

County health rankings highlight new indicators

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

This year's County Health Rankings & Roadmaps will shine a light on a few new indicators and take a deeper dive into some existing ones to show trends that have developed over the program's six years.

The rankings, being released on March 25, are a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The data allow each state to see

how its counties compare on 30 factors that impact health, such as education, transportation, housing, violent crime, jobs, diet and exercise.

"Now that we've been doing the county health rankings for six years, there are areas where we are able to start reporting trends that we're seeing across the nation," said Julie Willems Van Dijk, Ph.D., co-director of the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) program.

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Real estate move prevents new crude oil train traffic

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Hennepin County, Minn. plans to keep trains carrying Bakken crude oil from expanding traffic in its suburbs.

The County Board recently paid \$1.8 million for an auto body shop and towing company to keep two railroad companies from buying the

land to build a connection between their intersecting tracks. If successful, the purchase would protect several dense Minneapolis suburbs from increased traffic in volatile crude oil from western North Dakota.

The north-and-south BNSF tracks are pretty quiet as they bisect a series of towns, but the Canadian Pacific tracks, running east and west through the county, see a good amount of traffic including oil trains carrying as many as 109 tanker cars, as counted by Commissioner Mike Opat, who represents the area.

"Everyone is pretty used to that (set of tracks). They don't have to love it, but they understand its importance in commerce," he said. "People were rightly concerned and very much involved in the process to prevent 4,000-foot-long trains of Bakken oil through what are densely populated inner-ring suburbs."

The Threat

Once the county learned that the property was being scouted by the railroads, its plan was hatched within two weeks. In addition to fear over the oil's volatility, the county worried that long trains passing through towns on the south BNSF line would separate half the

See TRAIN TRAFFIC page 17

NACo testimony echoes local concerns about 'waters of the U.S.'



Photo by Matt Fellows

Clinton County, Pa. Commission Chairman Pete Smeltz (l) prepares to testify on behalf of NACo about the proposed "waters of the U.S." rule before the House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

Six weeks after NACo First Vice President Sallie Clark expressed serious concerns at a joint congressional hearing, on proposed changes to the "waters of the U.S." rule, Clinton County, Pa. Commission Chairman Pete Smeltz testified on the proposed rule's potentially harmful impacts on rural America before the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

"NACo — including rural counties — supports common-sense environmental protection," Smeltz said. "Our concerns stem from the proposal's unclear language and its failure to consider real-world, on-the-ground impacts in localities across the country."

"This proposal would amount to extended federal oversight, greater delays in critical work, public safety risks and additional financial costs without benefiting the environment."

After working closely with

county technical experts who implement federal and state programs every day — county engineers, legal staff, public works directors and storm water managers — NACo in November 2014 called for the proposed rule to be withdrawn until further analysis and more in-depth consultation with state and local officials could be completed.

At the March 17 hearing, Smeltz discussed the main reasons that led to NACo's decision:

- the proposal's broad impact on counties
- an inadequate consultation process with state and local governments
- ambiguous and inconsistent terminology, and
- ongoing delays with the current permitting process.

The proposed rule introduces vague definitions for terms like "tributary," "significant nexus," "adjacency," "riparian areas," "floodplains" and "neighboring." Depending on how these terms

are interpreted, additional types of public infrastructure could fall under federal jurisdiction.

Smeltz emphasized the importance of the local, state and federal

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Marketplace Fairness Act garnering more attention

By MIKE BELARMINO
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

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- » Bipartisan Marketplace Fairness Act introduced in Senate
- » States could require Internet merchants to collect sales taxes
- » Supreme Court justice says it's time to review decisions prohibiting remote sellers to collect sales taxes

Sens. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) have introduced the Marketplace Fairness Act, (MFA) of 2015.

Similar to the legislation that passed the Senate in 2013 with strong bipartisan support, the bill (S. 698) does not create a new tax; rather, it simply gives states and local governments the ability to enforce existing sales tax laws. By expediting the enforcement of existing sales taxes, the MFA would allow Main Street retailers to compete on a level playing field against out-of-state Internet retailers.

Upon enactment, the MFA would not automatically enable state and local governments to enforce existing sales taxes. In order to exercise this authority, state and local governments would need to simplify sales and use tax administration through one of two options:

- authority can be exercised if a state is a member of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement where participating states have already implemented simplification measures, or
- a state can adopt measures to meet the minimum simplification requirements detailed in the bill. Sellers with less than \$1 million in annual nationwide remote sales are

exempt from collecting. Additionally, under the bill, the authority to enforce could not be exercised until one year after enactment or during the first holiday shopping season after enactment.

