discussed “Disaster Response and Recovery: Leveraging Community, Volunteer and Faith-Based Partnerships for Effective Disaster Response” at the NACo Legislative Conference. He also advised holding an event with local faith-based groups where “everyone can get together.” Linking faith-based groups to local government, nonprofits and businesses is also helpful.

Panelists Marcus Coleman, acting director, FEMA, DH Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership and Torey Powell, program manager, USDA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, said their jobs are to connect groups with communities. We are there to “help localities bridge those relationships before disasters strike,” Powell said.

AmeriCorps trains 18-24 year-olds for disaster careers at five campuses, said panelist Gina Cross, acting director, AmeriCorps NCCC. FEMA partially pays for the young volunteers to help at disasters, she noted.

Resilient Counties discuss public health impacts of natural disasters

County leaders should establish a network of specialized “disaster hospitals” in order to prepare for a number of possi-

ble catastrophes, a panel told NACo members March 4 at the Resilient and Healthy Counties Luncheon.

The discussion about strengthening counties’ resilience by addressing the public health impacts of natural disasters was kicked off by Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Toni Carter, chair of Healthy Counties.

Last year, 813 counties were declared disasters, said Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore, chair of the Resilient Counties Advisory Board. “It is the new normal,” he said.

Local governments are finding innovative ways to deal with public health. Phil Maytubby, director of Public Health Protection, Oklahoma City-County Health Department, said they were able to vaccinate 422 people for the flu in a “drive-through” event held last month at a casino parking lot.

Forming volunteer groups be-

fore disasters is extremely helpful, Maytubby said. When a tornado blows down fences “cows and horses get out. Who’s gonna round all them up? We have a volunteer team for that.” But he recommended not using “spontaneous” volunteers. When they tried it there and “arrested 10 of them for outstanding warrants.”

Jennifer Kiger, chief, Office of Public Health Preparedness

and Response, Harris County, Texas said the county had its hands full with Hurricane Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane that hit the coast Aug. 25. It was the third 100-plus year flood in three years and submerged 30 percent of the county. More than 100,000 homes were damaged and 36 people died.

Harris County’s Office of Public Health response includ-

ed coordination with hospitals and healthcare systems, disease surveillance, health and medical operations at the NRG mega-shelter, mosquito control, environmental health (water systems, food establishments), mass health education campaign, large-scale disaster animal coordination and mobile service delivery.

Several members of the packed luncheon asked about the best way to help homebound residents during disasters and there were no easy answers. One concern was liability because often there are not enough emergency personnel to help evacuate the homebound.

“Liability is death to preparedness and community response,” Gore said.

Looking into some sort of neighborhood “buddy” system is one option, coordinating with durable medical device compa-



Torey Powell, program manager at the USDA Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, talks about the assistance available from his office. Photo by Jason Dixon

See **DISASTER** page 12



Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore opens a discussion March 4 about resilient counties during a luncheon panel discussion at the NACo Legislative Conference. Looking on are panelists Jennifer Kiger, chief, Office of Public Health Preparedness & Response, Harris County, Texas; Phil Maytubby, director of Public Health Protection Oklahoma City-County Health Department, and Richard Waldhorn, contributing scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. Photo by Jason Dixon

Graves: All options on table for infrastructure bill, but gas tax doubtful

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) cast doubt on the likelihood of funding infrastructure improvements with a gas tax increase, during a March 6 Capitol Hill briefing with county officials. “I don’t think we can get a gas tax passed through the House of Representatives

right now,” he said. “We could look at (vehicle miles traveled), maybe possibly some sort of indexing component. I don’t think we ought to even try (with the gas tax). Everything is on the table in terms of funding the highway trust fund moving forward.”

Graves is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Committee

on Transportation Infrastructure. He said funding an infrastructure package is the transportation committee’s top priority after Federal Aviation Authority reauthorization, but he expected the congressional infrastructure deal to be notably different from President Trump’s proposal, which leverages \$200 billion in federal funding to attract a total of \$1.5

trillion in total investment.

Graves said he wanted to avoid any funding mechanism that would present motorists with a single tax bill at the end of the year, crediting fuel taxes with the pay-as-you-go method. But he was not otherwise enthusiastic about fuel taxes’ viability as automobile technology improves.

“I have a problem with fuel

taxes anyway because we have a lot of vehicles on the road that aren’t buying gas or are hybrids and fuel efficiency is getting better and better all the time. It’s regressive,” he said.

Graves added that tolling didn’t excite him either as an infrastructure funding mechanism.

“I don’t like paying for something twice,” he said. **CN**

Forest Service chief outlines new priorities

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

A few months into his new role and a few days before his March 7 resignation, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief Tony Tooke outlined five national priorities to help guide decision-making for the agency.

“We’ve seen a rise of catastrophic-level-type events, including fire, insects, disease and drought, all of which exacerbate each other,” he said.

“Of the 193 million acres of national forest system, 80 million acres is at moderate-to-high risk of fire, insect and disease,” he said. “That’s not sustainable, we’re not keeping pace. [That includes] 70,000 communities that are adjacent to the lands at risk. Drinking water, environmental security, wildlife, sacred sites, recreation opportunities, there is a lot at stake.”

USFS’s priorities include:

- Having a safe, respectful work environment for USFS employees and eliminating unnecessary barriers to the point where the Forest Service can increase its capacities
- Being a good neighbor, including with urban and suburban communities, private landowners and different forms of government, and excelling at customer service
- Focusing on shared stewardship through strengthening partner and volunteer programs
- Improving conditions of forest and rangelands, and



Randy Hanvelt, Tuolumne County, Calif., speaks during the Western Interstate Region Board meeting. Photo by Jason Dixon

- Enhancing recreation opportunities, sustaining infrastructure and improving access — the most common refrain he has heard from communities contiguous to USFS land.

Endangered Species Act

In contrast to when Jordan Smith usually speaks to the WIR Board, he now sees opportunities to advance legislation or regulatory changes that should improve the way the Endangered Species Act (ESA) works and the effect it will have on local communities.

He is the executive director of the National Endangered

Species Act Reform Coalition. Twenty-five years have passed since the ESA was reauthorized or amended.

“For many, many years, we were looking at the Endangered Species Act as a holistic, kitchen sink approach to revamp or modernize the law. And I think people recognize that’s not a pragmatic way to go in our political climate, so we’ve advocated for targeted approaches to specific parts of the law that could use improvement.”

ESA-related legislation that has advanced in the House Natural Resources Committee includes:

- The Listing Reform Act would require an impact review as species are considered for ESA listing
- State-tribal-local species transparency, requires the Fish and Wildlife Service take data from states and local governments into account when making decisions
- Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act, court costs that go to litigants that receive federal money.

For the first time in a decade, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case related to the ESA. *Weyerhaeuser v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* will ask whether there is a hab-

itability requirement for a critical habitat and whether a decision not to exclude an area from critical habitat is judicially reviewable.

Wildfire playbook debuting in May

In November the WIR Board of Directors adopted wildfire as the most important policy priority for 2018. In May, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council will release the Community Wildfire Playbook.

The playbook, “designed for commissioners and supervisors by commissioners and supervisors,” will be an online portal that will provide county officials with a full spectrum of messaging to help lead counties toward more in-depth understanding of wildfire risk.

Mike Zupko, executive director of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, said the main problem with the Thomas Fire in Ventura County, Calif., in late 2017, resulted from evacuation fatigue, after residents had already evacuated several times.

The playbook’s online portal prompts users to choose a county’s wildfire history and environmental determinants, which then generates messaging tactics to help communicate awareness of wildfire risk and how to take steps to mitigate those risks.

The playbook will be introduced at the WIR Conference in Blaine County, Idaho May 24-26. **CN**

Public lands counties, members of Congress rally for PILT, SRS

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

With the 2017 Western wildfires still fresh in their minds, a bipartisan congressional group came out to support public lands counties intent on solidifying the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs at a Capitol Hill rally March 6, along with active forest management policies.

Members of the House and county officials spoke in support of PILT's permanent funding, which pays for county services that would otherwise be funded by property taxes, were large swaths of land not owned by the federal government.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), SRS's main sponsor in 2000, pointed out why the program was created — to make up for the decline in revenue from timber harvest on federal lands. The program expired in 2015, and payments to those counties had plummeted. It was not included in President Trump's budget proposal.

"When we wrote this bill, we always said this measure to help schools and roads and rural services was intended to be a complement, not a substitute for increasing the timber harvest in a sustainable fashion," he said.

Wyden added that the federal government's refusal to fund SRS was compounded by federal policies that made it harder for local governments to manage their land to their advantage.

He also decried the practice of "fire borrowing," in which the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior divert fire prevention funding to fight wildfires.

The wildfires last year in Washington, Oregon, Mon-



Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) declares that rural counties should not be sacrificed. Photos by Jason Dixon

tana and California, many on federally-managed forest land, led to speakers criticizing the federal government's failure to adopt active forest management practices, which members of Congress and county officials alike said would reduce the threat of wildfire and yield more timber revenue for the counties.

"There's fuel sitting in the forest floor," Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.) said. "You wonder why we're having devastating forest fires." Herrera Beutler was one of six representatives to join Wyden at the event.

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), chair of the House Republican Conference, represents several counties that rely on SRS payments, and she said funding the program was a priority for the coming budget agreement ne-

gotiations.

"What happens in our national forests drives the economy in those communities; and when there isn't the forest levels and the revenue coming off the forest it means these communities are in a desperate situation," she said.

Columbia County, Ore., for example, received \$2.3 million in 2008 from SRS, according to Commissioner Henry Heimuller. This year, with the program expired, payments were reduced to roughly \$400,000.

"For a small county like ours, that makes a huge difference in our ability to pave roads, keep our schools open, to keep criminals off the streets and police cars on the roads," he said.

Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) represents the western side of Arizona, much of which is



Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) addresses public lands rally.

managed by the Department of Defense, Bureau of Land Management or the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It's a new renaissance in this country and there's no reason Secure Rural Schools

can't be part of it," he said. "(PILT) is not a hand out, it's not welfare, it's what's due us as rural counties in Western states." He and Herrera Beutler stressed that counties have upheld their end of the PILT and SRS bargain. "This has nothing to do with partisan politics, this is good government," Herrera Beutler said. "This is a contract between the federal government and the counties, but it's ... a contract the federal government has reneged on.

"Either the federal government needs to return some of that authority for locals to use it, or they need to keep the contract." **CN**

Analytics coming to Department of Agriculture

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Rural Innovation Centers were a staple of Sonny Perdue's tenure as Georgia governor, and now one is a part of the Department of Agriculture (USDA), now that he is secretary.

His chief innovation officer, Gina Sheets, briefed Rural Action Caucus members at their conference business meeting. Sheets, previously served as Indiana's director of agriculture, and in her new role will build collaboration between USDA and local governments, foundations, nonprofits and associations to get the best out of rural America.

"Rural America isn't just about agriculture and forestry," she said.

"It produces most of the nation's energy, it's home to a significant share of the nation's manufacturing and most of America's dynamic and attractive small towns, our greatest scenic and vacation destinations."



