

COUNTY TEAMS CHOSEN FOR ARTS/PLACEMAKING PROGRAM **PG. 2**



PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS **PG. 4**



TAX PLAN COULD HAVE IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE **PG. 5**

## Tax reform brings changes for counties

By Jack Peterson  
associate legislative director

As the end of the year approaches, the pace of tax reform only seems to quicken. On Dec. 1, the U.S. Senate passed its version of comprehensive tax reform (an amended version of H.R. 1) on a 51 to 49 vote, with Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) casting the only Republican vote against the package over budget deficit concerns (all 48 Democratic and Independent senators voted no). This follows House passage of H.R. 1 on Nov. 16.

While the two versions share many similarities, there are also significant differences between the bills the two chambers now

See **TAX REFORM** page 3



Saline County, Ark. celebrates the holiday season at the courthouse, where county employees take about three months to decorate the courthouse and lawn with lights. Santa visits with local residents there during the holiday season. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Tourism Office

## House OKs brownfields renewal program

By Julie Ufner  
associate legislative director

The House has approved a popular Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program that helps communities revitalize underused and contaminated land. The bipartisan Brownfields Enhancement, Economic Redevelopment, and Reauthorization Act of 2017 (H.R. 3017) passed the House Nov. 30 by a vote of 409-8. Although the program expired in 2006, its popularity prompted Congress to appropriate funds on an annual basis.

Originally passed in 2002

as part of the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act (P.L. 107-118), EPA's brownfields program provides technical assistance and grants for communities to reclaim previously owned industrial sites that have fallen into disuse.

According to the EPA, there are more than 400,000 U.S. brownfields. Since the program's inception, there have been more than 27,075 brownfields assessments and 69,275 brownfields acres cleaned up. This has sparked economic development opportunities and

See **BROWNFIELDS** page 12

## Sessions announces new DEA office, grant funds

By Valerie Brankovic  
legislative assistant

The Justice Department will open a new Drug Enforcement Administration field division and distribute federal grant money to address the opioid epidemic, Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently announced.

These actions will target parts of the country hit hardest by the opioid epidemic, which in 2015 accounted for 33,000 out of 52,000 drug overdose deaths.

The new office, which will be based in Louisville, Ky., is expected to facilitate drug

control efforts within the Appalachian Region and to coordinate drug trafficking investigations between U.S. attorneys and the 22 DEA field offices.

The current Louisville district office will now be the 22nd DEA Field Division, with about 90 special agents and 130 task force officers. The new field division will cover West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Sessions also directed the nation's 94 U.S. attorneys to designate an Opioid Coordinator to identify cases for federal prosecution and combat the illegal manufacturing and

See **OPIOIDS** page 2

## DOJ to award \$12 million to investigate illegal drug trade

From OPIOIDS page 1

distribution of heroin and prescription opioids.

In addition, the DOJ's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office will award \$12 million in funding to law enforcement agencies in states with high per capita rates of primary care treatment admissions for heroin and opioids. Grant money will be used to support investigations of illegal heroin and opioid distribution.

The attorney general's announcement comes just over a month after President Trump

declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency under the Public Health Service Act. The president's declaration expands the availability of medically-assisted treatment via telemedicine and allows state and federal agencies greater flexibility in hiring substance abuse specialists; however, the administration stopped short of declaring a broader national state of emergency under the Stafford Act or committing new federal funds to the epidemic.

It remains unclear whether congressional lawmakers will take up opioid funding as they negotiate a year-end spending package. Congressional committees have held multiple bipartisan hearings to assess the full extent of the crisis, but have yet to authorize any additional new funding.

Congress previously allocated funds to address substance abuse in last year's 21st Century Cures Act, which authorized \$1 billion in funding over two years to combat opioid addiction and overdose deaths.

So far, \$500 million has been appropriated for FY2017, and the balance is expected to be attached to FY2018 funding for the federal government.

Some lawmakers have floated proposals to extend similar levels of funding into FY2019, or to tweak the funding distribution formula to reach states with particularly high opioid overdose rates.

NACo will continue to engage with congressional lawmakers and the Administration to ensure counties have the resources they require to manage the opioid epidemic in their jurisdictions. **CN**

## Teams chosen for new arts-driven economic development program



Costumed revelers stroll down the street in a lively parade. The arts can often boost local economies.

By Jenna Moran  
program manager

Seven county-based teams have been selected to participate in a new technical assistance and training program focused on arts-based economic development, sponsored by NACo in partnership with Americans for the Arts. The selected teams are from: Haines Borough, Alaska; Pottawattamie County, Iowa; Lafayette Parish, La.; Sullivan County, N.H.; McKinley County, N.M.; Athens County, Ohio; and Iron County, Utah.

In March 2018, the team members will travel to Polk County, Iowa, to participate in a creative place-making training and peer exchange workshop. During the workshop, attendees will receive intensive, hands-on training designed to boost their potential to integrate arts and culture into solutions to local economic development and quality of place challenges. They will develop tailored action plans that will guide their efforts to build more livable, dynamic and resilient communities with the arts at their core.

According to the recent Arts and Economic Prosperity 5 study, arts and culture programs generate \$63.8 billion annually in spending by arts and cultural organizations and their audiences. This program is intended to help smaller counties capitalize on this increasingly powerful trend.

Each of the interdisciplinary teams will also continue to receive individual assistance following the in-person training forum. The ongoing training will guide their implementation of the creative place-making strategies and projects they chose to incorporate into their action plans.

This two-year program provides key support to NACo's long-term goal of building a larger community — particularly for smaller and more rural counties — that can directly support and learn from one another's successful arts and culture-driven programs, policies and partnerships.

"We feel like our team will benefit from the Des Moines workshop because we will have the opportunity to learn about

the best practices for integrating arts into county planning," said Pottawattamie County Supervisor Scott Belt.

"We look forward to also hearing from other communities about the challenges and opportunities in collaborating with local artists. Ultimately, we want to create a community that is attractive to residents and businesses, and believe that integrating the arts into our planning efforts will have an additive effect on our intended outcomes."

In September, counties with populations fewer than 250,000 were invited to apply to participate in the arts challenge. Applications came in from across the country, from Alaska to Florida, from counties just under 250,000 in population to counties of under 5,000, showcasing the immense value communities place on arts and culture to their local economies and quality of life.

Late last month, an outside review panel from the public and private sectors evaluated each application and selected

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### SNAP/STATS

#### BEST MOVIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Film	Rank
"It's a Wonderful Life".....	#1
"Miracle on 34 <sup>th</sup> Street".....	#2
"Holiday Inn".....	#3
"The Shop Around the Corner".....	#4
"How the Grinch Stole Christmas".....	#5

Source: Rotten Tomatoes, an online aggregator of movies and TV shows which ranks films based on reviews from professional critics.

Photo: Flickr user Sarah\_Ackerman (cropped)

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**From ARTS page 2**

the winning group. Each team will consist of at least one county elected official, one local arts representative and one business leader — ensuring cross-sector collaboration and widespread support as the teams plan and implement new community initiatives over the next 18 months.

As part of the larger Creative Counties program, NACo and Americans for the Arts will also host webinars and workshops at

NACo conferences over the next two years, and will launch an online resource page to aid counties as they pursue arts-driven community and economic development solutions. The first Creative Counties webinar will take place Dec. 12 at 2 p.m. ET.

For the complete list of team members and to learn more about the program, visit [naco.org/CreativeCounties](http://naco.org/CreativeCounties). Please direct additional questions to Jenna Moran on NACo staff at [jmoran@naco.org](mailto:jmoran@naco.org). **CN**

## Tax bills impact counties

**From TAX REFORM page 1**

must resolve. The Senate bill, for example, phases out individual tax rate cuts after 2025, delays implementation of the lower corporate tax rate until 2019, repeals the individual mandate established under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and has a larger child tax credit — all of which diverge from the House bill.

The two bills, and any final tax reform package, could have significant impacts on counties. For starters, the bills passed by both chambers would eliminate significant portions of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, which provides state and local control over tax revenues. The legislation would retain a capped property tax deduction for individuals up to \$10,000, but few would be able to access this deduction. These changes also could constitute the federal government directing states and local governments to rely on a specific type of tax revenue, creating more competition between counties and state governments over property taxes.

Also of concern for counties are changes to a tool called advance refunding bonds, which counties can use to refinance tax-exempt municipal bonds. Tax reform, as it stands now, would eliminate this option. Advance refunding bonds saved counties and taxpayers \$12 billion from 2012 to 2016, and repeal of this tool would only make infrastructure projects more costly for local gov-

ernments and taxpayers. NACo continues to work with lawmakers to request at minimum a delay in the effective date of this provision.

Contrary to the House version of the bill, the Senate version does hold harmless several other county priorities. Certain changes in the House bill that would have exposed government pension programs to taxation are not included in the Senate version. The New Markets Tax Credit and Private Activity Bonds — both vital to local infrastructure and housing development and eliminated in the House legislation — are maintained in the Senate's bill.