Legislation that allows the collection of sales taxes on remote sales has been a longstanding priority for NACo. The current inability of state and local governments to enforce existing sales taxes is essentially the result of two-decades-old U.S. Supreme Court decisions — *National Bellas Hess v. Department of Revenue (1967)* and *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota (1992)*. Both cases dealt with requiring sales tax collection by sellers who were not physically located within a state.

In *Quill*, the court held that states cannot require retailers with no in-state physical presence to collect the sales tax. Even though the *Quill* decision essentially upheld

Bellas Hess, the court also held that Congress ultimately has the authority to regulate interstate commerce and could overrule the decision through legislation.

An interesting development related to the *Quill* and *Bellas Hess* decisions, occurred in a recent Supreme Court decision in *Direct Marketing Association v. Brohl*.

At issue was a Colorado law that would require remote sellers to inform Colorado customers annually of their purchases and to send the same information to the Colorado Department of Revenue. The law was an attempt to improve tax collection in the state and did not impose any requirement on sellers to collect, just a requirement to report. Direct Marketing sued the Colorado Department of Revenue, alleging that the reporting requirements violate the U.S. and Colorado Constitutions.

The *Brohl* decision, which sent the case back to lower court, wasn't the interesting development. Rather, it was a concurring opinion filed by Justice Anthony Kennedy. In it, Kennedy primarily dealt with the court's previous decisions in *Bellas Hess* and *Quill*. He acknowledged that *Brohl* would not be the proper case to address the two prior decisions because *Brohl* does not raise the issue of collecting sales taxes. However, he specifically added: "Given these changes in technology and consumer sophistication,

it is unwise to delay any longer a reconsideration of the court's holding in *Quill*. A case questionable even when decided, *Quill* now harms states to a degree far greater than could have been anticipated earlier."

Although this is only one justice's opinion, it will be interesting

to see whether it will provide any motivation for Congress to finally act on the issue after years of the legislation's languishing in previous sessions.

To view NACo's resources on the Marketplace Fairness Act, visit <http://www.naco.org/legislation/Pages/MFA.spx>

Counties: Waters of the U.S. proposal not a partisan issue

WOTUS from page 1

partnership in crafting practical rules and implementing Clean Water Act programs on the ground.

"Counties are not just stakeholders or a special interest group. We are key partners in our nation's intergovernmental system," he said.

Local governments own nearly 80 percent of all public road miles and half of the nation's bridges. Counties also own and maintain public safety infrastructure designed to keep rising water away from people and property. These and other systems include flood control channels, roadside ditches, green infrastructure and drinking water facilities.

Smeltz remarked that this is not a partisan issue for counties. "In the eyes of county governments,

this is not a political issue. It is an issue of practicality and partnership.

"NACo looks forward to working with Congress and federal agencies to craft a rule that makes sense. Together, we can create a rule that will achieve our common goal: to protect clean water while protecting public safety and the economic vitality of our communities."

Since the proposal was unveiled in April 2014, NACo has advocated for greater clarity and launched an online resource hub and action center.

To read Smeltz's full testimony on behalf of NACo and for more information, visit www.naco.org/WOTUS.

Florida counties embrace health initiatives

Florida's county officials are not only talking the talk, they're also walking the walk.

Over the last two years, several initiatives, sponsored by the state's health department, have focused on the participation of county leaders as they joined ranks with public health officials to encourage more active lifestyles.

The three campaigns — Healthy Promise Florida, Healthiest Weight Community Champions and FloridaWalks! — are part of a broader initiative, Healthiest Weight Florida. They're intended

to help children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living.

The premier event, FloridaWalks!, was an interactive walking challenge designed to engage Florida's county leadership and county staff in physical activity. The challenge was co-sponsored by the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Association of Counties and promoted by Florida's state surgeon general and secretary of health, Dr. John Armstrong, and Leon County Commissioner Bryan Desloge, former president of the

Florida Association of Counties, now NACo second vice president.

More than 600 participants competed to finish the virtual 2,000-mile trek throughout Florida — from Pensacola to Key West — walking a combined 803,185,974 steps during the challenge. Individual participants virtually walked through each county in the state and received motivational tips, challenges and reminders along the way. Awards were given to the counties with the most steps and to the most consistent trackers.

Currently, county health officials are taking part in a new Healthiest Weight initiative called Healthy Promise Florida. The initiative is a message board campaign promoting small, achievable commitments to healthier choices during 2015. The public is invited to join local leaders in making a promise in person at local county health department buildings where display boards are available for individuals to post their promises.

The Healthiest Weight Com-

munity campaign recognized 65 communities as the 2015 Healthy Weight Community Champions for their best practices to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

These initiatives demonstrate an increased awareness and adoption of healthier lifestyles by county leadership. When it comes to weight loss, even relatively small reductions can significantly improve health outcomes.