Gina Sheets, chief innovation officer, Rural Development, addresses NACo members. Photo by Jason Dixon

Analytics will inform much of the innovation center's work, with demonstrated success being key to winning support from USDA.

"We are called rural development, we are not rural aid," Sheets said. "There are times that we use programs to the aid of our communities, but we are looking for the development

to see rural prosperity actually take place. If we say we're going to do it, we'd better be able to measure it."

Rural areas have also seen a disproportionate impact from the opioid epidemic. Betty-Ann Bryce, a USDA senior policy advisor, described the scope of the series of opioid roundtables USDA is planning

across the country.

"Rural development looks at this not as a public health issue but as a prosperity challenge," Bryce said.

"In order for us to move forward and say we're building healthy, prosperous communities, we have to look at what's happening with respect to opioids, because that's tak-

ing away from your ability to be prosperous and that's your bottom line."

The summits will focus on what is working, what is not working and where locals see the next opportunity.

"We believe if we have a series of local in-depth conversations in different counties, we will hear from your leadership; we'll hear from folks on the ground; we'll hear from social services; we'll hear from economic development; we'll hear all aspects in these conversations," she said.

With health trends outpacing the rest of the country by 10 or 15 years, the Appalachian region has been a canary in the coal mine for the rest of the country, and Michael Meit, co-director of the NORCH Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis explained how data from opioid deaths and other diseases of despair could be used to figure out these epidemics.

That data will be loaded into an interactive feature available in March at norc.org. **CN**

Getting the word out about the mentally ill in jails

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

If your county is involved in Stepping Up, a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in jails, part of that effort should include selling the idea to the public, said Lincoln County, Ore. Commissioner Bill Hall, a former journalist.

"You have to know the issue well before you sell it," he told an audience March 5 at NACo's Legislative Conference during a panel discussion on the topic.

"It's not a new program, it's not about new jobs and it's not about getting soft on crime."

"It is about getting smart on crime," he said. "It's personal to more people than you realize. Use your bully pulpit."

Panelist Nicole Nishida, public information officer for

the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, said there are many ways you can get the word out including:

- Issuing news releases
- Posting information on the county website
- Creating a video
- Posting information on social media
- Submitting op-eds to the local newspaper
- Making monthly appearances either in person or on radio or TV
- Submitting public service announcements, flyers and bulletins
- Holding town hall meetings

"Who is your target audience?" Nishida asked. "Get to know them. Do 'meet and greets.'"

She also advised using fact sheets to back up your news releases, build up good will with



Nicole Nishida, public information officer for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, speaks to NACo members during a panel discussion on how to work with the media. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

the media and to remember that these days, journalists are on very tight deadlines. "It's

fast-paced," she said. The media "needs it now."

Hall said to be sure to keep

the message local. "This is our problem. We have to own it, we have to try to fix it," he said. **CN**

Counties need to assess damage from opioids

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

With the federal government announcing its intent to file a lawsuit against the producers and sellers of opioid-based painkillers, county officials may wonder why their hundreds of peers are filing their own suits, either in state or federal court.

“Because we help the most. We provide the most services to those in need and the public at large,” said Steve Acquario, executive director of the New York State Association of Counties.

Those services are in high

state for addiction treatment services that are plentiful in Florida.

“They don’t have these kinds of services in West Virginia,” she said. “When people come out of treatment and they don’t have a place to stay, they wind up in our shelters and that drives up our costs even more.”

Palm Beach County will likely file a lawsuit in state court, McKinlay said, pursuing the following causes of action against pharmaceutical companies, healthcare providers and pharmacies: unfair trade practices, negligence, misrepresentation, public nuisance,

sel and deputy director for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, said that even though it was too early to begin determining damages in the lawsuits, it wasn’t too

early for counties to start adding up their costs associated with the opioid epidemic.

“Even if you’re not sure what damages you have or how to quantify those damages, start

talking to folks in your county, law enforcement, social services, to get an idea of the magnitude of the problem and how you might be able to quantify the damages,” she said. **CN**

Crisis simulation forces county officials to think on their feet

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

Bucksnoth County was in crisis. A five-car accident had disrupted the small county’s life, with undetermined injuries and a difficult time reaching everyone in the area, thanks to uneven cellular coverage.

While Commissioner Mark Scott addressed questions from the media, he thanked first responders and gave what updates he could, but then came a shout from the back of the press scrum. “Why did you vote against funding road improvements on this stretch, three times?” Scott fell silent.

“I was totally stumped,” Scott said. “How do you respond to that, and change gears in the middle of a press conference? If we don’t role-play those situations, we wouldn’t know how to handle that.” Scott is actually a commissioner in Randolph County, W.Va., but

he was representing fictional Bucksnoth County in a crisis communications workshop that grouped county officials together to tackle disaster simulations. Groups were given disaster situations to go along with demographics for their made-up counties. Participants then conducted mock press conferences, with lights and recorders in their faces. Several participants brought their real-life experiences to the workshop, including a representative from a county that faced scrutiny over the removal of Confederate monuments, a supervisor from flooded Mono County, Calif., and Scott himself dealt with Hurricane Sandy as a city councilman in Elkins, W.Va.

“We had the national press in our town taking pictures of the damage, they had reporters everywhere,” he said. “This stuff really happens, and the role-playing really helped us

prepare for doing it again.” Those press briefings can escalate, with tempers flaring and people shouting to be heard. For elected officials, who often play a support role to county staff, their most valuable role is often their fundamental function as people’s representative.

“Sometimes the best thing we can do is be there for the public and communicate with them,” Scott said. “But you need to be able to evaluate whether a question is effective or if it’s a gotcha question that will distract from what you’re trying to do as a county.”

In a crisis, communicating the dangers to look out for, the resources to make use of and the ways the public can be of assistance take precedence.

“One of these days soon, it will be a real microphone in my face,” he said. “Elected officials do not realize what weight their words carry. I do now.” **CN**



Steve Acquario, executive director, New York State Association of Counties explains why counties should consider suing to recover costs of fighting the opioid epidemic. Photo by Jason Dixon

demand as a generation of people, sold on the promise of non-addictive pain relief by doctors they trusted, blew up in their faces and left many addicted and often turning to heroin when their supply of the drugs dry out.

“People just don’t get up and say they’re going to start taking heroin,” Acquario said.

Counties, from human service agencies to law enforcement to medical examiners’ officers, are left to address the effects.

For Palm Beach County, Fla., that has meant a 509-percent increase in the number of overdose deaths in the last four years, with 1,200 deaths over the last two years.

Numbers are higher, County Mayor Melissa McKinlay said, because of the volume of people who travel from out of

unjust enrichment, racketeering and fraud.

Mark O’Connell, executive director of the Wisconsin Counties Association, described his association’s effort to recruit the state’s 75 counties into the federal lawsuit being settled.

“By getting involved, that doesn’t mean you are somehow against the medical field,” he said. “You are getting involved because you want two things. You want to change behavior on the part of manufacturers and you want to be compensated for costs that you have already incurred because of misbehavior (by those manufacturers).”

Acquario added, “This is not to put these manufacturers out of business, it’s to put them in their place.”

Amy Bason, general coun-



Mark Scott, Randolph County, W.Va., interviews Julie Rodgers of Kalamazoo County, Mich., about a crisis in her fictional county during the crisis communications workshop. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

VA's Shulkin: Offering vets choices a priority

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

Giving veterans better choices when it comes to how they get services and benefits is a top priority at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Department, VA Sec. David Shulkin said March 5 in an address to NACo members.

That means working with Congress to eliminate rules that require that someone live 40 miles away from a VA hospital in order to get private-sector care, he noted. "They won't have to drive so far," he said. The VA secretary's speech kicked off the General Session March 5 at NACo's 2018 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

Much of the VA's work takes place in satellite VA centers where administrators work with local leaders, Shulkin said, especially at Community Veterans Experience Boards,

which spurs local dialogues on veterans' issues. "Counties matter — we can't do this work from Washington," he said.

Another top priority at the VA includes modernizing VA facilities, 60 percent of which are more than 50 years old, Shulkin said. Along with updating old buildings, he also hopes to see an overhaul of management practices and electronic records at the VA. The VA wait-time crisis that hit the news several years ago is a thing of the past, Shulkin said.

Today, 85 percent of veterans seeking help from the VA system are seen within seven days. The VA posts wait times on its website and it is 40 percent faster than the private sector, he noted.

Other good news: The VA has seen a 50 percent reduction in homelessness among veterans, he said and is working on creative solutions with local



Veterans Affairs Sec. David Shulkin addresses NACo members March 5. Photo by Jason Dixon

partners. The VA system is also preparing for the "silver tsunami," with the average age of Vietnam vets currently at 66; as they continue to age, demands will grow, he said.

The Veterans Affairs Depart-

ment is working on getting 100 percent of veterans covered for mental health benefits; currently only 45 percent are eligible, Shulkin noted.

The VA is also tackling the opioid abuse crisis, he said, by

prescribing fewer opioids. He noted that prescription rates have seen a 41 percent decrease.

"We're working with local governments to find solutions," Shulkin said. **CN**

FEMA hopes to embed staff in local communities



During his speech, FEMA Administrator William "Brock" Long said resiliency belongs at the local level, not at the federal level. Photo by Jason Dixon

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants to get FEMA staff out of federal and regional

offices and embedded in states, large cities and eventually local communities, FEMA Administrator William "Brock" Long told NACo members March 6.

"We're going to help you with planning, mitigation and public

outreach," Long said. "We're going to start changing. I want the relationship now rather than when disaster strikes." Long made his comments at the Opening General Session.

"My goal is to help support

you in achieving your goals," he said, "not dictating what your goals should be."

Long noted that in his 17 years in emergency management, there are three things he's learned:

- "First, all disasters begin and end at the local level."
- "Two, I don't care who you are, I don't care what your politics are...when a disaster strikes, it requires all of us, we're all in it together to be able to help our citizens respond and recover."
- "The third thing I've learned is every time I change jobs, something catastrophic happens."

After the hurricanes that hit Texas, Louisiana and Florida "we learned as a result of 2017, Mother Nature does not seem to recognize the flood maps that we produce," Long said.

"We've gotten away from the very simple fact that any house can flood, regardless if you're on the map or not. I'm kind of tired of the argument that these maps needing to be changed."

"Quite frankly the NFIP program is not operating on a functional sound basis," he said. "We need Congress to change the platform on which we operate. We need to double the number of policyholders from 5 million to 10 million."

Physically inspecting damaged homes, Long said, is an "antiquated" way of doing things and "slows things down." He said he hopes to start using technology.

"It's a delicate balance," he noted, because he has to protect against fraud but said for the most part, "the overwhelming majority are honestly seeking assistance after suffering damage."

Long also advised county officials to "get to know your local emergency manager" and "make sure they are properly staffed and properly funded."

Resiliency is at the local level, Long noted. "Land use planning and building codes can create resiliency and reduce the risk. I need you to help me overcome that." **CN**

LUCC talks affordable housing, workforce issues

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

Affordable housing, job training, economic development and transportation were key issues discussed by a panel of county leaders March 4 at a standing-room-only meeting of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus.