Following Senate action, both chambers of Congress have voted to enter a conference committee, which will bring lawmakers from each chamber together to resolve differences between the bills. The conference committee could adjourn as early as Dec. 8, with final votes in each chamber coming the week of Dec. 11.

If the conference committee runs into trouble, another option exists: the House could simply vote on and pass the language approved by the Senate, if House leadership can generate enough votes. This would send the bill directly to the president's desk.

NACo will continue working with congressional leadership to advocate for county priorities during the conference deliberations, and we encourage all county officials to engage with your members of Congress on key issues for your county. **CN**

# New Guidance Aims to Provide Greater Flexibility in Medicaid

**By Brian Bowden**  
associate legislative director

In a letter to state Medicaid directors Nov. 1, the Trump administration announced new opportunities to design programs to meet substance abuse and opioid addiction treatment needs through the Medicaid program.

The updated guidance further cements the significant role Medicaid plays in treating addiction.

Approximately 22 million Americans are classified as having an addiction disorder, also known as a substance use disorder, with only one in 10 receiving treatment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that drug overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. More than 60 percent involve an opioid — which works out to be approximately 91 lives every day. This statistic has quadrupled since 1999.

Medicaid is already a vital source of health coverage for individuals with addiction problems and accounts for 21 percent of all health care spending on substance use disorders. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Medicaid covered three in 10 adults with opioid addiction in 2015.

Medicaid supports a full continuum of care that spans prevention, treatment and recovery support services for people with substance use disorders.

For instance, Medicaid has allowed many states to increase access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT), the most effective treatment for opioid disorder, which combines medication with counseling and therapies. All state Medicaid programs cover at least one of the three medications—methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone — used for MAT, and most

cover all three.

Medicaid's ability to pay for inpatient treatment is limited because of a decades-old federal rule, known as the Institutes of Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion, which prevents states from allowing Medicaid to reimburse for care at treatment facilities with more than 16 beds. The IMD exclusion is a component of the Social Security Act, and legislation would be needed to repeal it entirely.

However, a regulation was updated last year allowing up to 15 days of care for inpatient stays meeting certain conditions in Medicaid managed-care only.

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**Counties annually invest \$83 billion in community health systems, including behavioral health services.**

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While still recognizing the need to enact legislation, the President's Commission recommended that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) use its existing administrative authority to grant waiver approvals to states to ease the IMD exclusion.

In a letter issued on the same day as their recommendations, HHS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced to Medicaid directors that they would be using their authority under another piece of the Social Security Act — Section 1115 — to waive certain provisions of federal law for an "experimental, pilot or demonstration project" that "is likely to assist in promoting the objectives of" the Medicaid program.

The new guidance to Medicaid directors on what are

known as Section 1115 waivers is intended by the administration to allow Medicaid to cover even more of the continuum of care for people with substance use disorders, including inpatient treatment. Previously, states needed to meet certain milestones prior to getting a waiver approved by CMS. Under the updated guidance, states would be able to achieve these milestones over the life of the demonstration.

While the expectations for initial waiver approval are loosened, according to the National Association of Medicaid Directors, there will be significant new reporting and evaluation requirements.

IMD payment waivers are the most frequently sought type of Section 1115 behavioral health waiver requests. Utah was the first state to see its waiver approved under the new guidance, joining six other states (California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia and West Virginia) that already have Section 1115 waivers to use federal Medicaid funds to pay for substance use treatment services.

An additional seven states have pending waiver requests for IMD substance use services. For instance, some states are allowing up to 30-day stays in IMD facilities whereas others propose 90 days.

Counties annually invest \$83 billion in community health systems, including behavioral health services.

Through 750 behavioral health authorities, counties plan and operate community-based services for individuals with substance use disorders. In almost half of all states, counties help finance the Medicaid program, contributing approximately \$28 billion in 2012, the last year for which figures are available. **CN**

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*Valerie Brankovic, legislative assistant, contributed to this report.*

# National groups partner to improve kindergarten readiness

NACo, the National League of Cities, Center for the Study of Social Policy, National Institute for Children's Health Quality and StriveTogether recently announced a partnership to work with communities nationwide to improve kindergarten readiness by focusing on child development from birth to three.

The partnership will be funded by the Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, to enhance local supports for infants, toddlers and their families. The Sorenson Impact Center, housed at the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business, will work with PCI and the partner organizations to manage the initiative. This is the first in a series of PCI-supported national, state and local efforts to improve kindergarten readiness for children.

Each year, an estimated 3 million children across the United States are at risk of reaching



kindergarten not ready to learn. This network of partners will work together to significantly reduce this number by promoting programs and services that focus on a healthy start at birth, support families with infants and toddlers and provide high-quality care and learning environments. Research shows that investment in children and their families in the earliest years helps communities create better education, health, social

and economic outcomes that increase revenue and reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life.

"Communities across the country are leading innovative efforts to address the unique needs of infants and toddlers and, in turn, drive better education, health and economic outcomes for our entire nation," said Janet Froetscher, president, J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation.

"We plan to harness this momentum to build on promising community-based approaches, share their lessons broadly and move forward together," she said.

"We are confident that through close collaboration and a shared focus on our nation's youngest children, this strong network of partners will be able to build local capacity to achieve the greatest outcomes for as many children as possible."

These organizations will work together to implement a multipronged strategy focused on building local capacity to best reach infants and toddlers and their families and bring promising programs to scale. They also will leverage each other's strengths and share best practices to maximize the reach of high-quality services for young children and stimulate a coordinated movement with lasting impact. To achieve this mission, the partner organizations will

equip communities with tools and resources to build strong early childhood systems and share best practices with other cities, counties and states. PCI will encourage local partners to disseminate content that will help drive policies that make the case for public and private investment in core services for infants and toddlers.

"We're pleased to partner with the Pritzker Children's Initiative to advance county efforts to serve some of our most vulnerable residents, especially children under the age of 3 and families living in poverty," said NACo President Roy Charles Brooks. "When we make investments and demonstrate leadership in early childhood development, we will lower future costs in health, child welfare, public safety and justice services. This unprecedented partnership will help us build healthier, more vibrant, safer communities across the nation." **CN**

## MONEY MATTERS

# Survey shows fraud ranks as a top concern for business owners

Karyn Roeling thought it was odd when she got a gift in the mail from a major credit card company.

After all, she didn't have an account with them. Roeling decided to check her credit report and discovered that somebody had impersonated her identity and opened several additional accounts across the country — including one that racked up \$5,000 in phone bills.

"I immediately reported this as fraud," Roeling said. "It was a very painful and time-consuming process. Now I know what it feels like to have your identity compromised."

While Roeling experienced fraud on a personal level, she is also a professional business owner who runs an independent insurance agency. Roeling now gives regular talks to fellow business owners across the country about the impor-

tance of protecting themselves from fraud and other security-related issues.

### Calculating fraud

Fraud can take many shapes and forms. It can include insurance fraud, corporate fraud, consumer fraud, tax fraud, identity theft and other issues.

It's a timely topic, as roughly 20 percent of business owners recently reported that they are concerned about both internal and external fraud, according to Nationwide's third annual survey of 1,069 business owners. In fact, fraud ranks right up there with cyberattacks (28 percent), the Affordable Care Act (29 percent) and the tax code (33 percent) when it comes to issues that impact an owner's ability to protect and secure their business.

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners calculated

in 2016 that the median loss from a single case of fraud cost business owners \$150,000, but more than 23 percent of occupational fraud cases resulted in a loss of more than \$1 million. The cost of loss associated with fraud can be especially devastating to small-business owners, who may not have the resources to detect or deter it.

"Fraud, often categorized as a white-collar offense, can be one of the most expensive crimes in America," said Lynne Brady, Nationwide's vice president of external fraud. "That's why Nationwide invests in state-of-the-art, anti-fraud technologies, training and solutions that help business owners protect their companies. Our goal is to help owners by giving them the ability to detect and deter fraud perpetrated against them and their customers."

### Detecting fraud

Since 2010, Nationwide has processed thousands of external fraud referral cases each year. Many of those cases stem from medical provider fraud, such as false coding of injuries or billing for services that weren't actually rendered.

Last year alone, Nationwide was able to detect millions of dollars' worth of potentially fraudulent claims using preventative technologies and predictive analytics.

### Detering fraud

Nationwide helps business owners fight fraud by providing comprehensive loss control training programs that teach them how to uncover potentially fraudulently reported cases of food contamination, employee accidents and other false claims.

This year, the company also

released a new anti-fraud solution for business owners called Fraudulent Impersonation Coverage. The crime insurance product helps protect small- and mid-sized businesses against loss from one of the latest schemes in which imposters manipulate employees into sending them corporate money or goods under false pretenses. **CN**

### Methodology

*Nationwide commissioned a survey among a sample of 1,069 U.S. small business owners. Small business owners are defined as having between 1-299 employees, 18 years or older, and self-reported being a sole or partial owner. The margin of error is +/-3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey was conducted May 16-24 by Edelman Intelligence, a full-service consumer research firm.*

# County uses GIS software to crowdsource holiday lights map



More than 60,000 lights illuminate Massachusetts Street in Douglas County, Kan. The location is featured using county GIS mapping software. Photo by Matthew Bristow

**By Mary Ann Barton**  
senior staff writer

'Tis the season — and Douglas County, Kan. is getting in the spirit of the holidays by launching a web-based mapping application that allows residents to share their outdoor holiday decorations and view other displays. The geographic information systems (GIS) division of Douglas County is leveraging a recent enhancement to its existing web GIS software to power this

new app at no additional cost to the county.