With a population growth of 3.3 percent and housing growth of 2.2 percent in Los Angeles County, "we're pricing ourselves right out of affordable housing," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, a LUCC Steering Committee member. The median price for a home in the county is \$550,000.

Airbnb is having a big impact on affordable housing in her county, Barger noted. "People are buying real estate and then renting it out. They are renting out homes in the Hollywood hills and renting them out for parties." International investors, especially, are "absentee landlords," she noted.

In the District of Columbia, the city-county uses a Housing Production Trust Fund and a Housing Preservation Trust Fund to help residents, said D.C. Deputy Mayor Courtney Snowden, a LUCC panelist.

Although affordable housing is a major challenge, panelist



Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, a LUCC Steering Committee member, makes a point March 4 during the group's meeting at the NACo Legislative Conference. Seated to her right are panelists Courtney Snowden, District of Columbia Deputy Mayor and Michael Thurmond, chief executive officer of DeKalb County, Ga. Photo by Jason Dixon

Michael Thurmond, chief executive officer of DeKalb County, Ga., said "the largest common denominator is a job."

DeKalb County is working to put young people in jobs with its summer youth employment program, paying \$9 an hour with a combination of federal and county funds, he said.

Having a viable workforce and providing job training

are challenges for large urban counties, especially when they are trying to recruit new companies to the area. "The best way to train for a job is to have a job," said Thurmond. "They need to learn the 'soft skills' of getting to work on time."

Helping young people find jobs is also a way to deter crime. "If you want to reduce crime, you've got to provide

jobs," Thurmond noted.

In D.C., residents can get job experience by taking part in Infrastructure Academy, where they are trained for jobs working with the water company, transportation and green infrastructure, Snowden said. The average wage for those positions, she said is \$48.56 an hour. "The pathway to the middle class does not require a

college degree."

In Los Angeles County, "our biggest challenge was doing away with high school wood shop and classes for mechanics," Barger said. A new tech university that starts as early as 8th grade is teaching all skill sets that can help students eventually land "good six-figure jobs without a college degree." **CN**



They look like well-dressed frat brothers caught in a moment of celebration. And that's not far from reality for Sens. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Tim Scott (R-S.C.).

The two former local government officials banded together to successfully push legislation to create a new community development program, dubbed "Opportunity Zones," that was included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

The Opportunity Zones program provides a tax incentive for investors to re-invest their unrealized capital gains into Opportunity Funds that are dedicated to investing in Opportunity Zones designated by the governors of every U.S. state and territory.

Booker and Scott were on hand at the Legislative Conference to discuss the new measure during an interview conducted by John Lettieri, co-founder of the Economic Innovation Group, a strong advocate for the Opportunity Zones concept. Photo by Jason Dixon

Edelman sparks Board Forum



Marian Wright Edelman (r) shares a laugh with Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Toni Carter (c) and Arapahoe County, Colo. Commissioner Nancy Sharpe. The three fielded questions from the Board of Directors about their efforts to reduce childhood poverty. Photo by Jason Dixon

Marian Wright Edelman is the rock star of children's advocacy.

The founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, a Head Start champion, counsel to the late Dr. Martin Luther King and recipient of the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Edelman commands respect and admiration.

She came to NACo's Board Forum at the Legislative Con-

ference with a singular message: "Counties are the ones we need to end childhood poverty."

Edelman is launching a new initiative, an End Childhood Poverty Campaign, slated to step off within the next two months.

It will address the needs of the poorest group in America — children from birth to 5 years old.

Despite some good budget news at the federal level that

saw CHIP reauthorized for 10 years and new money set aside for family preservation and child care, Edelman said "our safety net is at risk."

About 13.2 million children live in poverty in the United States and of those, 6 million live in extreme poverty, Edelman said.

"There should be no hungry children in America."

Reducing poverty, keeping children safe and healthy is not just a moral quest, Edel-

man said, but a self-interested one as well.

How can the country compete with the likes of China or South Korea? she asked, if children cannot read or perform at grade level.

"You don't need to love the children, you don't need to like the children, but you do need to invest in the children," she admonished.

She ended her formal remarks with some advice she found one day on her desk that

maintained all you needed to know to succeed in life you could learn from Noah's Ark:

- No. 1: Don't miss the boat
- No. 2: We're all in the same boat
- No. 3: Plan ahead, and finally,
- Remember that the Ark was built by amateurs. The Titanic by professionals.

"We need to be building better communities and give our children hope," she observed. **CN**

Responsiveness, communication key during disasters, county officials say

From **DISASTER** page 5

nies, Meals on Wheels (although privacy concerns are another issue, one county official noted), and transportation services for the homebound are other options that were mentioned.

Gore ended the hour-long discussion by asking members to make disaster-planning a priority and to collaborate with NACo and state associations. "Be a part of the movement," he said.

Building relationships

After a flood hit Ellicott City in Howard County, Md. in 2016, Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman said it was important for him to be out on the streets to find out what residents needed. The flood hit after 6 inches of rain fell in less than two hours.

"The lieutenant governor came, he lives in the county, and said 'this looks like a disaster movie,'" Kittleman said March 5 in a panel discussion on dealing with disasters at the NACo Legislative Conference.

Kittleman said it is important to be on the ground communicating daily with residents and to quickly communicate with state officials.

Every day after the flood, Kittleman said he hit the streets in his jeans to meet with local business owners to see how the county could help. And at night, Kittleman said he and the county's emergency manager would drive through residential areas and stop to talk to residents.

"I was on the streets for days," he said. "We were responsive

and I think that made a difference." The flood also had a silver lining among local business owners who said they bonded over their challenges during getting back on their feet after the flood.

Kittleman, who was elected in November 2014, said that his staff told him shortly after his election that he needed a disaster plan, but he didn't want to think about it. But they did review the plan and were ready when they were later hit with 28 inches of snow, and later a tor-

nado and the flood.

Keeping the lines of communication open with state officials is key and contacting them immediately can only help a county when disaster strikes, Kittleman said. After the flood hit on a Saturday, he said a town hall was held on the following Monday with the governor.

Panel moderator Judd Freed, emergency manager in Ramsey County, Minn., said "even if you have a plan, you have to be able to adapt and change when needed." **CN**

Serious concerns raised about FCC Mobility Fund map

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has released a map showing areas across the United States eligible to receive support for the deployment of 4G service as part of the commission's Mobility Fund Phase II auction, the FCC's Michael Janson, deputy director, Rural Broadband Task Force, told members of NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee during a March 3 meeting at the Legislative Conference.

The purpose of the fund is to allocate \$4.53 billion over the next 10 years to preserve and expand mobile coverage to rural areas.

The auction is important to supporting mobile voice and broadband coverage, incentivizing the deployment of mobile wireless service through a reverse auction and ensuring that 4G service is preserved and advanced in those areas of the country that lack unsubsidized service.

The map, however, has drawn fire, most recently from a bipartisan group of U.S. senators representing rural states. "...we are concerned that the map misrepresents the existence of 4G LTE services in many areas," they told the FCC in a letter March 9. "As a result, the Commission's proposed challenge process may not be robust enough to adequately address the shortcomings in the Commission's assessment of geographic areas in need of support for this proceeding."

Led by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), others who signed the letter include Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Angus King (I-Maine), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Gary Peters (D-Mich.) and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.).

But the FCC says the map is more of a starting point.



Gerry Lederer, partner, Best, Best & Krieger, says local governments are not barriers to 5G deployment March 3 during a panel discussion at the NACo Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

"The initial areas map is just the first step of the process, and there will now be a robust five-month challenge window during which parties will have the opportunity to submit evidence that more areas should be eligible," FCC spokeswoman Tina Pelkey said.

"It will be public who wins what," Janson said in response to a question about who will receive the funds and how they will be used.

The window for submitting a challenge opens March 29 and will remain open until Aug. 27, he said.

See the map here: <http://bit.ly/2FYqPBU>.

NACo members also expressed frustrations at their March 3 meeting over the continued inability for first responders to communicate in rural areas, inside buildings and between responders.

"The next five years we're building out more and more, including pushing out into rural areas," Justin Shore, counsel, Office of Government Affairs, First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) told members during a panel discussion. "It's a 25-year contract that FirstNet has established with

AT&T."

The First Responder Network Authority of the United States was created under the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 as an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

The AT&T/FirstNet service isn't available in Josephine County, Ore. said Lily Morgan, a county commissioner there. "I have agencies that can't communicate with other agencies," she said. "We're going back to analog radios. The service isn't available in rural areas."

"Now that I know about FirstNet, I'm going to be watching to see how services improve in our area," Morgan said.

Fifth-generation wireless networks were also discussed at the March 3 meeting.

"What we're seeing around the country is this false narrative from telecom companies: 'Give us access at reduced prices and we will build out to rural areas,'" said Gerry Lederer, partner, Best, Best & Krieger.

"Don't buy into the narrative that local government is

the barrier to broadband deployment — it just doesn't ring true," Lederer said.

The FCC will move at its March 22 meeting to get rid of National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Pres-

ervation Act reviews when locating equipment necessary to deploy 5G. Local control over 5G is also taking root in state Legislatures. In all, 14 states have passed small-cell legislation, Lederer said. **CN**



GRANT COUNTY, Wash.

Grant County was formed in 1909 and was named for U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant.

The water represents irrigation, lakes and the Grand Coulee Dam.

The Roman figure in the background signifies the power that the Dam supplies the county, state and beyond.

The cornucopia represents agriculture — Grant County is the No. 1 producer of potatoes in the nation.



The red and white emblem on the right represents government.

The phrase "Terra de Sol et Agua" means "Land of Sun and Water."

Would you like to see your county's seal featured? Contact Charlie Ban at cban@naco.org.

White House promises additional opioid efforts

On March 1, the White House hosted an Opioid Summit to discuss the Administration's efforts to combat the opioid crisis. With an opening by First Lady Melania Trump and closing remarks by President Trump, the program in the East Room included individuals who have been affected by the crisis such as former Fox News host Eric Bolling whose son died of an overdose. The White House's nominee for the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Jim Carroll made his first remarks and revealed his own family's experience with addiction. Organizations including NACo as well as state and local officials including Commissioner Greg Puckett (Mercer County, W.V.) were invited to the event.

Cabinet members joined panels on prevention, treatment and recovery and law enforcement and interdiction moderated by Kellyanne Conway, presidential counselor. In his remarks during a prevention, treatment and recovery panel, Human Services Secretary Alex Azar announced he will approve separate Medicaid waivers that exempt states from the Institutes of Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion.

The IMD exclusion prevents states from allowing Medicaid to reimburse for care at treatment facilities with more than 16 beds. Legislation is needed to repeal the IMD exclusion entirely. NACo supports easing the IMD to allow up to 15 days of inpatient care and up to 90 days of community-based mental health and substance use care per year.