“Local government doesn’t always have to be about stuffy property assessments,” said Amy Roust, senior GIS analyst at Douglas County. “We’re fun people.”

Residents can view a map of outdoor holiday displays or if they have a holiday display, can add theirs by visiting the “Outdoor Holiday Displays” page on the Douglas County website at [www.douglascountyks.org](http://www.douglascountyks.org).

Roust said she got the idea to

use it after seeing a new template from the GIS mapping software company the county uses. “I think it came out this summer,” she said. She began to think about ways to crowdsource information.

The county got the word out to residents about mapping their displays on the county Facebook page, on Twitter and in a news release. The local newspaper featured the new map in a story. Roust said she saw a spike in traffic to the site after word got out.

Residents can add a location to the map by clicking on a “participate” button and either sign in with a social media account or continue as a guest, and uploading a photo of their decorations. The county reviews all submissions before they go live. When anyone signs on with a social media account, they can come back later to update their entry.

Residents can see other holiday displays by clicking on the “explore map” button to see the full list. Clicking on

a picture in the menu on the right side will give you details on each location.

Crowdsourcing applications are useful to government entities to engage with the public. Many local governments around the country already use crowdsourcing applications to solicit feedback from the public, engage them in issues of broad interest and even have them help identify infrastructure problems such as reporting downed signs or bad roads. **EN**

## Tax proposals likely to impact nation’s healthcare system

**By Brian Bowden**  
associate legislative director

New tax reform legislation under consideration in Congress — beyond impacting financing mechanisms important to counties — are likely to have wide-reaching implications for counties as health care providers. Counties operate on the frontlines of delivering health care services and finance 907 hospitals, 838 nursing homes, 750 behavioral health authorities and 1,943 local health departments to

the tune of \$83 billion annually.

Most notably, the Senate-passed bill repeals the Affordable Care Act (ACA)’s individual mandate, which requires individuals to either have health insurance or pay a fee when calculating their taxes. While the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates repealing this mandate would reduce the federal deficit by more than \$300 billion by decreasing the amount spent on Medicaid and ACA subsidies, the same CBO report predicts

the number of uninsured individuals would increase by 13 million in 2027, as compared to current law. This increase in the uninsured population could shift costs to states and counties in the form of uncompensated care if patients are unable to access health insurance and pay their medical bills. The House did not include a repeal of the individual mandate in its bill, but a final conferenced bill is expected to include the provision.

In addition to changes to the ACA, the House-passed

bill also includes a repeal of the medical expense deduction, which allows individuals to deduct medical expenses exceeding 10 percent of their adjusted gross income. These individuals usually have high out-of-pocket medical expenses, including nursing home costs, long-term care insurance premiums and other medical bills. Removing this deduction could place greater strain on Medicaid and other public programs that help counties provide long-term services and supports to their

residents, especially seniors and individuals with disabilities. The Senate-passed bill not only maintains the medical expense deduction, but lowers the threshold to 7.5 percent of an AGI’s for two years adjusted gross income — allowing more people to access the deduction.

Other lesser known provisions would also have tangential impacts on health care. For instance, the House-passed version would change

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# LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE:

*Schedule subject to change*

### FRIDAY, MARCH 2

- 8:00 a.m. CIO Forum
- 12:00 p.m. Tech Town Hall Pt. 1
- 5:30 p.m. Tech Town Hall Reception

### SATURDAY, MARCH 3

- 8:00 a.m. First Timers Orientation
- 9:00 a.m. Policy Steering Committee & Business Meetings  
(open to all conference attendees)
- 12:00 p.m. Tech Town Hall Pt. 2

### SUNDAY, MARCH 4

- 8:00 a.m. Standing, Ad Hoc, Advisory & Task Force Meetings  
(open to all conference attendees)
- 10:00 a.m. Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) & Rural Action Caucus  
(RAC) Meetings
- 1:00 p.m. Western Interstate Region (WIR) Board Meeting
- 1:30 p.m. Educational Workshop: Managing a Multi-Generational Workforce  
(separate registration & fee required)

### MONDAY, MARCH 5

- 7:30 a.m. Regional Caucus Meetings
- 9:00 a.m. **General Session**
- 10:45 a.m. Educational Workshops
- 12:00 p.m. **Attendee Luncheon & General Session**
- 1:45 p.m. Educational Workshops
- 1:45 p.m. Crisis Communications (separate registration & fee required)
- 3:15 p.m. Educational Workshops

### TUESDAY, MARCH 6

- 8:00 a.m. Educational Workshops
- 9:30 a.m. **General Session**
- 12:00 p.m. Hill Visits
- 1:00 p.m. Educational Workshops
- 7:00 p.m. NACo President's Reception

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7

- 8:00 a.m. Hill Visits
- 8:15 a.m. NACo Open House

For registration information and  
the full conference schedule, go to  
[www.naco.org/leg](http://www.naco.org/leg)

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Join fellow county officials to shape NACo's policy agenda, share best practices, network and advance county's federal policy priorities.

### GENERAL SESSION SPEAKER:

**Hon. David Shulkin**  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs



ANALYSIS

# Commentary: SALT tax deduction protects local government and residents

The following commentary, which NACo helped to draft, has appeared in several Minnesota newspapers.

**By Commissioner  
Randy Maluchnik  
Carver County, Minnesota**

The total elimination of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction in the current tax reform plan will drive up taxes for homeowners, drive down their property values and upend a safeguard that has protected taxpayers against double taxation and state and local governments from federal encroachment for more than 100 years.

Eliminating SALT in any tax reform plan poses a serious threat to support for essential public services such as health care, infrastructure, education and public safety.

The plan creates an unprecedented double standard by eliminating the SALT deduction for individuals and families while preserving the same deduction for corporations.

SALT was first recognized by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War.

It was also established in 1913 when the federal income tax was adopted under the U.S. Constitution to avoid the federal intrusion and dominance over state and local tax revenue. This was pushed by conservatives of the day to protect state and local control.

The U.S. House and Senate bills aim to use state and local revenues as a new federal piggy bank — both by eliminating SALT and by putting new restrictions on refinancing of tax-exempt bonds and Private Activity Bonds (airports, ports, water and sewer, non-profit hospitals and affordable housing).

SALT was on the original

federal tax form — when it truly was a postcard and only three pages — as one of the six original deductions.

Both House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have now clarified that both bills do raise taxes on some of the middle class, mostly middle class homeowners in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range for household incomes, not just individuals.

The proposals only make the child and family tax credits as temporary provisions through 2022.

Meanwhile almost all of the corporate tax provisions are permanent, so we're being asked to "trust Congress."

Corporations would be able to deduct their SALT expenses, plus taxes paid to foreign governments, but individuals and families would not be entitled to deduct these expenses.

(The House is now saying that small businesses and "pass through" businesses might not be able to deduct SALT — just the big corporations.)

It appears that these tax bills are all about corporate tax reform — corporations pay 10 percent of federal tax reform. Individuals and families pay 83 percent, yet the personal income side of the tax reform proposals was put together without any real thought or understanding of the impact. It was all about finding revenue sources to offset the corporate tax rate cut.

Minnesota residents, particularly homeowners, stand to pay more under the plan passed by the Ways and Means Committee.

IRS data shows that an average single homeowner making between \$50,000 and \$200,000 in every single ZIP code in Minnesota's Third Congressional District will



**MALUCHNIK**

pay more taxes, even given the proposed reduction in rates. The average tax increase on these homeowners

is \$545, with a max increase of \$1,257.

In almost half of the ZIP codes, in our Congressional District, a family of four would see a tax increase, with an average increase of \$946 and a max increase of \$2,321. These calculations are based on the plan that includes the \$10,000 deduction for property taxes.

If the bill fully repeals SALT, as the Senate version proposes, the math gets even worse for these families.

These are certainly concerns for individual taxpay-

ers, but also for county governments. As taxpayers see their federal taxes rise, they turn to local governments for tax relief.

That means not approving new infrastructure projects, decreasing county revenues and decreasing county services.

The SALT deduction was put in the original 1913 tax code to protect state and local governments from interference by the federal government.