Secretary Azar is also encouraging states to approve medication-assisted treatment (MAT) under Medicaid, which is a vital source of health coverage for individuals with addiction, accounting for 21 percent of all health

care spending on substance use disorders. Increasing the availability of MAT was one of the recommendations by the opioid task force convened by NACo and the National League of Cities and NACo has long advocated for protecting the Medicaid program while promoting flexibility to support local systems of care.

On a panel focused on law enforcement and interdiction, Attorney General Jeff Sessions discussed the recently formed Prescription Interdiction and Litigation Task Force, which will focus on targeting opioid manufacturers and distributors who have contributed to the opioid epidemic. Sessions also is directing the Drug Enforcement Administration to examine whether their quotas for the production of legal prescription drugs are adequate to protect people from risks.

In his closing remarks, President Trump announced that "the administration is going to be rolling out policy over the next three weeks," stating it "will be very, very strong." Last October the administration declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency, and in November the White House's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis released their final report with 56 recommendations — many of which have yet to be addressed. The president's FY 2019 budget proposal calls for an additional \$13 million to expand addiction treatment.

The recently enacted Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 allocates \$3 billion in additional funds for the opioid crisis for FY2018 and 2019, and Congress is currently deciding how the funds will be appropriated. At the same time, multiple committees in Congress continue to hold hearings and introduce legislation aimed at various aspects of the opioid crisis. **CN**

Gen. Stanley McChrystal went hands-off to make gains in Iraq



Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal speaks to the General Session audience. Photo by Jason Dixon

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Gen. Stanley McChrystal achieved a lot while in command of U.S. Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, but he still dwelled on how being slow to adopt new ways of thinking and leading kept him from doing more early on.

He saw al Qaeda in Iraq take heavy losses in leadership but keep on working, despite successful operations by American counterinsurgency forces, which had been in operation since 1980.

But it was an old way of thinking that had lulled U.S. Forces into overconfidence.

"When (the original) al Qaeda was formed in 1988, there was no information technology, but in 2003 every Iraqi and Afghan had a cell phone and access to a computer and used it in their daily lives and reflexively used them as terrorists," he said, comparing an established company to a nimble startup.

U.S. Forces changed the way they operated to match. Keeping backbone functions like finance and human resources

stable, communication and information sharing among combat forces changed dramatically, with more lateral communication among many more sources and more delegation.

Rather than bringing intelligence about targets to McChrystal after he had gone to sleep and deliberating over the courses of action, McChrystal instructed his forces to use their best judgment in authorizing airstrikes so they didn't miss their opportunities. To feel empowered to deviate from a plan if there was a better way to achieve success.

"You'll never be fast enough if you don't push decision making closer to the point of action," he said. "You'll never be precise enough because centralized doesn't work anymore."

For an organization, like the Armed Forces, that was built on routine and stability, delegation was a risk, but leveraging the trust between competent officers made it successful in what he called eyes-on-hands-off leadership.

"None of us had a road map before we did it," McChrystal said. "We did it because we had

to in combat."

That risk went hand-in-hand with accountability. The natural tendency to try to mitigate risk is to write policy after policy, he said.

"The experience changed his vision of leadership.

"When I started my career, I thought this is what a leader looked like: a general walking ashore with flunkies behind him taking down every instruction," McChrystal said. "The reality is that what we do as leaders may be different from what we thought we'd do.

"In reality what we actually do is we make the team work. We grow leaders, we enable leaders. I started thinking of leaders like gardeners. What's a gardener do? I don't think a gardener grows anything. Only plants can do that, but gardeners are not unimportant. They prepare the ground, they plant, they water they weed, they feed, they protect, they harvest.

"If a gardener does it well, he creates an environment in which plants can do that which only plants can do. The gardener isn't the choke point. The most effective leaders are a lot like gardeners." **CN**

All is not lost when public loses confidence

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Even beleaguered counties have a way back into citizens' good graces. It involves communication, accountability and commitment from officials who do have the public's confidence. Three local government officials in a variety of roles explained how during a workshop session on gaining citizen buy-in.

Lane County, Ore.'s budget cuts in the face of lost of timber revenue decimated the public safety budget, leaving the county with one deputy over nearly 5,000 square miles.

"People didn't trust us," said Commissioner Pat Farr, with a touch of gallows humor. "So what better time to ask for a really big revenue levy?"

After five failed levy votes, the county put the sheriff, the last person voters believed in, out as the face of the request.

"We promised specific things — a minimum of 225 jail beds, counseling and secure treatment and that the money would be placed in a separate revenue fund and audited independently," he said. "You have to make certain the entire jurisdiction hears the promises. We promise, very clearly, what we'll deliver."

Thanks to the trusted sheriff, not only did the next levy pass, but in several years the county was able to reduce the tax rate.

Baltimore City Mayor Catherine Pugh schedules a weekly press conference and twice-monthly meetings with groups representing all populations of the city.

Her common refrain during community listening tours, "We heard what you said, we're bringing the services you requested."

In some cases, that has meant reconfiguring schedules for services to match the needs of residents. For instance, homeless services are open at night, rather than from 9-5.

DeKalb County, Ga. CEO Michael Thurmond could have campaigned in the southern half of his county during his



Mecklenburg County, N.C. Manager Dena Diorio, Lane County, Ore. Commissioner Bill Farr, Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh and DeKalb County, Ga. CEO Michael Thurmond discuss building citizen buy-in. Photo by Jason Dixon

2016 campaign and won easily, but he committed to showing up all over the Atlanta metro county that is divided north and south on racial and partisan lines.

"You can win, but can you serve?" he asked. "You will represent the people who didn't vote for you, or didn't vote at all." That self-awareness can help

the government pull out of inertia when the public isn't happy. "If you find yourself with low credibility, be honest, accept the lack of trust and recognize

that you are obligated to over communicate," Thurmond said. "If a person does not trust you, they'll filter out even good information." **CN**

Chao touts Trump's infrastructure plan

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer



Transportation Sec. Elaine Chao. Photo by Jason Dixon

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao addressed county concerns about the composition of President Trump's infrastructure plan, which leans considerably on state and local governments to put up money for projects and includes a lot of private investment. She also stressed the administration's focus on rural infrastructure.

The infrastructure plan calls for \$200 billion in federal funding, in hopes of stimulating a total investment of \$1.5 trillion.

Chao said the plan to include private investors should put county officials at ease.

"The private sector helps to allocate risk. If the project isn't successful, the private sector bears the first loss, instead of the taxpayer," she said. "There are many private sector funds, private pension funds that want conservative investments like public infrastructure, which has collateral that will

not walk away." Federal spending to meet all infrastructure needs, she said, would result in dislocation in the private investment markets, hindering growth and job creation.

Meanwhile, the ban on private investment in public infrastructure in 26 states highlights the kind of hurdles the infrastructure plan faces.

Chao also touted regulatory reform that would speed up project delivery, including concurrent permitting review and allowing sister agencies to share information rather than requiring them to conduct their own studies.

Roughly \$50 billion will be dedicated to rural projects, with \$40 billion of it allocated by formula and \$10 billion by performance-based grants.

"We understand that rural America has different kinds of needs, and these rural infrastructure needs will be prioritized by state and local leaders like you," she said. **CN**

Innovation, collaboration key to combating two-generation poverty, county officials say

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

At a standing-room-only luncheon discussion on combating two-generation poverty at NACo's Legislative Conference March 3, the word of the hour was "innovation." That's what panel members said is needed to break down long-held ways of dealing with poverty.

Panel discussion member Arapahoe County, Colo. Commissioner Nancy Sharpe noted that her county has 17,000 children who live in poverty out of a population of 640,000. "What we really started focusing on was innovation," she said.

"We were really seeing the silos we had working with children and their parents," she said. "Sometimes we don't see what each is doing. We think about how the programs bring families together." Sharpe noted that silos exist across the board locally, statewide and on the federal level. "How do we bring siloed agencies to all work together?"

Sharpe also said that her county is "all about collecting data. Are we really achieving our goals?"

"What truly will change this is innovation," said Weber County, Utah Commissioner James Ebert, adding that his county had found "alarming" numbers of children in poverty, with 24 percent at-risk of living in poverty as they get older.

Collaboration was another key word at the March 3 luncheon. Ebert said bringing community leaders and policy makers together is important when trying to stamp out poverty in your county.

The panel discussion, which also included Duane Yoder, president of Garrett County, Md. Community Action Committee, was moderated by the Aspen Institute's Marjorie Sims. NACo President Roy Charles Brooks, Tarrant Coun-



Arapahoe County, Colo. Commissioner Nancy Sharpe makes a point during a discussion on multigenerational poverty. Seated next to her are Marjorie Sims, managing director, Ascend at Aspen Institute, and Duane Yoder, president, Garrett County, Md. Action Committee. Photo by Jason Dixon



Dakota County, Minn. County Manager Matt Smith discusses how his county cut red tape to reach at-risk children during a panel discussion on how to serve families in need. Photo by Jason Dixon

ty, Texas commissioner, is raising awareness about the county role in addressing poverty.

In addition to the luncheon panel discussion, another session explored how counties can cut through red tape to better reach families in need.

Cutting through red tape in Dakota County, Minn.

Dakota County, Minn. got the ball rolling to connect families in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program to its Birth to Age 8 Collaborative Initiative by cutting through some red tape, according to

Dakota County Manager Matt Smith.

Due to privacy laws, the county was initially unable to connect WIC families with the program, but a county attorney and state lawmakers created a consent form that everyone was comfortable with.

That was one of the nuggets of information revealed March 6 at "Counties Care: How to Effectively Serve Families in Need."

Carol Moehrle, district director, Public Health, Idaho North Central District, which covers Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis and Nez Perce counties, said

discussed the issue and heard from members of Congress.

Quality, affordable child-care is the key to help poverty-stricken families, said Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.). If parents know their children are being taken care of, they can get to work themselves. "If it's not affordable, it's not accessible," he said. "And if it's not affordable, parents can't go to work. And it can't be affordable unless it's subsidized."

Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood said you sometimes have to drill down to see "pockets of poverty." Poverty rates for children under 18 are rising in her district, she said. "As we sit here today, it's approaching 30 percent. We have 6,000 homeless children in our school system. We have low unemployment... but it doesn't take into account that there are pockets of poverty, ZIP codes, most in my district, that have unemployment rates between 10 percent and 25 percent."

The University of South Alabama Office of Community Engagement will help the county hold community conversations about ways to combat poverty, Ludgood said. After hearing from the community, there are plans to meet with policymakers, she said.

Sen. Martin Heimrich (D-N.M.) echoed what many said during the conference, that various entities need to work together and not in a siloed way to combat poverty. "You can't even access many of the programs you need, to get yourself out of a desperate situation," he said. Nutritional assistance, workforce programs, child care and transportation programs should all be accessible to residents in need in one location, he said. He also noted that local government needs to have flexibility and discretion to blend them together in a way that works best for their communities. **CN**

that more and more, various entities are working together instead of being "siloed." Some of their home visiting referrals, for instance, are coming from the court system. "If they want to keep their children, they must have a home visit," she said.

"We all have a stake in the game," she said. "Counties seem to be that place for common discussions to be had."

An audience member from Georgia noted that one of his county's biggest struggles was finding ways to reduce "provider fatigue" — stress among providers who visit families, day in and day out, with social problems. Another challenge? Finding affordable housing for program providers.

Finding people to employ, specifically nurses, was another problem for a county official from North Carolina, who said a position has been open since spring of 2016. The county is considering finding ways to collaborate with surrounding counties.

NACo members also took part in a press briefing March 6 on Capitol Hill on multigenerational poverty, where they



Board adopts new policy on issues ranging from affordable housing to election security



Gila County, Ariz. Supervisor Tommie Martin, chair, Public Lands Steering Committee, presents the committee's policy recommendations to NACo's Board of Directors.

Photo by Jason Dixon

NACo's Board of Directors approved 20 interim policy resolutions at the Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. These interim policy resolutions will supplement existing NACo policy until NACo's 2018 Annual Conference.

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

FY2019 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

ISSUE: Support FY 2019 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to support the following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs

in the FY 2019 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than \$3.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than \$1.2 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); no less than \$2.6 billion for Homeless Assistance grants, including at least \$270 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Section 8 project-based and tenant-

based contracts; \$70 million for HUD-VASH and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

Additionally, NACo opposes the imposition of a funding threshold to receive CDBG and HOME program funds directly, or the revision of "grandfathering" provisions that would remove participating jurisdictions from future funding eligibility.

Support Preservation and Expansion of Affordable Housing Stock

ISSUE: Preservation and Expansion of the U.S. Affordable Housing Stock

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports strategies that preserve and expand the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income families. These include:

- The elimination of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) cap, which limits the number of public housing units eligible for conversion under the RAD program to 225,000. Elimination of this cap would promote access to the RAD program for more Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) nationwide and create a more favorable environment to fully maximize the opportunity to preserve and expand affordable housing. Increase the RAD Section

8 Project-Based rental subsidy to equal regular Section 8 Project-Based rental subsidies.

- Fully fund and expand the Public Housing Resident Self-Sufficiency Programs, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), Resident Opportunity and Supportive Services (ROSS), the Jobs Plus Initiative, and Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration programs funded by HUD that provide tools for Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to promote access to opportunity for the families they serve.

- Release of the MTW Expansion Notice which gives more

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PHAs access to the MTW program and supports legislation that expands the program for all PHAs.

- Adequately fund HUD's mainline programs of Section 8 vouchers and public housing.

New Markets Tax Credit

ISSUE: Support the reauthorization of the New Markets Tax Credit program in order to promote community development and economic growth by attracting private investment in low-income communities with high unemployment and poverty.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide a permanent extension of the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) and other enhancements to the program to allow for private sector investment and economic growth in low income communities.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Water Control Infrastructure Drawdowns Before Flooding Events

ISSUE: A resolution urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to enact operating procedures consistent with their mission and design to reduce downstream flooding from imminent storm water events.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to revise federal guidelines in coordination with local governing authorities that operate water control projects to reduce downstream storm water events.

FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Secure Elections Act (S. 2261)

ISSUE: The Secure Elections Act of 2017 (S. 2261) seeks to protect states' primacy in conducting elections; improve information sharing between the federal government and state, county and municipal election agencies; assist state, county and municipal election agencies in election cybersecurity preparedness; support states in replacing outdated and insecure electronic voting machines; and encourage robust sanctions in response to a state-sponsored hack on U.S. election systems.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports efforts by Congress to combat the cybersecurity threats that are already negatively impacting public perception of the integrity of elections. NACo appreciates that the Secure Elections Act would involve county election authorities in addressing these threats and that it seeks to share crucial information from feder-

al authorities to state and local authorities and vice-versa.

NACo believes it is essential that election cybersecurity guidelines and grant administration remain coordinated within the existing structure of the Election Assistance Commission rather than having a new federal entity develop potentially conflicting guidelines.

In addition, NACo supports certain revisions in the Act and any related legislation, including but not limited to:

1. Giving greater representation to state and local authorities on any new advisory panel on election cybersecurity;
2. Maximizing flexibility and opportunities for nimble, innovative and secure tabulation auditing protocols;
3. Providing county election officials with maximum information about cyber threats;
4. Increasing the proposed aggregate amount of interim election preparedness grants to 25 percent of the given state's lim-

itation, with criteria based on security principles rather than specific technologies;

5. Authorizing a separate and sustainable allocation of funds for local governments; and

6. Removing the "hack the election" program, or else placing it under the EAC.

Federal Tax Intercept of Unpaid Court Fees

ISSUE: Re-introduce and pass the Crime Victim Restitution and Court Fee Intercept Act to facilitate a federal tax intercept for recovering court debt.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to re-introduce and pass the Crime Victim Restitution and Court Fee Intercept Act.

HEALTH

Veteran's Choice Accountability Act (H.R. 1797)

ISSUE: Support for the Veterans Choice Accountability Act (H.R. 1797)

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the Veteran's Choice Accountability Act (H.R. 1797) and urges Congress to ensure that reimbursements from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to non-VA facilities for the care they provide to eligible veterans through the Veterans Choice Program are processed in a timely manner.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017

ISSUE: Support for the Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017 (H.R. 1472)

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to pass the Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017 (H.R. 1472) to expand the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program of comprehen-

sive assistance for veteran family caregivers and to enhance special compensation for members of the Armed Forces or veterans who require assistance in everyday life.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Service Life of Fire Protective Clothing

ISSUE: The service life of firefighting personal protective equipment, which includes helmets, boots, coats and pants ("fire protective clothing" or "bunker gear") is governed by a standard that mandates retirement of the gear based on manufacture date and not consideration of integrity, meeting applicable specifications or safe use.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to enact legislation that regulates the service life or use of bunker gear through objective technical specifications correlated to the capacity of the equipment to protect firefighters during its intended use or to encourage the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to amend NFPA Standard 1851 (NFPA 1851), its Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting, which regulates the service life of fire protective clothing.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)

ISSUE: Restore full reimbursements to states, counties and cities for the costs of housing criminal aliens as provided in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322).

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to appropriate funding that fully reimburses states, counties and cities for the costs of housing



Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee Chair Renee Price takes her turn presenting her committee's proposed policy resolutions. Photo by Jason Dixon



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criminal aliens.

Pretrial Integrity and Safety Act

ISSUE: Reforms to money bail practices and pre-trial systems as part of larger criminal justice reform efforts.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the bipartisan Pretrial Integrity and Safety Act (S. 1593), introduced in 2017 by Sens. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.). The bill would provide grants to eligible entities, including counties, to reform their criminal justice systems to encourage the replacement of the use of payment of secured money bail as a condition of pretrial release in criminal cases.

Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)

ISSUE: The need for Congress to fund juvenile justice programs in annual appropriations bills.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges congressional leaders to finalize reauthorization of JJDP by resolving differences between reauthorization bills passed in each chamber in 2017 so that a single piece of legislation can be sent to the President of the United States and enacted into law.

Reauthorization of the Second Chance Act

ISSUE: Reauthorization of the main source of federal funding for local reentry programs.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges congressional leaders to reauthorize the Second Chance Act, which funds local programs that help formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society, access needed treatments and gain and maintain employment.



Powhatan County, Va. Fire and EMS Chief Steven A. Singer questions a resolution at the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee meeting. Singer represents the International Association of Fire Chiefs, a NACo affiliate. Photo by Jason Dixon

Training and Safety of Correctional Employees

ISSUE: Training and safety of correctional employees should be prioritized at the federal and local level.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) calls on Congress to prioritize funding to be accessed by counties to provide training and services for employees of local correctional institutions. As Congress considers criminal justice reform measures, the needs and safety of correctional employees should not be overlooked.

PUBLIC LANDS

Fee in Lieu of Taxes (FILT)

ISSUE: Private lands either sold or donated to the federal government for conservation purposes resulting in such property becoming exempt from local property taxation, thereby reducing the overall

taxable market value in affected counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to enact federal legislation to require private entities that sell or donate private land to the federal government for conservation purposes to pay an annual fee in lieu of property taxes (FILT) to affected counties.

NACo recommends that the FILT be based upon the actual property taxes paid on the land at the time that it was removed from the tax rolls.

Landscape-Scale Mitigation, Net Conservation Gain and Compensatory Mitigation on Federal Lands

ISSUE: Federal agencies, including the Department of Interior (DOI), the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the U.S. Forest

Service (USFS), have issued regulations, policies and guidance imposing certain mitigation requirements, including landscape-scale mitigation net conservation gain objectives and prioritizing compensatory mitigation, that are without necessary authority.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the immediate revocation, rescission and revision of the U.S. Department of the Interior’s and U.S. Forest Service’s proposed mitigation policies on federal lands, to the extent not authorized by Congress.

Spotted Lanternfly Eradication

ISSUE: The spotted lanternfly was accidentally introduced to Berks County, Pa. in September 2014 through an international shipment from Asia. Since then, the invasive species has caused significant agricultural, envi-

ronmental and economic damage, especially harming the grape industry and other businesses in the Mid-Atlantic United States. Because the spotted lanternfly is attracted to and takes nourishment from the “Tree of Heaven” (*Ailanthus*) — an invasive plant found in nearly 90 percent of the United States — in order to procreate, most of the nation is threatened by this invasive insect.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports a coordinated effort between the federal, state and local governments to eradicate the spotted lanternfly, an invasive species that negatively impacts important agricultural and forest commodities as well as quality of life. NACo also calls on the federal government to provide significant financial resources to assist the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, other

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impacted states and county governments in combating the spread of this invasive species.

TRANSPORTATION

Transit Options in Any Upcoming Infrastructure Package or List of Expanded Legislative Principles

ISSUE: Counties and local jurisdictions desire transit options to reduce traffic congestion, spur economic development and job growth and enhance regional connectivity and mobility.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the U.S. Congress and U.S. Department of Transportation to provide funding and funding mechanisms in



Health Steering Committee Vice Chair Nick Macchione presents policy recommendations to NACo's Board. Photo by Jason Dixon

its upcoming infrastructure package, including incentives for private investment such as public-private partnerships, to state and local governments for purposes of expanding, installing and maintaining transit systems; including but not limited to Bus Rapid Transit ("BRT"), Heavy Rail and Light

Rail systems.

Agricultural Exemption for Electronic Logging Device (ELD) and Hours of Service Final Rule

ISSUE: Federal regulation mandating the use of an electronic logging device for agricultural transportation driv-

ers does not take into account delays drivers will encounter in the process of loading, unloading and transporting livestock, which could result in inhumane animal treatment, devalued livestock pricing and further economic hardship to rural counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to amend the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Electronic Logging Devices and Hours of Service final rule to completely exempt all agricultural trucking activity from this regulation.