Changing it now would hurt taxpayers and the local services we provide. **CN**

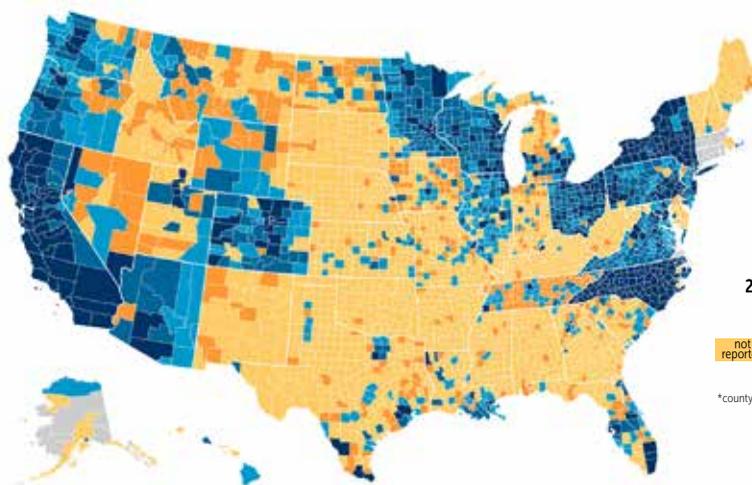
NEW IN DECEMBER FROM NACO'S

# COUNTY EXPLORER

**\$129B** dollars of federal funding to counties during FY2013-2015 are for programs affecting young children (0 to 3)

**437K** homeless shelter beds are located within counties

**26%** of county spending goes to health, hospitals, and human services



2013-2015 Federal Funding for Early Childhood (ECD)

Total ECD Federal Funding

not reported	\$0	\$287.7k	\$2.3mil	\$12.5mil
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\*county without county government if county is colored grey

Source: NACo Analysis of Federal Audit Clearinghouse Data, 2013-2015

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



2016 DATA VIZ AWARD WINNER



## PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY, VA.

Introduced: March 2, 1970  
Designed by:  
Charlotte Franklin

The Pittsylvania County seal was adopted from the county's flag on March 2, 1970. Noted to be the **only county flag in existence during the War of 1812**, Col. Daniel Coleman of the 42nd Regiment had the flag designed and painted. When it was found in the state library, it was returned to the county, at which point the Board of Supervisors approved the design of a seal based on the flag by Charlotte Franklin.



### THE FLAG:

Painted on white taffeta is the American eagle, resting on a pillar of American Independence and the year the county was founded, 1767. A ribbon bears the words "2nd Batt, 42nd Reg. Pittsylvania." In the beak of the eagle is a ribbon bearing the inscription "Pluribus Unum." A wreath of oak leaves and acorns encircles the pillar, and 23 stars are scattered over the flag.

### THE SEAL:

The corporate seal of the county is circular, one and seven-eighths inches in diameter, with the words "Seal of Pittsylvania County Virginia" and "1767" appearing on the circumference with a design in the center depicting the American bald eagle.

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

# Locals cheer Utah monument reduction



San Juan County, Utah Commissioner Rebecca Benally speaks at a "thank you" rally Dec. 2 in anticipation of President Trump's action to reduce the size of Bears Ears National Monument. Photo courtesy of San Juan County

By **Charlie Ban**  
senior staff writer

President Trump's dramatic reduction of national monument boundaries in three Utah counties drew support from local officials, who felt the designations were unnecessary, threatened reduced access and ignored local concerns.

Trump cut Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County by 85 percent of its original 1.35 million acre total. Grand Staircase-Escalante, located in Garfield and Kane counties, will be half its original 1.88 million acres.

"It was pretty significant and pretty thrilling to us to have President Trump come to Utah and invite the county commissioners from Garfield, Kane and San Juan counties to the signing ceremony," said San Juan County Board Chairman Bruce Adams. "But we're only halfway there, we need Congress to add protections to make sure this doesn't happen again."

President Obama declared Bears Ears a national monument in December 2016, using the Antiquities Act of 1906. Although San Juan County leaders had a chance to talk to federal

officials before the designation, Adams felt their concerns fell on deaf ears. President Clinton declared Grand Staircase-Escalante a monument in 1996.

"We just didn't feel like they cared what we said," Adams said. "They seemed disinterested."

Adams said San Juan County's concerns centered on the monument's excessive size, the existing levels of protection and the prospect of losing access, including for grazing, hunting and recreation.

"We were very concerned about access, and that it would be a precursor to closing roads, closing access, cutting off grazing rights," Adams said. "We just felt like it was about controlling the access and the use on the ground."

While thrilled about the redesignation, Adams said without changes to the Antiquities Act, counties and states like his could wind up in the middle of a tug-of-war game between presidential administrations.

"The next president could reverse the whole thing, so we're looking for legislation that requires the president to get consensus from the governor and state Legislature in the case

of a monument designation," he said. "Or making San Juan County or the state of Utah exempt," as Wyoming and Alaska are.

Gila County, Ariz. Supervisor Tommie Cline Martin, chair of NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee, had a more nuanced reaction.

"We rush to put houses on private land, and we bring the same ethic to public lands, in terms of taking out oil or cutting trees if we can. There's nothing wrong with that as long as it's sustainable," she said. "But I also think that some of the monuments are overdone, and think the designations were more of a political statement than one designed to protect resources and land."

"I think Staircase probably needed to be brought back. That seemed like as much a fight between the environmental community and the mining industry."

Clinton's 1996 designation for Grand Staircase-Escalante prevented a coal mining operation on the land.

"This is definitely good news for the counties," she said. "It will affect them more, at a rural level, than they've had a voice

in, though I still worry that even in a situation like this, the locals' say still wasn't taken into consideration."

Adams is hoping for increased attention from the Bureau of Land Management, which manages the Bears Ears land, to add resources to protect the artifacts on the land.

"That would be real protection for the land, making sure visitors are taught how to enjoy what we have here without causing any harm," he said. "Some parking lots, bathrooms, educational signage to teaching people from visiting from places like Japan or New York, places that are different from Utah, that you can't take shards of pottery home to put on your mantle."

Adams disputed concerns that less restricted use of formerly designated monuments land would be damaging in the locals' hands.

"We have great reverence for the artifacts and cultural resources in the area," he said, "We're very sensitive to how important they are especially to the Native American population in our community. There's a sacredness about it. And there's no oil or gas to be extracted here." **CN**

## LEADERSHIP EDGE

# What's the Big Deal About Big Data?

By Dr. Alan R. Shark  
executive director  
Public Technology Institute (PTI)

Government has been collecting data since the beginning of time. So, what has changed? We now we have something called big data. Yes, with the advent of super-fast computing we are learning to cultivate data in ways not thought possible just a few years ago. But that is only one part of the story as web 2.0 technologies allow citizens to not only digest content — but to create data. Those who study the information explosion claim that 90 percent of the world's data has been generated since 2010 and, add to that, we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day. (A quintillion is a billion billion.)

Corporate America is way ahead of local governments in collecting everything they can about an individual's buying habits, preferences, income sources, movements, as well as likes and dislikes to name a few. We are tracked the moment we log onto a commercial website— be it Amazon or Facebook or Twitter.

Big data has become a big business with data scientists and data analysts becoming one of the most sought-after professions. Today, there are at least 20 local governments that have created the position of chief data officer.

### Big Data vs. Open Data

The terms “big data” and “open data” are popular right now, and this creates some confusion as open data and big data are related — but different.

Numerous counties have created separate “open data portals” that make available government-collected information — data sets — to the public. Data sets made public might include public works

project accomplishments and metrics, pothole repair metrics, public safety response times, restaurant health violations and in some cases — public employee salaries. Open data has been promoted as a means of enhancing government transparency. And transparency has become a positive buzz-word for those running for office. The new mantra is “open government is good government.”

Big data is different and a definition is in order. One of the better definitions comes from IBM, which defines big data as: Big data is being generated by everything around us at all times.

Every digital process and social media exchange produces it. Systems, sensors and mobile devices transmit it. Big data is arriving from multiple sources at an alarming velocity, volume and variety. To extract meaningful value from big data, you need optimal processing power, analytics capabilities and skills.

The Internet and, the “Internet of everything” describes the conduit for all data that crisscrosses the globe and back in an instant. In 2014, more data was

transmitted and received via the Internet, surpassing voice communications. Big data also comes in many forms such as structured data and non-structured data.

Examples of structured data would include nine-digit Social Security numbers or fixed fields within a database. Unstructured data might include telemetry from mobile devices, data from web pages or social media, automated vehicle or school bus location systems, etc.

Metadata is another form of data which can play a significant role too. Simply put, it is data about data. It can be used to analyze trends, usage, manage resources and better understand relationships between users and devices. Instead of traditional research methods that rely on surveys and samples, big data can replace samples with live data from a larger and more reliable pool of data sets.

So, while open data and big data enjoy many similarities, they usually focus on different outcomes. Counties are using both to better inform the public about what they are doing (open) and to use data (big) for enhanced data-driven de-

cision-making. In almost every case, the focus is citizen-centric.

The rationale here is that the more we know about our citizens or local businesses, the better a county can deliver an appropriate service, message or system. In many instances, the public has become a willing partner toward sharing data that benefits all.

Now that we have a better understanding of what big data is, here are a few examples of how they are being applied:

**Example 1:** Big data has played a significant role in traffic reporting. Have you ever wondered just how Google Maps can be so accurate in displaying in graphic colors how traffic is moving (or not) in just about any part of the country?

The data is mostly coming from metadata derived from everyone's cellphones as they traverse our roadways. Google computers can tell traffic flow by the movement of vehicles and the time it takes for a signal to identify itself with any given cell tower.

The data collected is metadata, so don't be alarmed as they are more interested in your movement in aggregate

terms as opposed to learning exactly who you are.

**Example 2:** Big data has played a significant role in better understanding the opioid crisis. Counties can tap into numerous databases from law enforcement, social services and health facilities and plot the information to maps showing the location of each fatality.

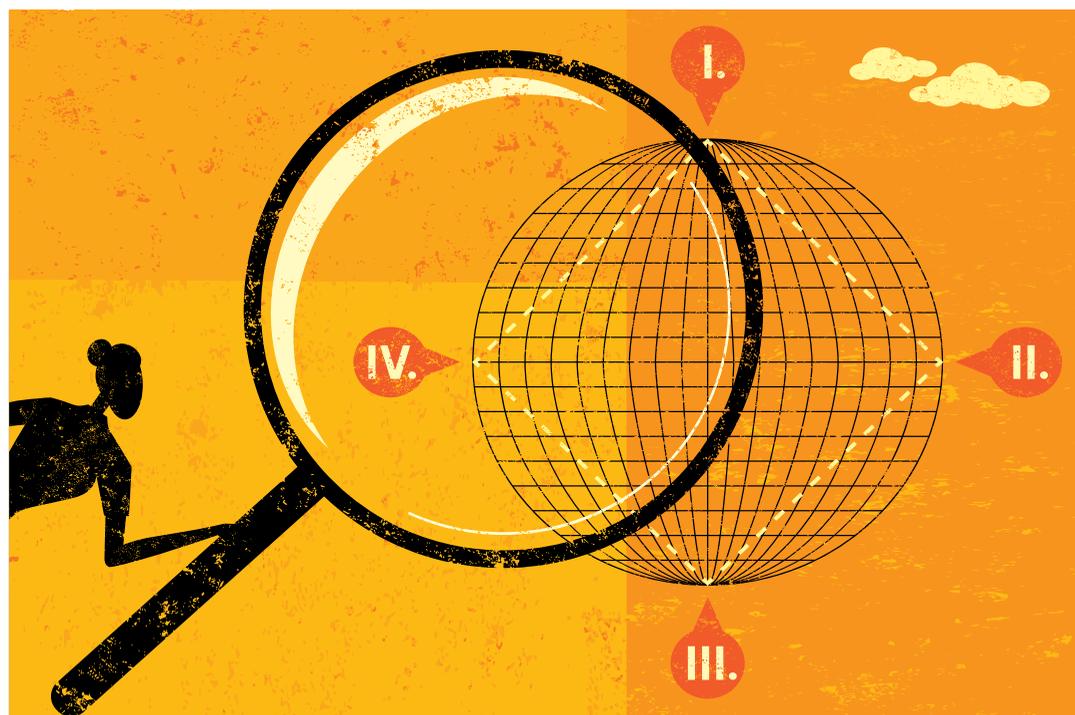
This can greatly assist public officials to better focus on prevention and intervention strategies since they can better focus their efforts and resources to where they may be most needed.

**Example 3:** Transportation officials use big data to better understand how citizens move about the county whether one is using a car, truck, bike, walk or public transportation. Data collected can lead to better street and highway planning, bus-stop placement and public transportation routes.

**Example 4:** Public safety uses big data to analyze crime statistics that includes types of incident, exact location, time of incident, while also at the same time looking for patterns. This type of analysis is often referred to as predictive analytics, where the focus is on anticipating crimes and deploying resources to prevent crime.

The digital age has provided unimaginable quantities of data delivered with amazing speed. Data by itself begins with a series of 1's and 0's and when structured properly, provides for greater human comprehension. From data we gain information, and when we have good and verifiable information, we gain wisdom.

Big data has become a big deal because when used to its full potential, it can help guide counties toward better resource management, healthier and safer communities, as well as improved citizen support and understanding. **CN**



# Tell Your Story

TALK TO

CN

CountyNews

WRITERS...

Give us a call at 202.393.6226  
or email us at [cnews@naco.org](mailto:cnews@naco.org)  
and we'll be in touch.

Looking forward to hearing from you,  
*Bev, Charlie, Mary Ann*

**WORD SEARCH**

**PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY, VA.**

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

**BOARDING** The county is home to two boarding schools: Hargrave Military Academy and Chatham Hall.

**CALLANDS** Home to the Callands Clerk's Office, built circa 1770, the community served as the county's first county seat from 1767 to 1777. A dispatch from 1775 describes a meeting in Callands where a "Committee of Safety" was elected to line up against King George III. Callands is named after Samuel Calland, a native of Scotland whose general store became a fixture in the community.

**CAROLINA** North Carolina is located on most of the county's southern border.

**CHATHAM** Location of the county seat, since 1777.

**COURTHOUSE** The Pittsylvania County Courthouse, built in 1853 in the Greek Revival style, is one of eight sites in Chatham listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**DANVILLE** The city of Danville sits adjacent to the county and is known as "the heart of Southern Virginia."

**FUNERAL** The Simpson Funeral Museum, located in the county, features everything you'd ever want to know about the history of funeral practices.

**HISTORY** The county History and Research Center and Library is located in the renovated 1918 Southern Railway Depot in Chatham.

**LAKE** A small portion of Smith Mountain Lake lies in Pittsylvania County.

**LARGE** The county is the largest in Virginia by land area, at 968.94 square miles.

**PITT** The county was named for William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham, who served as prime minister of Great Britain from 1766 to 1768. He was known as a friend of the Colonies by denouncing the Stamp Act, imposed on American colonists. His address in the House of Commons helped repeal the tax.

**ROANOKE** The county is bounded on the north by the Roanoke River.

**TOBACCO** The economy of the county was tobacco-dominated from after the Civil War to the 1970s. Some 26 million pounds of tobacco was produced in 1965 during its heyday.

**URANIUM** The largest undeveloped uranium deposit in the United States is located in Pittsylvania County. Some say it is worth an estimated \$10 billion.

**WINERIES** The county is home to several wineries, including Tomahawk Mill Winery, ranked the top winery in the area by a popular web review site. The winery is named for a grist mill on the property constructed in 1888.

**PROFILES IN SERVICE**

**GEORGE P. HARTWICK, III**

NACo Board  
 Commissioner  
 Dauphin County, Pa.



**Hartwick**

**Number of years involved in NACo:** 13

**Years in public service:** 20

**Occupation:** County commissioner

**Education:** Penn State University B.S. in public administration

**The hardest thing I've ever done was:** Survive a challenging childhood — learning to forgive and gaining the resilience and mental toughness to focus on the blessings and lessons, not bitterness and blame.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** Jesus, Martin Luther King and Ellen DeGeneres.

**A dream I have is to:** Leave my hometown, county, state and country better than I found it, as a result of my leadership and service.

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:** Was the winningest wrestler in my high school's history and was inducted into the Central Pennsylvania break-dancing Hall of Fame. That's true, but on a more serious note, few people know that I wore leg braces for five years of my life due to a rare childhood hip disease called Perthes. It made me understand at a young age that it's OK to be different and that God never puts challenges in our way unless he is sharpening our swords for his higher purpose.

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** Run for office when I was in my early 20s. I was the youngest mayor ever elected in Pennsylvania at that time. I won, and that early victory made me continue to aim high and dream big.

**I'm most proud of:** First and foremost, my kids. I believe you cannot change the world unless you are a good father first. I have twin girls, another daughter and a son. Secondly, it would be choosing a profession of service. Government is so often criticized by people who lack

solutions or the desire to come off the bench; I never wanted to be on the bench and would rather accept responsibility for solutions.

**Every morning I read:** Virtually every electronic newspaper in Pennsylvania, including all the local newspapers in my county as well as my Twitter feed.

**My favorite meal is:** My late grandmother's kidneys and potatoes or a good steak. I am definitely a meat-lover.

**My pet peeve is:** CAVE people -- "Citizens Against Virtually Everything." They have no solutions of their own but they are eager to tell you why your idea won't work.

**My motto is:** "Hard Work is the Hartwick Way."

**The last book I read was:** *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction* by Dr. Gabor Maté.

**My favorite movie is:** There are so many. I love real-crime movies and historical dramas.

**My favorite music is:** Hip-hop and R&B, and I grew up on my Dad's Motown.

**My favorite U.S. president is:** I have two. The first is probably Barack Obama. I brought him and Sen. Casey to my hometown of Steelton, was appointed as a member of the Pennsylvania Electoral College and had the

chance to meet Michelle and the kids as well. I was so proud to play an active role in making history by electing this great nation's first African-American president. I also have such admiration and respect for Abraham Lincoln. He showed true leadership in a time of adversity, stayed the course and did what was right despite enormous odds as well as personal and political opposition.