Support Increased Consideration of Alternative Congestion Mitigation Measures

ISSUE: Federal funding for automated technologies has

been focused mostly on the development of driverless cars and shuttles which can enhance mobility and improve first/last-mile accessibility, but have limited ability to reduce road congestion, and may increase vehicle miles traveled before mitigation measures can be implemented.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to make road congestion mitigation a top priority by exploring, implementing and funding automated shuttles and transit network systems for congestion mitigation that reduce the impact of driverless vehicles on road congestion and increase usage of Automated Transit Networks (ATN) to relieve travel demand on roads. **CN**

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2018 CONFERENCE

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THE CONFERENCE IN PHOTOGRAPHS

ALL IMAGES BY JASON DIXSON (UNLESS NOTED)



A crowd gathers March 6 in front of the U.S. Capitol for a NACo news conference in support of key public lands programs.



Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Jim McDonough participates in a discussion at NACo's Board of Directors meeting.



Grant County, Okla. Commissioner Cindy Bobbitt, NACo Central Region representative, leads the discussion at the Central Region's caucus meeting.



NACo President Roy Brooks (l), presents NACo's Award for Corporate Excellence to Ernst & Young. Accepting the award is Steven Kral, EY senior manager.



Alger County, Mich. Commissioner Jerry Doucette shows off the U.S. Mint's latest quarter in its America the Beautiful series, which features Michigan's Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Alger County.



Supervisor Liz Archuleta, Coconino County, Ariz., discusses immigration issues at the Immigration Reform Task Force meeting as Sussex County, Del. Councilman Robert Arlett looks on.



Caren Harp, administrator, DOJ Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, briefs Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee members.



Person County, N.C. Commissioner Brannon "Ray" Jeffers seeks support in his race for NACo second vice president.



Richard Waldhorn, contributing scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, takes the podium during a discussion of resilient counties. Looking on are (l-r) Jennifer Kiger, chief, Office of Public Health Preparedness & Response, Harris County, Texas; Phil Maytubby, director of Public Health Protection Oklahoma City-County Health Department, Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore and Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Toni Carter.



Chris Gaston, senior policy director, Davis & Harman, was the guest speaker for Nationwide's 2017 Tax Act workshop.



Commissioner John Alford, Scotland County, N.C. does some networking before the start of a General Session.



Kathryn Dodge, assembly member, Fairbanks North Star Borough, takes the floor at the Board of Directors meeting.



Steve Wagner, acting assistant secretary, HHS Administration for Children and Families, and Jerry Milner, acting commissioner, Administration for Children and Families, take part in a panel discussion at the NACo Legislative Conference.



Women of NACo Leadership Network members meet on Capitol Hill with members of the Congressional Women's Caucus, including co-chairs Reps. Susan Brooks (R-Ind.) and Lois Frankel (D-Fla.) Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Transportation Steering Committee members listen to a presentation from Anthony Bedell, USDOT deputy assistant secretary for intergovernmental affairs.



Brian Steed, Bureau of Land Management deputy for programs and policies, addresses the Public Lands Steering Committee.



In their power colors (l-r) Guilford County, N.C. Commissioner Kay Cashion and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman take part in a discussion at the NACo Legislative Conference.



Boone County, Ky. Judge Gary Moore, a candidate for NACo second vice president, addresses NACo members.



Broward County, Fla. Commissioner Barbara Sharief, a candidate for NACo second vice president, addresses NACo members at the NACo Legislative Conference.



Washington County, Minn. Commissioner Stan Karwoski snaps a photo at the Rural Action Caucus meeting.



(L-r): Brian Roy, executive director of the Kentucky Association of Counties; Boone County, Ky. Judge Gary Moore; David Nicholson, president of the Kentucky Association of Counties and Circuit Court Clerk, Jefferson County, and NACo President Roy Brooks, Tarrant County, Texas, celebrate Kentucky's 100-percent state milestone. All 120 counties in the commonwealth are now NACo members.



Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood discusses the state of poverty in her county at a Capitol Hill press briefing held March 6 at the NACo Legislative Conference.



County officials shine as they accept awards for their leadership in deploying solar use in their communities. Some of the winners are pictured here. (L-r): Commissioner Lenny Eliason, Athens County, Ohio; Supervisor Connie Rockco, Harrison County, Miss.; Board Member Denise Winfrey, Will County, Ill.; Commissioner Casey Tighe, Jefferson County, Colo. Back row (l-r): Chris Somers, Arlington County, Va.; Supervisor Mike Carberry, Johnson County, Iowa; Commissioner DeWayne Mareck, Stearns County, Minn.; Chip Taylor, Colorado Counties, Inc. (representing Clear Creek, Delta, Pueblo counties).



(L-r) Pamela Heitner, county manager, Otero County, N.M. and Isabella Solis, Dona Ana County, N.M. commissioner, explore the conference app at the newcomers' breakfast.



Cascade County, Mont. Commissioner Joe Briggs (center) discusses the County Explorer Benchmarking Tool, with NACo staff Ricardo Aguilar (right) and Andrew Hartsig (left).



Participants hop tables to meet with different experts during the Federal Tools for County-Driven International Economic Development session.



DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson, a candidate for NACo second vice president, addresses the crowd.

LEADERSHIP EDGE

Changing the FEMA Landscape

Dear National Association of Counties Membership –

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference. FEMA supports and shares your goal of creating healthy, vibrant and safe counties across the U.S.

FEMA is leaning forward, both strategically and operationally. We are building on the successes of 2017 and are learning from the challenges. These lessons learned also serve as foundational blocks in the 2018–2022 FEMA Strategic Plan.

Priorities of the plan include building a culture of preparedness, readying the nation for catastrophic disasters and reducing the complexity of FEMA. However, this Strategic Plan isn't just for FEMA. It's a strategic plan for the nation, and something we should all embrace.

Building a true culture of preparedness begins at every level of government, which spreads throughout our communities, and eventually reaches every person. During a disaster, individuals in affected communities are the first responders. We must empower individuals with lifesaving skills to help speed response and recovery efforts. We must also encourage our citizens to be financially prepared for disasters.

Closing the insurance gap, which is the difference between what is currently insured and what is insurable, is another priority. We need to double the amount of flood insurance coverage we have in the country, because any home can flood, and homeowners, renters and businesses recover more quickly when insured. Mother Nature doesn't recognize flood zone maps, and we currently have too many people at risk. And it's not just flood insurance, it's insurance



FEMA Administrator William "Brock" Long addresses NACo Legislative Conference participants.

against high winds in hurricane and tornado-prone areas, and earthquake insurance to protect your investment.

Everyone should have the right insurance coverage for the hazards they face.

Only by using every tool at every level will we be able to shift this paradigm. How we communicate about risk is

also of primary importance. Reducing risks to people and property helps build more resilient communities and saves taxpayer dollars. Developing resilient communities ahead of an incident reduces the loss of life and economic disruption.

As always, FEMA remains ready to support when catastrophic disasters occur, but all

disasters should be federally supported, state-managed and locally executed. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), damages in 80 percent of presidentially-declared disasters fall below \$41 million. We are looking at innovative approaches to allow states, tribes and territories to manage these incidents themselves. FEMA will continue to fund recovery for smaller disasters, while state, local, tribal and territorial governments play a much larger role in managing their own recovery programs.

Finally, FEMA is committed to simplifying our recovery processes and making our programs more user-friendly. More than 15 federal agencies have assistance programs to help survivors. FEMA will work with its federal partners to consolidate programs and streamline activities, to bring help to

survivors in a more efficient manner.

Local leaders are some of the most trusted in government. It is critically important that your constituents hear from you early and continuously. Your role and influence in your communities are instrumental in building a safer and more resilient nation. It is at your level that conversations should begin about a community's vision and commitment to its own preparedness, resilience and recovery strategies in the case of major events.

I ask that you support this Strategic Plan, and adopt these goals as your own, so we can work together to build a better, safer and more resilient nation. Thank you for the work you do every day to make our country safer and stronger.

Sincerely,
Brock Long
FEMA Administrator

WORD SEARCH

GRANT COUNTY, Wash.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'BEHIND THE SEAL'

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

- AGRICULTURE:** The county's main industries are agriculture and food processing.
- AIRPORT:** The former Larson Air Force Base was transformed to civilian use in 1966; the Grant County International Airport covers almost 4,700 acres and has five separate runways.
- BEETS:** The Utah and Idaho Sugar Company, owned and controlled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, once processed 11,000 tons of sugar beets per day in the 1950s in the county.
- BMW:** The company recently sold its share of a carbon fiber plant in the county to SGL Automotive; the plant employs 450.
- BOEING:** The company uses Grant County International Airport as a test site for its aircraft.
- COLUMBIA:** The county is located in the Columbia Basin.
- DAM:** The Grand Coulee Dam, dubbed "the eighth wonder of the world," opened in 1941 in the county.
- DOUGLAS:** Created by the state legislature in Feb. 24, 1909, the county was carved out of neighboring Douglas County.
- EPHRATA:** The county seat.
- GRANT:** The county was named after Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th U.S. president.
- JAPAN:** Japan Air Lines used Grant County International Airport from the 1960s to 2009 to train its Boeing 747 crews.
- MOSES:** Moses Lake, the largest city in the county, was named for Chief Moses, a Native American chief of the Sinkiuse-Columbia, whose tribe extended from Waterville to White Bluffs, in the Columbia Basin.
- NEPPEL:** The original name of the city of Moses Lake was named for this town in Germany, the hometown of one of the settlers. The name was changed in 1938.
- SOAP:** The county's Soap Lake gets its name from naturally occurring foam that gives its water a soapy appearance, and because the lake's mineral-rich waters have a slick, soapy feel.
- WASHINGTON:** The county is located in the central part of Washington state.

BRIGHT IDEAS | HUMBOLDT COUNTY, Calif.

Small Counties Receive Help Collecting Child Support in Workers Comp Cases

PROBLEM:

County residents' inability to collect child support from parent receiving workers compensation pay.

SOLUTION:

County child support office developed expertise in child support collections from workers comp cases by creating relationships with key agencies and insurance carriers.

By **Mary Ann Barton**
senior staff writer

Collecting child support can be difficult for some parents and for some counties that step in to help them. It can become even more difficult when the case is somewhat unusual, such as when the parent paying the child support goes on worker's compensation.

Nationwide, nearly 16 million children participate in the child support program and reliance on child support is growing. Child support represented, on average, 41 percent of poor custodial families' income in 2013, up from 29 percent in 1997. The benefit was even more pronounced among deeply poor custodial families (those who live below 50 percent of the federal poverty level) if they received it. For these families, the average percentage of family income from child support was 65 percent, up from 38 percent in 1997.

Many counties, especially smaller ones, don't have the experience to help residents collect child support from parents receiving workers compensation pay.

In Humboldt County, Calif., county employees at North Coast Regional Department of Child Support Services, which also serves neighboring Trinity County, have developed exper-

tise in collecting child support in workers comp cases, according to Lisa Dugan, director.

"One of the things that we figured out is that nobody was really an expert in workers comp because you run across it so infrequently as a case manager, that you don't necessarily keep on top of the ins and outs of the workers comp side of the house," she said.

The county became good at collecting child support by building relationships with some of the key "players" in the workers comp world including employers, insurance companies, the Department of Industrial Relations (part of the Cabinet-level California Labor and Workforce Development

"We're here to take the financial aspects out of it so people can focus on ... their children."