**My county is a NACo member because:** NACo gives us the ability to enhance best practices and share ideas with communities across the country to ensure we are at the front end of the curve when it comes to system reform and innovation and to better serve residents and taxpayers. We appreciate NACo's purchasing program, U.S. Communities.

NACo also gives me the chance to participate in setting the priorities and policies for federal human services and education funding and offers exceptional post-retiree health benefits, employee benefits and discounts on prescription drugs. I also embrace all the county-specific data from NACo. This data drives our decisions.

**My favorite way to relax is to:** be present and in the stands at my kids' sports events (I'm not quiet!) and help coach wrestling and football.



# House-passed brownfields legislation expands EPA program

From **BROWNFIELDS** page 1

created over 129,240 jobs.

Key provisions in the Brownfields Enhancement, Economic Redevelopment, and Reauthorization Act of 2017 include:

- **Expands brownfields liability protection for state and local governments** that acquire brownfields. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, also known as “Superfund” or “CERCLA,” local governments have liability protection if they acquired the brownfields involuntarily through bankruptcy, tax delinquency or abandonment and did not cause or contribute to the contamination. However, under CERCLA, local governments must meet a separate set of standards if the brownfields are acquired voluntarily. H.R. 3017 expands the scope of CERCLA to provide liability protection to state and

local governments for both voluntarily and involuntarily acquired brownfields.

- **Includes abandoned petroleum sites as brownfields** if there is no viable responsible party, and if the EPA and the state determine that the entity assessing and remediating the site is not liable to clean up the site. According to EPA, close to half of brownfields are contaminated by leaking underground storage tanks such as those found at unused gasoline stations.

- **Broadens the universe of eligible brownfield grant entities** to include 501(c)(3) organizations with a limited liability corporation, limited liability partnership and/or a qualified community development entity. While this provision would potentially broaden the types of entities that would qualify for funding, brownfields redevelopment projects are expensive and the grants only cover

a small portion of the costs. This inclusion may allow more counties, especially rural ones, to partner with outside entities to redevelop brownfields.

- **Increases funding for brownfields cleanup grants** from \$200,000 to \$500,000 per site and allows EPA to waive that limit up to \$750,000 based on need.

- **Creates a multipurpose brownfield grant program** that would allow eligible entities to undertake multiple brownfield projects under the same grant. The bill allows EPA

to issue multipurpose grants up to \$1 million.

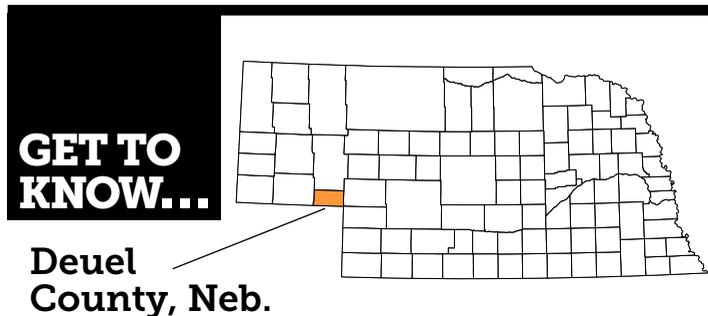
- **Permits additional administrative costs** to be charged back to the grant. Grant recipients can use up to 5 percent of their brownfields grant for administrative costs.

- **Allows grants for renewable energy projects** on brownfield sites. This includes facilities that generate wind, solar or geothermal energy or any energy efficiency improvement projects on brownfields.

- **Provides small community technical assistance grants of**

**\$20,000** to states for communities with populations under 10,000 and/or in disadvantaged areas where the annual median household income is less than two-thirds of the state-wide annual median income.

The bill has been sent to the Senate for consideration. A similar bill, the Brownfields Utilization, Investment and Local Development Act (S. 822) was passed by the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee in July. S. 822 is currently awaiting action on the floor of the Senate. **CN**



## Welcome to Deuel County, Neb.

Deuel County is named for Harry Porter Deuel, a prominent Union Pacific Railroad worker, said to be the oldest railroad man in continuous service in Omaha. Strangely enough, the **first and largest robbery of a Union Pacific train** happened in the county in 1877. Sam Bass and his gang held up a train for \$60,000 in loot and some believe a stash is still buried in the county. Deuel County is also **home to the state's largest flag**, painted on the side of a grain elevator in Chappell.



## ON THE MOVE

### NACo OFFICERS, COUNTY OFFICIALS

- NACo Second Vice President **Mary Ann Borgeson** spoke to members of the Association of Minnesota Counties at their Annual Conference Dec. 3-4 in Stearns County (St. Cloud), Minn.

### NACo STAFF

- **Fred Wong** has joined the Public Affairs Department as communications director. Wong will supervise the digital team and lead NACo's media relations and messaging efforts. Prior to joining NACo, he held several communications and public engagement roles in the Obama administration – the White House, USAID, HHS and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- **Scott Whitfield** is the Financial Services Center's new regional development manager. Whitfield will be responsible for managing national regional sales development, implementing new marketing initiatives, pursuing legislative needs and increasing revenue. Prior to joining NACo, he held several marketing positions with LP Building Products, Honeywell and Time Warner Cable.

- **Vernon Smith** will join the Counties Solutions and Innovation Department as senior associate for justice. Smith will manage the day-to-day quality, conduct and completion of project deliverables and ongoing relations with foundation partners, oth-

er NACo departments and members. Prior to joining NACo, he served as program analyst for the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Tracy Steffek** will also join Counties Solutions and Innovation as a program manager for human services. Steffek will assume project management responsibility for assisting in the development and implementation of an early childhood development project. Prior to joining NACo, Tracy worked for the Fairfax County Government as a service integration and planning management analyst.

- **Nastassia Walsh**, program manager, presented the Stepping Up project at the Institute for Behavioral Healthcare Improvement's Second Annual Conference in Miami-Dade County, Dec. 3-5.

- **Kevan Stone**, associate legislative director, was a panelist at the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE)-UAS Integration Seminar in Los Angeles County, Dec. 5-7. A few days earlier he briefed Minnesota county officials on infrastructure funding outlook, tax reform and drones at their annual conference, held Dec. 3-4.

- **Jack Peterson**, associate legislative director, will brief participants on federal regulations and potential legal issues that could affect counties at the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference in Dorchester County (Cambridge), Dec. 6-8.



Wong



Whitfield



Smith



Steffek

## BRIGHT IDEAS | COLUMBIA COUNTY, Wis.

# County engages high school students with Future Leaders program

### PROBLEM:

How do you engage young people to help them learn how county government works?

### SOLUTION:

Team up with a local leadership program to host high school students at meetings with county leaders.

By **Mary Ann Barton**  
senior staff writer

Wondering how to get the young people in your community excited about county government? In Columbia County, Wis., county supervisors meet often with teenagers who are part of the Future Leaders Active in Government (FLAG) program, led by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Columbia County.

The program got its start 10 years ago, when former county Supervisor Doug Richmond returned from a Wisconsin Counties Association meeting, where he had heard about a student leadership program.

He wanted to start a similar one in Columbia County and when he returned, met with Kathleen Haas, community development educator and associate professor at Columbia County UW-Extension, and Karen Nelson, 4-H youth educator and department head.

“We looked at a lot of different models, and designed and planned the program with Doug,” Haas said.

One of the traditions of the program is to schedule time for students to meet one on one with county supervisors at a breakfast where students ask questions about how county government works and the role that supervisors play. The students also meet monthly throughout the year.

“As the students progress through the year, they gain a better understanding of how it works,” Columbia County Super-



**Columbia County, Wis. Supervisor Nancy Long shares her perspective on county government with Future Leaders Active in Government participants, including Nic Volle of Lodi High School, at a “Breakfast with Your Supervisor” meeting.** Photo by Lyn Jerde/Portage Daily Register

visor Andy Ross said. In addition to meeting with supervisors at breakfast meetings, the students also prepare a resolution at the county supervisors’ meeting in April.

The program usually includes anywhere from about 20 to 45 students — high school juniors and seniors — who participate in daylong activities related to government each month.

“I’ve run into some of the young people out of school, out of college and who have come back in the area to work,” he said. “I still know them, they still know me, we’ll stop and say hi. Invariably they’ll say the experience they had was outstanding.”

“The bottom line to this whole thing is that the young person, whether they ever take and do anything — say as an elected official or anything like that — or they just go out and be a good citizen and participate in voting, and talk with their friends

and add a little perspective to what they’ve learned, it’s a ripples-on-the-water thing. I just can’t support it enough. There are very few things that I’ve ever really, in almost 30 years of local and elected positions, that I’ve said, “This is so good, you’ve got to keep going somehow,” he added.

Extra expenses for the program include transportation that isn’t provided by schools as well as catering for meetings, about \$2,500 annually, which is funded by the county.