Agency), the Workers Compensation Appeals Board and reaching out to attorneys representing the parent receiving workers comp, Dugan noted.

Humboldt County became so good at collecting in workers comp cases that "slowly but surely, we began doing work for other counties," she said. The county is currently doing the "detective work" on workers comp cases for 18 California counties; once they have a case almost completely "solved," they turn it over to the "home" county to make the collection, Dugan said. The counties, in addition to Humboldt and Trinity counties, are Butte, Colusa, Lake, Lassen, Mariposa, Mendocino, Plumas, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, San Joaquin, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sutter, Trinity

and Yolo counties.

The department has memorandums of understanding with the counties.

It's a team effort, she said. "It quickly became apparent that the one employee designated to look into the cases couldn't possibly keep up, so a team was created. We have a team of case managers now who are subject matter experts in what we call the Workers Comp Center of Excellence."

The team gets together on a weekly basis, has created a "how to" manual and has "really figured out how to do this well," Dugan said. "We're trying to create the bones of how to do it."

The previous fiscal year, the county collected more than \$660,000 in child support from workers comp for families in 17 California counties, Dugan said. They have collected more than half a million dollars in FY2018 (the past seven months) for parents in 18 counties. In the seven months so far in FY2018, five of 17 counties have already surpassed last year's workers comp collections, she noted.

The program is funded out of the operating budget from Humboldt County Department of Child Support Services; the other counties do not pay for the extra work, Dugan said.

"We're here to take the financial aspects out of it so people can focus on the emotional part of raising their children and co-parent," said case worker Sharon Mitchell, who has worked in the child support field for 22 years. **CN**

The North Coast Regional Department of Child Support Services received a Challenge Merit Award in 2017 from the California State Association of Counties. For more information, contact Lisa Dugan at MLDugan@co.humboldt.co.us.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

JON BURROWS
Board Member,
Transportation Steering
Committee
County Judge
Bell County, Texas



Burrows

Number of years involved in NACo: 20

Years in public service: 20

Occupation: Attorney

Education: Law degree from University of Texas; Bachelors and Masters in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma (I was going to be a band director).

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Finally getting Texas legislative approval of a Hotel Occupancy Tax to support our Expo Center. It took four legislative sessions (eight years).

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: President Ronald Reagan, Billy Graham and President George H.W. Bush.

I dream I have is to: Travel internationally, especially throughout Europe and the Mediterranean.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Drive around northeast Maui on the winding, narrow Kahekili Highway looking out the window down the cliffs to the ocean. Great to do once!

You'd be surprised to learn that I:
Played saxophone with The Beach Boys.



My favorite way to relax is to: Travel with my wife, Katie.

I'm most proud of: When I was promoted to full Colonel in the USAF Reserve.

Every morning I read: *Temple Daily Telegram, Austin American-Statesman, Killeen Daily Herald* and County Clips from the Texas Conference of Urban Counties.

My favorite meal is: Texas barbecue.

My pet peeve is: Unforgiving people.

My motto is: "I don't take myself very seriously, but I take my job very seriously."

My favorite movie is: *The Godfather II*.

My favorite music is: Classic alto saxophone music such as Charlie Parker, Alto Sax - "April in Paris."

My favorite U.S. president is: Ronald Reagan.

My county is a NACo member because: Of the vast research and data resources available through NACo. We find that we get advance notification of changes coming from the federal level, giving us more reaction time. Also, we have the opportunity to collaborate with counties nationwide and learn their best practices. The NACo staff assistance has always been outstanding.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

SONOMA COUNTY and the Town of Windsor are teaming up to bring **affordable housing to veterans**. The county and the town are working with Veterans Resource Centers of America and Urban Housing Communities LLC on the project. Dubbed Veterans Village, the county voted last month to approve \$750,000 for the project, which will bring 60 one- and two-bedroom apartments housed in six residential buildings to the community.

The complex will include a community room, service center and outdoor recreation space. A van will be available for those without a vehicle; the regional Veterans Affairs clinic is just four miles away from the new housing project. The village is expected to open in 2019.

GEORGIA

• The **HALL COUNTY** Board of Commissioners recently approved **transitional housing** for homeless men involved in workforce development, the *Gainesville Times* reported. North Georgia Works! will pay the county \$1 rent per year for the space.

Each Georgia Works! participant is housed at a facility for up to a year while they participate in transitional work (earning \$7.40 per hour for 30-plus hours per week). All participants renounce dependency and remain drug and alcohol free. Personal support, case management and workforce training is offered throughout the program. The organization also provide AA/NA classes, GED classes, help obtaining a driver's license, help setting up a bank account and a life skills preparation course.



• **NEWTON COUNTY** is the new home of a **\$750 million data center for Facebook**, according to a report by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*. In addition to construction jobs, the 970,000-square foot data center, the ninth for the social media company, is expected to bring 100 new jobs to the county once it opens.

At a news conference, Facebook representatives said they chose the county because of its access to renewable energy and a strong talent pool. Walton EMC will install hundreds of acres of solar panels on Georgia's electric grid as part of a power supply agreement with Facebook. Groundbreaking is expected to begin in late March with completion by 2020.

"This is a big day for Newton County," Marcello Banes, chairman of the Newton County Board of Commissioners, said at the news conference. "We're excited about Facebook being in our community. It's a wonderful partnership."

ILLINOIS

KENDALL COUNTY recently hosted a roundtable discussion on how to combat **opioid addiction**, according to a report by KendallCountyNOW. In all, 45 representatives from government, private and non-profit organizations gathered at the county health department to discuss the problem. County Coroner Jacquie Purcell noted that of 15 overdose deaths last year, 13 were caused by opioids.



The county has seen a steady increase in the past five years, she said. She also noted that with no hospital in the county, some local residents are transported to hospitals in other counties, where the death is counted there, so the actual number of resident opioid deaths is likely higher.

IOWA

The Iowa House of Representatives is proposing legislation that would change the **redistricting process for county boards of supervisors**, *The Des Moines Register* reported. The bill would require any county with a population of 60,000 or more to require district residents to choose a candidate who also lives in the district.

Currently, county boards of supervisors can also be elected at large or a supervisor must live in the district but voters can cast at-large votes. The bill was approved by the House and is now headed to the state Senate.

KANSAS

The **SEDGWICK COUNTY** Zoo recently welcomed a **new**

baby Sumatran orangutan to its menagerie. Last year, the county renewed its agreement with the zoo to provide funding for 109 full-time employees at the zoo as well as half of the zoo's capital improvements over the next five years, the *Wichita Eagle* reported. "I'm very happy that we've partnered with the zoo and that we can look forward to five years of partnership," Commissioner David Dennis said. Outlays for 2018 call for \$800,000 in spending for fixing the viewing panel at an alligator exhibit, new water heaters for the hippos and a new lighting system for the orangutan and chimpanzee exhibit.

MICHIGAN

WAYNE COUNTY is expected to build a **\$553 million justice center**, the county recently announced. The center will include a 2,280-bed jail, offices for the Sheriff's Department, prosecutor's office, a criminal courthouse and a juvenile detention facility. Completion is expected in 2022.

NEBRASKA

With no real plan to use some of Enola's streets, **MADISON COUNTY** may well just let the community go to seed, literally.

The unpaved roads are getting overgrown, some even by trees, and the Board of Commissioners is considering **vacating or abandoning some of those overgrown streets**. The properties could revert to the current adjacent landowners, *Norfolk Daily News* reported.

NEVADA

Haircuts and Heinekens won't mix in **CLARK COUNTY**, now that the commissioners have axed a proposal to let owners of salons and barbershops **sell alcohol** to patrons.

Chairman Steve Sisolak told the *Las Vegas Sun* that issues with the sale, marketing and





Jeremy Mio, a Cuyahoga County, Ohio IT director, practices speaking on camera as part of his media training.

Photo by Greg Wilson

OHIO

CUYAHOGA COUNTY top administrators received **media training** as part of County Executive Armond Budish's 2018 strategic plan.

Though administrators generally haven't spoken on record to the media, the training will prepare them to take on media requests, speak at press conferences and address community groups.

"It is important for them to understand and prepare for the media," said county spokeswoman Mary Louise Madigan, who generally provides all county responses for information.

She said directors sometimes respond to media requests and may have to speak at press conferences or before community groups. The training is part of County Executive Armond Budish's 2018 strategic plan, she said.

Gise signed an executive order ending its relationship with the carrier because the company allows guns and ammunition to be shipped "without reasonable restrictions." DeGise said Hudson County has spent more than \$60,000 shipping through FedEx over the last three years, NJ.com reported.

FedEx has faced increased scrutiny in recent weeks after a list was leaked of gun manufacturers and businesses who were given a cheaper, less secure shipping option.

• **HUNTERDON COUNTY** plans to create a **central booking process** for those arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is expected to be in place by April.

After being arrested, apprehended drivers will be transported to the Hunterdon County Justice Center in Flemington where they will be tested using an Alcotest machine and charged before being released. The process will replace bookings in the county's 14 different towns; each would have had to buy a \$25,000 Alcotest machine.

NORTH CAROLINA

Following the Florida school shooting, **ROCKINGHAM COUNTY** Sheriff Sam Page wants to pair schools with **armed volunteers**.

A 2013 state law allows sheriffs' offices and local police departments to set up volunteer school safety resource programs staffed with experienced law enforcement or military police officers. That law was passed after the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

The volunteers would work in public schools under agreements between sheriffs' offices and school boards. They would have the power to arrest anyone while on duty and must meet firearms proficiency standards required of people serving as criminal justice officers, the statute says.

Page has been working with Superintendent Rodney Shotwell to implement the program by next school year, *The Winston-Salem Journal* reported, making it the first such program, if the school board approves it, and Page sees it as a model for other counties.

UTAH

An employee with the **UTAH COUNTY** Assessor's department is hoping to **find homes for 50-year-old agricultural applications** rather than shredding them after they are scanned and digitized.

Diane Garcia's family operated a farm in the 1960s and expects other descendants of farmers might be interested in keeping the original documents as family heirlooms. "It's just kind of cool," Garcia told *The Daily Herald*. "Because it's in their handwriting and it's the fun, old crinkly paper, and it's the official document that was recorded."

WASHINGTON

• The Three Rivers Mall has plenty of space, parking and accessibility, and may be perfect for the **COWLITZ COUNTY** administrative offices. **Accessibility for people with physical disabilities** has driven the county to find a better fit for offices that serve the public. Maintenance costs are also be-

coming prohibitive, and space constraints make it hard to keep departments consolidated, *The Daily News* reported.

• **KING COUNTY** has created an **Immigrant and Refugee Commission**. The permanent body will act as a central point of contact, communication and coordination for all immigrant and refugee residents. It will also focus on understanding and addressing challenges faced by immigrant and refugee communities living in suburban cities and unincorporated areas of the county.

The commission will assist and advise the county and other levels of government on issues, programs, plans, funding and policies impacting immigrant and refugee communities and promote civic participation and government representation.