If you are interested in creating a similar program, Haas said you’ll need buy-in from the county board, your extension office, schools, students and other county departments that are involved in a future program. **CN**

For more information about FLAG, contact Haas at: [kathleen.haas@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:kathleen.haas@ces.uwex.edu)

## PREPARING TO MEET YOUR COUNTY SUPERVISOR

**Students come prepared to the county supervisor breakfast meetings, armed with instructions on conversations topics. It’s also an opportunity to sharpen their social skills. Here’s a sample:**

- Introduce yourself and shake hands; then share:
- Your school
- Why you joined Future Leaders Active in Government
- One or two current events you’re interested in

**Students are encouraged to take notes because they’ll be sharing their information later with the group. Here’s a sample of the questions they ask the county officials:**

- Name, district, which municipality do you represent?
- How long have you been an elected official and why did you run for office?
- Have you held any other public offices and if so, what you most proud of accomplishing in that position?
- What county committees are you on and what is your role?
- How do you see your role and responsibilities of being a county board supervisor relating to: USA’s democratic principles and U.S. Constitution; the constituents you represent; protecting the public good of Columbia County and Wisconsin and how do you see yourself as a public servant?

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



A snorkeler dives underwater. Some sunscreens could be banned in Maui County, Hawaii, because they harm coral reefs. Photo courtesy of Pixabay

## HAWAII

**MAUI COUNTY** could become the first county in the country to **ban certain sunscreens** because they could harm coral reefs. A County Council committee has recommended banning sunscreens that contain oxybenzone and octinoxate, *The Maui News* reported. Supporters of a ban say it would help coral reefs. Samples from swimming and snorkeling spots around Maui have found growing levels of the chemicals in the water. "I think it's really about time," said Council Vice-Chair Robert Carroll, who also leads the county's land use committee. "It's something we need to have done and the sooner we do have this in effect, it gives our ocean and our fish and our limu a chance to recover and prosper." Limu is the Hawaiian name for a type of brown algae high in a potentially beneficial substance called fuciodan.

## CALIFORNIA

• **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** saw a jump in hate crimes last year linked to **white supremacists**, according to a recent study released by the L.A. County Commission on Human Relations. The study also

found that L.A. County saw an increase in gender-based crimes, particularly against transgender people. There were 39 reported gender-based crimes compared with 22 the year before — a 77 percent increase. The most targeted

within that group was Latina transgender women. The California attorney general's office reported an 11.2 percent statewide increase in hate crimes in 2016. According to recently-released FBI statistics hate crimes across the nation were up 5 percent in 2016 from the previous year.

• **MERCED COUNTY** is considered a **health professional shortage area**, with only 45.4 physicians per 100,000 residents, according to the county's 2016 community health assessment. Health and elected officials say that programs that help put local high school students on a path leading to medical school can eventually bring more doctors to the area. Delhi Unified High School offers a four-year medical program, Delhi Medical Academy

of Sciences, and students can go into one of two courses of study — nursing or general medical training.

• The **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY** Board will work with the City of Santa Cruz to find a space for a **day center** — a place for homeless people to spend daytime hours indoors. A city-sponsored storage program, which will allow homeless people to store their possessions while they go into shelters or the proposed day center, opened Dec. 1, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* reported. Meanwhile, the county will also explore a "tiny house" transitional housing program.

## FLORIDA

In October, **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY** officials passed a resolution asking the Trump administration to **extend the tem-**

**porary protected status (TPS) program for Haitian nationals** living in the United States to July 2019, which the Trump administration did late last month; the area is home to the largest population of Haitian nationals in the United States, about 24,000. The Haitian-American population is about 300,000 in South Florida, according to the *Sun Sentinel*. "President Donald Trump recognized the devastation Haiti faced even before the additional damaging effects of Hurricane Matthew, acknowledging the turmoil, pain, and suffering of the Haitian people as a result of the 2010 earthquake and desiring to be their 'greatest champion,'" the commissioners noted.

• The largest number of **heroin-related overdoses** last year in Florida took place in



# Tax plan impacts healthcare

From HEALTHCARE page 5

tax treatment for graduate students and those paying back student loans, including those pursuing and recently employed in medical fields. For instance, new doctors would not be able to deduct the interest paid on student loans. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, 75 percent of the medical school class of 2017 graduated with student loan debt, with nearly half owing \$200,000 or more. The Senate-passed bill keeps this deduction in place. Counties support targeted incentives, including low-interest loan repayment programs, to encourage more health care providers to enter and remain in primary care and public health careers.

Because both tax bills would add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years, they could trigger another law that would require cuts to certain federal programs.

While Medicaid and Social Security are exempt, the Medicare program could be subject to cuts totaling up to \$25 billion. Other mandatory non-exempt programs such as the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which helps fund county public health departments, would be similarly impacted.

However, Senate leadership has assured members that these cuts would not go into effect, and the cuts have never been enacted since the original law was passed.

NACo will continue to work with congressional leadership to advocate for county priorities — including those impacting health care — as the House and Senate reconcile differences in their tax bills during the conference deliberations. NACo encourages all county officials to engage with your members of Congress on key issues for your county. **CN**

**PALM BEACH COUNTY** for the second year in a row, according to a *Palm Beach Post* analysis. The official heroin-related overdose death toll for 2016 took 571 lives, a 110 percent increase from 2015. Statewide, there were 5,725 opioid-related deaths, a 35 percent increase. Deaths caused by fentanyl increased by 97 percent. Palm Beach County has held numerous summits on opioids and devoted \$3 million in its 2018 budget to help combat the opioid epidemic.

## ILLINOIS

**COOK COUNTY** and the City of Chicago have teamed up to **sue Uber**, alleging the company violated state and local laws when it concealed that personal information — including names, email addresses, mobile phone numbers of 57 million customers and drivers — was stolen in a hack in October 2016. Uber paid the hackers \$100,000 to destroy the stolen information. The lawsuit seeks compensation for violations against any city or county residents.

## MINNESOTA

Last winter, Minnesota saw 59 snowmobile crashes, five of which were fatal. This year, the **SCOTT COUNTY** Sheriff's Office is offering free **snowmobile field training** for aspiring drivers ages 11-15. The half-day classes fulfill part of the state requirements for snowmobile certification, which is required for anyone born after 1976 before they ride on public land. A Scott County recreational safety deputy and a Department of Natural Resources instructor will provide an overview on snowmobiles, the machines' different con-

trols, riding at night and speed limits.

## MONTANA

**GALLATIN COUNTY** recently voted to consider making the **elections administrator** an appointed role rather than an elected position and separate it from the clerk and recorder's duties, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* reported.

## NEBRASKA

**LANCASTER COUNTY** roads could become sites for **memorial signs** in memory of a loved one who died in an automobile crash. The county engineer has drafted a policy that will allow purchase of a blue rectangular sign bearing one of the following messages: "please drive, safely," "seat belts save lives," "please watch for bicyclists" or "don't drink and drive." Signs will include the name or names of crash victims, but not drunk drivers. Signs memorializing drunk drivers will only include the name of sponsors. The signs will be placed on county roads near where accidents occurred and will remain there for three to six years.

## NEW JERSEY

**BERGEN COUNTY** is the first in the state to raise its **minimum wage** for county workers to \$15 an hour. About 130 full-time workers will see raises and payments retroactive to Sept. 1, 2017.

## OREGON

Homeless **LANE COUNTY**

residents will be allowed to **camp in their cars** on private property. The Board of Commissioners approved a pilot program that will match 10 people or families with property owners willing to play host to them for up to a year. Property owners can include church businesses, public agencies and industrial property owners, *The Register-Guard* reported. Residential property owners will not be able to participate.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

A new ordinance being considered will make it easier for **ORANGEBURG COUNTY** to charge people connected to **trash found on roads**.

The ordinance raises the maximum penalty for littering from \$500 to \$1,000 and clearly defines when those penalties have to be given. Magistrates and municipal courts will be able to publish the names of the person convicted of violations. During litter pickups, violators will have to wear "litter bug" vests as a form of public shaming.

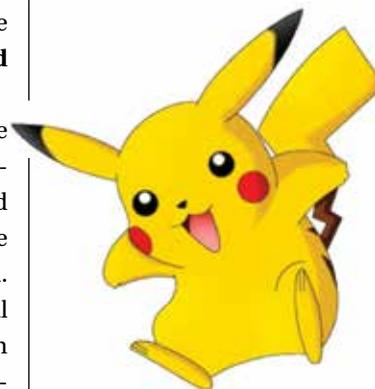
## TEXAS

Claiming its violations **put first responders at risk** during Hurricane Harvey, **HARRIS COUNTY** has sued chemical company Arkema, seeking \$1 million in penalties. About 300 homes were evacuated and more than 30 people hospitalized — including law enforcement — when a volatile chemical erupted into flames after the plant lost power and generators in Harvey floodwaters, the *Houston*

*Chronicle* reported. The suit claims the company violated a long list of environmental, safety and building regulations which increased the risk to first responders.

## UTAH

**SAN JUAN COUNTY** has sued the federal government seeking ownership of a path through **Bureau of Land Management territory**. The path was closed in 2007 because of damage to nearby archeological sites. County Commissioner Phil Lyman said that seven different archeological assessments since then have all shown that proposed projects would not harm the sites, so he said neither should using it for transportation, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

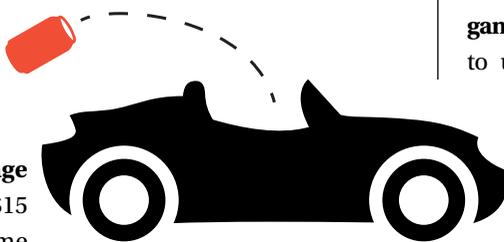
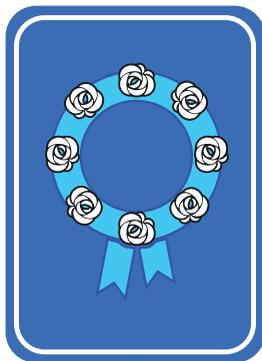


## WISCONSIN

After a federal judge blocked **MILWAUKEE COUNTY's** ordinance that **augmented-reality game developers** get a permit to use county parks for their games, the county has settled with the developer. The county will pay \$83,000 in attorney's fees to Candy Lab, Inc., — developer of Pokemon Go.

The county passed the ordinance in February after Pokemon Go players left trash in a county park while playing the game, which prompts players to find creatures hidden in the real world via a smartphone app.

*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.*



## the HR DOCTOR

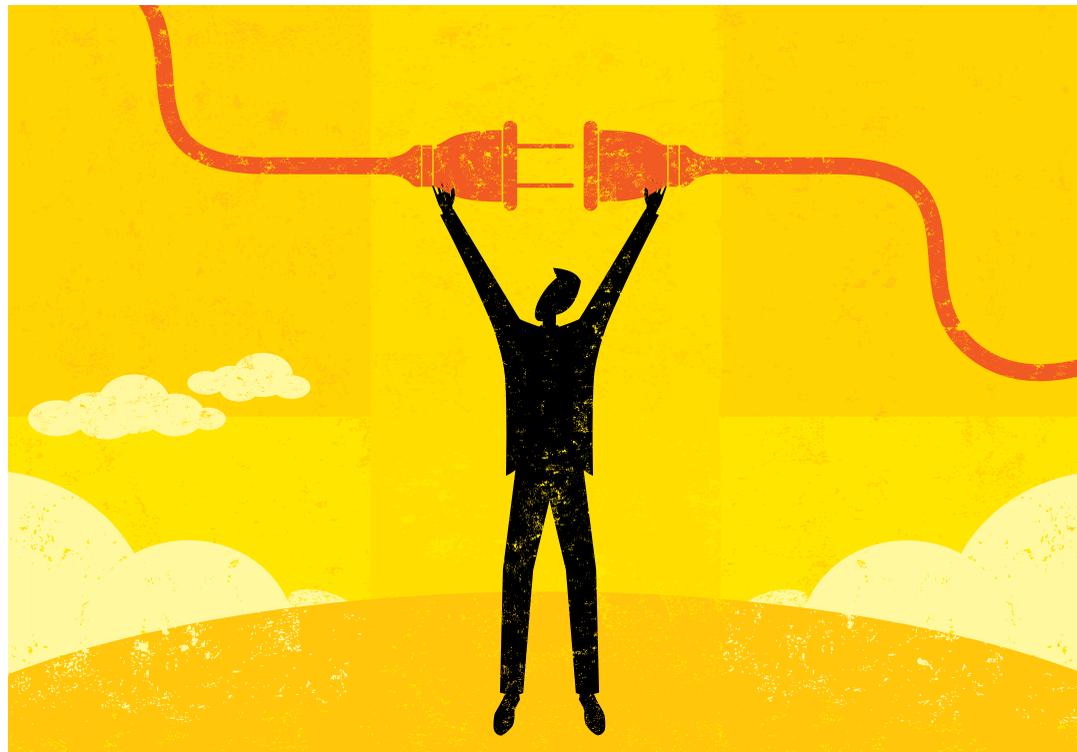
with Philpot & Winkler

Imagine you are hiking the Grand Canyon. You have just hiked down one mile, to meet the river that created this canyon and cut through rock formed over two billion years ago. This natural wonder is rich in geology, ecology, history and culture. As you approach your destination, either the campground or Phantom Ranch Lodge, you eagerly anticipate a cold drink with ice. Just as you approach the river and hear its mighty roar, you have one obstacle remaining, a suspension bridge over the river.

There are two suspension bridges that cross the Colorado River at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The Black Bridge, built in 1928, is the bridge connecting the South Kaibab Trail to the North Kaibab Trail. Hikers or mule riders who have descended the South Kaibab Trail will find this bridge has a wooden floor. Hikers who have descended the more popular Bright Angel Trail are led to the Silver Bridge, built in the late 1960s. Only hiker traffic, no mules, may use this suspension bridge, and the floor of the bridge is metal slats, allowing hikers the opportunity to look down and see the raging waters pass beneath them. (There are videos of both bridges on YouTube.) For some travelers, the thought of the suspension bridge at the end of a long day is somewhat unnerving. It is possible the person has never crossed a suspension bridge, walked over such a mighty river, or ridden a mule. The newness of the experience combined with just a little dehydration, exhaustion and sore muscles may cause a little anxiety. The key is to continue to focus on the other side of the bridge.

Now think of your onboard-

# What Does Your Suspension Bridge Look Like?



ing process to your department or organization as a suspension bridge. Does that suspension bridge have a floor? How much anxiety does it cause? Is it wide or narrow? Is there room for a mentor to guide an employee over the bridge? How do we maintain and care for the bridge? How does it welcome people and present a first impression of who we are as an organization? And how do we empower and engage employees from the moment they approach the bridge?

While new employees will certainly provide a perspective of your onboarding process, they are not the only way to assess the value of your bridge. Through temporary assignments, established employees can also experience your onboarding processes. Temporary assignments have been identified as an effective strategy for recruiting and retaining millennials, as they provide varied growth opportunities. But temporary assignments allow a variety of employees to grow beyond the silo of their own department or division.

Assignments take employees out of their comfort zones, encouraging growth and self-reflection. Such an assignment may be an opportunity for an ascending employee to gain supervisory skills, oversee a

budget or begin an initiative. It may be a great opportunity for a “Buddy to Boss” situation, where an internal candidate who has been promoted within the department can expand his or her supervisory skills with another team of employees.

Additionally, employees on temporary assignment can assess the suspension bridge to your team. The employee on assignment has a set point of reference from their home department. They have an experience to draw from and compare, favorably or unfavorably. They may be more candid with their perspectives since their tenure is temporary.

So how do you go about setting up such a rotation? First, partner with another division, department, or even another organization, for an employee rotation, with one employee rotating to the other department and another employee rotating into that position (a position swap). Or have an employee rotate into a vacancy. Second, work on priorities, goals and expectations for the rotation. Usually, such rotations are three to six months in length. Who will the employees report to? How will they complete their timesheets? Will they continue to meet periodically with their home department or supervisor? Will

they weigh in on any long-term projects in the home department for continuity? Third, hold a competitive process to determine which employees will be able to take part in this opportunity. Fourth, outline the expectations with the selected employees, including transition strategies into the new department, transition strategies back to the home department and any deliverables.

Some questions to ask at the completion of the assignment may include: Is the group effective and transparent at inclusion, particularly in situations where the employee may have a different perspective? Are the employees in the new team open to the question “why?” or do they rely on “because we have always done it that way” and “we tried that before.”

Are expectations shared or do employees keep their heads down and watch how others navigate situations? For example, how do employees call in sick? Are they allowed to text to notify a supervisor they are out for the day? Are employees taking long lunches? Do they arrive late? Do employees offer assistance to one another and how do they respond when asked for assistance? Is the office a ghost town at four o'clock on Friday? Under what circumstances are office doors

to be closed? Do all employees have the same rules and guidelines, or do managers follow an entirely different set of criteria? What is the overall culture? And what is the tone of morale? Also, and possibly more importantly, ask what the employees learned about themselves through the special assignment process. Ask how they grew professionally and what specific takeaways they will bring back to their home department.

Having a fresh set of eyes in the department-division may allow out-of-the-box improvements to be made or give a unique perspective to a particularly challenging task. This may help to move a project forward that has been stalled or put on a back burner. A new leadership style may help to engage staff in the department in a new, dynamic way. It may also help identify some areas that need attention in the department. Finally, it may help the rotating employees to be reenergized in their own work. Department or division rotations are not only good for the growth of the organization, they are fantastic ways to give growth opportunities to employees who may not have an immediate or obvious vacancy to aspire to on their career track. They get projects moving, invigorate staff and focus on inclusion.

While the suspension bridge is critical, the focus must be the other side of the bridge — the career in public service and the mission of the department. If we can't create an atmosphere of inclusion as part of our culture, we jeopardize our ability to retain top performers.

For that reason, we need to evaluate our ability to create such a culture: one that starts with the first look at the suspension bridge, but continues to focus on what lies beyond the bridge.

Because if you focus on the metal slats, you will miss the majesty of the canyon and the power of the river. **CN**