Thirteen voting members and four nonvoting members will serve three-year terms.

WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE COUNTY Executive Chris Abele has proposed **terminating pension benefits** for employees convicted of a felony and has asked the County Board to approve the amendment to a county pension ordinance, *The Journal Sentinel* reported. The County Board approved a measure blocking other employees now facing criminal charges in the dehydration death of a jail inmate from obtaining pension benefits.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.

distribution of the drinks stymied the commission.

• **WASHOE COUNTY** restaurants with patios are opening their **doggie doors** to non-service canines, and the County Health District will distribute "Dog Access Approved" signs thanks to a \$3,000 grant from the Food and Drug Administration.

NEW JERSEY

• **HUDSON COUNTY** will no longer work with **FedEx**. County Executive Tom De-



GET TO KNOW...

Albany County, N.Y.



Welcome, Albany County, N.Y.

Albany County was founded in 1683 and named for the Duke of York and of Albany, who later became James II of England. The county seat is Albany, the state capital of New York, and **the oldest continuous settlement in the original 13 English colonies**. Four New York Governors were later elected President of the United States- Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Martin Van Buren. **Rumor has it that Theodore Roosevelt exercised each morning when he was Governor by running the front steps of the Capitol** and invited reporters to join him if they wanted an interview!



the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot & Winkeler

In the recently released movie, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, four high school teens are transported into a video game where they must work together and rely upon the strengths of each person in order to finish the game and return home. Once in the game, they find Alex, a player who began playing the game over 20 years ago and was unable to finish the game on his own. At one point in the film, Alex, upon hearing Bethany bemoan the absence of her cell phone, asks, "Does 'phone' mean something different in the future?"

The simple answer is yes, "phone" does mean something different than it did in 1996, the year Alex started playing the video game.

Today, "phone" represents connectivity to friends and family as well as instant information.

It is your phone book, your wallet, your newspaper and

Generations in the Workplace: Welcome to the Jungle

your mail box all in one. It can also mean 24/7 connection to work and a new way of finding the answers to questions. How do the 1996 "players" in your environment communicate with and understand the present day "players"? How do we best utilize the strengths of each generation in the workforce?

Today, as you likely have noticed and read about, there are five generations in the workplace.

The common labels for those groups include Traditionalists/Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

What is a generation? It is a group of people, born around the same time, who have similar frames of reference based on events and life experiences that shape their values and belief systems.

While there is some disagreement over exactly what year each generation ends and the next begins, the stereotypes are familiar. Traditionalists are conservative, rule

GENERATIONS

Traditionalist/
Silent Generation 1925-1945

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Generation X 1965-1976

Millennials 1977-1995

Generation Z 1996-2000

Source: Center for Generational Kinetics

followers. Boomers are selfish and technology-challenged. Generation Xers are cynical and skeptical of authority.

Millennials are entitled, needy employees who work just to support their adventures/vacations.

They are also technologically savvy, passionate about making a difference, require constant positive feedback, don't want to pay their dues, and will leave in a year.

Regardless of whether you buy in to the stereotypes, Millennials are growing in numbers and are about to become the largest generation in America. According to the

Pew Research Center and U.S. Census Bureau, Millennials in America are projected to number 73 million in 2019, when Boomers will only number 72 million. Additionally, since 2015, Millennials have been the largest generation in the American workforce.

If you look back at media and pop culture past, the Traditionalists were not so certain about putting the future in the hands of the Baby Boomers, or as they called them "Hippies," coming of age in the Me Generation.

In the May 20, 2013 issue, *Time Magazine* called millennials the Me Me Generation.

So, is the difference truly the generations themselves as defined by birth year, or is it actually the stage of life or career development in which someone new to the workforce finds themselves? Is it facing change in the form of handing leadership to the next generation?

Millennials are often defined as having a birth date of between 1977 and 1995. Given that span of years, even within that generation are people

in very different stages of life. Michael is a millennial born in 1978, is married with two children, ages 7 and 3, and has been working as a public servant for 15 years. He owns his own home, has a Master's degree, and has seniority at work.

He is not the millennial people envision when they are describing the stereotype. In fact, Michael is just as happy when people don't think he is a millennial and don't have preconceived ideas about his age or his work.

Areina is a millennial in a different stage of life than Michael. She is single and has two roommates.

Areina has a Bachelor's degree and has worked in the public sector for three years. Areina works a full time and a part-time job, fears she won't own a home until she is 40, and is not certain where her career will take her.

Areina says "Millennials' informal communication style can be seen as a sign of disrespect." She adds that she wants to "understand her colleagues



on a personal level, but not all hierarchies allow that” and not everyone is that open. She adds that millennials are not afraid to speak what’s on their minds and ask questions.

Kayla is a bi-vocational Latina millennial who began working at 16 and has two years of experience in the public sector. Kayla typically works 60 hours per week between her two positions and is planning to go back to school in the fall.

Kayla says, “There is more student debt in our generation than any other, and I believe that is actually producing harder working human beings instead of lazier ones.”

She notes millennials want to leave a legacy, “one that impacts the planet, the people around us, our futures or own families. That is a common quality I find in my peers.”

Each is a millennial. Yet at different ages within the generation’s date span, their work needs are quite different.

Thus, as is often true with stereotypes, they often don’t play out as we expect them to. Still skeptical?

Let’s consider five millennial stereotypes where the supervisor’s leadership response can apply to employees of any generation.

1. Technology savvy

Someone can be technology savvy and not have used the systems found in your organization.

Let’s be honest, some local government computer systems have been in use for a while and some may even use F keys rather than drop down menus. Or maybe the system is a complex Excel spreadsheet rather than an integrated enterprise system.

If a young employee has experience using Google Docs, they might not have as much familiarity with attaching a document to an email or sending a secure attachment. The reminder for supervisors: don’t assume.

Ask interview questions that demonstrate computer exper-

ience, transferable computer skills, familiarity and comfort. Then, ensure each new employee, regardless of age, is given training and instructions for each system and task.

Additionally, be open to questions about why the system is set up the way it is and what you are really trying to accomplish. Millennials like to understand why and make things better. Mature workers bring good perspective about processes they have used in the past.

2. Asking for help

A young professional needing assistance now has tools of great assistance at their disposal, such as Youtube and Google. Today, instead of asking someone how to use a multiline phone or operate a shredder, they can Google their problem.

How to forward a call on a multiline phone has 1,400 answers on Google and how to unjam a shredder has 2,040.

But the technology also provides solutions to soft skill questions as well—how to call in sick has 10.9 million answers on Google and how to ask for a raise has 12.1 million answers.

The reminder for supervisors is to have regular conversations and frequent check-ins with new employees. Appreciate that seeking solutions shows initiative and recognize that initiative wherever possible.

Don’t forget to discuss basic items, like calling in sick. An individual new to their career may not know your expectations, while a seasoned employee may come from an organization with very different procedures.

Additionally, rather than viewing the use of technological advice as avoidance of a chain of command or lack of respect for supervision, see it as a new employee wanting to show self-sufficiency and wanting to make the best use of your time to ask questions regarding larger items.

Millennials enjoy having a mentor who wants to help

them progress in their career, while mature workers often find great satisfaction in being a mentor and sharing their knowledge and experience.

3. Connected

Millennials want to have friends at work, like what they do and have fun at work. Sitting down with their supervisor once a year for a performance evaluation is not going to be anywhere near enough.

They crave dialogue and conversation, about work, professional goals and other successes.

Daily and weekly feedback are necessary, as are progressing responsibility, challenges and stretch goals. They also want to share successes, as well as receive compliments and praise.

In a world with tight budget constraints, compliments, praise and frequent feedback are an affordable and unlimited resource.

Supervisors may want to add peer compliments to regular staff meetings and team build-ings and check in with staff by text or email.

For example, when a young staff member wanted to be certain everyone arrived home safely from work during a large snow storm, a group text when everyone was safe connected the group and brought a sense of family.

Supervisors may also create a forum for personal joys to be shared with the team, allowing a team member to share photos with everyone when they get a new puppy or their child graduates from kindergarten.

Due to their desire for creativity and innovation, many millennials have a second job or hobby that they invest time in and want to share those successes — coordinating a cancer fund raiser, publishing a blog, or selection on a non-profit board — with their work family.

Mature workers also have non-work interests as they have likely learned to balance work and life as they prepare to transition to retirement.

This passion for outside interests connects the two generations.

4. Passionate about the work

Millennials want to make a difference in the world and see their efforts improve society. Their values are very important to them, and they want the mission of their employer to connect them to greater purpose.

They also need to see how their work contributes to the mission of the organization — why entering this data makes a difference in the lives of the citizens we serve.

If they feel they are no longer making a difference, they will take their talents to an organization where their contributions matter.

Reminder for supervisors: continue the dialogue about strategic plans, long term goals and the importance of public service work for all employees.

5. Teams

Millennials love to work on teams, work in groups and work with diverse groups of people, which can only make the work stronger.

When creating teams, supervisors should remember to include generational diversity on the teams, thus creating informal mentoring opportunities and connections.

Generational diversity is also important on interview panels. Furthermore, it is important for staff morale that employees don’t perceive that all the exciting opportunities are only given to millennials to keep them around.

Mature workers want those stretch opportunities and trainings too.

What do millennials want you to know about working with them?

Areina: “I want to be you at one point. I want to know how you got there and I need your help to get there.”

Kayla: “Millennials are a passionate and fierce group of influencers that can be your

biggest resources.”

Supervisors desire positive, confident employees who are up for challenges, desire leadership in the work environment and want to take on new opportunities and enjoy what they do. Be careful what you wish for, because that description fits the stereotype of a millennial.

The price for this exceptional employee—lots of feedback, additional communication, an atmosphere of understanding, connection to mission, innovation and new challenges.

But let’s take a moment here to consider a really important question: In what other context is it acceptable to stereotype an entire group of individuals or workers?

The generations in the workplace conversation hinges upon stereotypes of people based on age, which is a protected class.

It is not acceptable to judge a class of people on any other protected class. Therefore, today’s leaders must treat each individual as just that, an individual, understanding their motivations, strengths and professional goals.

Leaders need to create a culture of leadership with strategic thinking where employees are empowered to identify and address problems for the good of the customer.

Where diverse teams represent the diversity of the citizens served and are not afraid of innovation and change to meet the changing needs of the citizens.

We need to mentor staff based on their motivations, career goals and level of experience, regardless of what age they happen to be. We can’t be using the tools and communication of 1996 *Jumanji* because the citizens have present day needs.

But we can work together, understanding the strengths of each team member to win the game and go home at the end of the day to a better community that we helped to create.

Now that will make you want to yell “*Jumanji!*” **CN**

2018

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QUESTIONS?

Contact awards@naco.org

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:
**MARCH 26 AT
11:59 P.M. EDT**
- NOTIFICATIONS OF
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:
WEEK OF APRIL 23
- NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE
AND EXPOSITION:
**JULY 13 – 16
NASHVILLE/DAVIDSON
COUNTY, TENN.**