Quick Takes

Top 5 healthiest counties for kids (2014)

Based on low birthweight, infant deaths, teen births, children in poverty and injury death rates

1. Marin County, Calif.
2. Norfolk County, Mass.
3. Hunterdon County, N.J.
4. Chittenden County, Vt.
5. Nassau County, N.Y.

Source: U.S. News and World Report

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House, Senate introduce Addiction and Recovery Act

By YEJIN JANG
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Bipartisan legislation that aims to address the increasing incidence of opioid and prescription drug addiction has been introduced in both the House and Senate by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.).

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA (S. 524-H.R. 953), contains six major provisions: prevention and education; law enforcement and treatment; treatment and recovery; collateral consequences; addiction and recovery services for women and veterans; and incentivizing comprehensive response to addiction and recovery.

Under Title I, Prevention and Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would create an interagency task force to develop best practices for pain management and pain medication prescribing. The Department of Justice (DOJ) would be charged with creating a national education campaign to prevent the abuse of opioids and heroin. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) would create new grants to help implement community-wide prevention strategies for areas experiencing above average rates of drug abuse for extended periods.

Title II, Law Enforcement and Treatment, would authorize the DOJ to make grants available for alternatives to incarceration programs, training for state and local law enforcement on Naloxone (which reverses the effects of an opioid overdose) and expansion of prescription drug take-back programs.

Title III, Treatment and Recovery, calls for new grant funding to be made available by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment for areas that have a high rate of heroin and opioid use and for ONDCP to create a National Youth Recovery Initiative that would provide recovery support for individuals enrolled in high school or college. ONDCP would also be directed to create and expand grants for recovery services.

Title IV, Addressing Collateral Consequences, would provide grants for the expansion of education

opportunities for incarcerated individuals, revise the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to remove questions related to drug possession and convictions, and create a National Task Force on Recovery and Collateral Consequences which would be charged with identifying collateral consequences faced by individuals with drug convictions and recommend ways of reducing them.

Title V, Addiction and Recovery Services for Women and Veterans, calls on the DOJ to create a grant program that would expand a state's ability to address opioid and heroin abuse by pregnant and parenting women and grants for family-based substance abuse treatment, and authorizes the VA to expand the use of veteran treatment courts.

Title VI, Incentivizing Comprehensive Responses to Addiction and

Recovery, would authorize grants for the planning and implementation of an opioid abuse response initiative through HHS, the DOJ and the ONDCP.

NACo policy supports diversion and treatment for alcohol and substance abuse disorders. NACo also supports treatment-based alternatives to local incarceration for nonviolent offenders whose core problem is substance abuse and addiction.

NACo members are encouraged to contact their congressional delegation, especially those that serve on the House and Senate Judiciary committees, and urge support for CARA.

For more information, contact Yejin Jang at 202.942.4239 or yjang@naco.org.

(Jacob Terrell, legislative assistant, also contributed to this report.)



Much Mahalo – thank you – to all the county officials and staff who participated in the 2015 NACo Legislative Conference. I appreciate all the time and effort that you exerted reviewing policy issues on steering committees, attending the workshops, hearing the great lineup of speakers and meeting with your representatives in Congress. Those meetings on Capitol Hill are so important, ensuring that members of Congress understand the key issues that are facing counties and their residents.

I hope that you found the conference worthwhile and that you returned home with ideas, solutions and a renewed sense of purpose.

Now is the time to begin planning for the Annual Conference, which will be held July 10 - 13 in Mecklenburg County (Charlotte), North Carolina. You can register today online – www.naco.org! There will be interesting, informative speakers, great workshops, policy committee meetings and the opportunity to network with other county officials from all over the country.

Riki Hokama

NACo President

Council Member, Maui County, Hawaii

CORRECTION

The term "Outstanding Alabama Water" was missing from the Baldwin County, Ala. word search in the March 9 issue of County News. We apologize for any inconvenience.



COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Oakland County, Mich.

County Agency Encourages Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



The numbers surrounding child abuse and neglect are tricky. A British medical journal, *The Lancet*, found that only one in 10 incidents of abuse in highly developed countries tends to be confirmed by social service agencies. With Hamilton County, Ohio confirming about 2,400 such cases in 2010, the real number could be as high as 24,000.

Having a more accurate count would allow the county's job and family services department to better address the issues.

In 2010, Brian Gregg, job and family services department spokesperson, was receiving calls from news reporters asking about domestic violence cases or drunk driving incidents where a child was present, though not directly involved.

"We had no idea about them," Gregg said. "They had never been

reported to us."

Because police officers, along with medical professionals, teachers, child care operators and others are required to report incidents of child endangerment, agency director Moira Weir decided those mandated to report incidents needed clarification on what that mandate covered.

"Even if a child wasn't directly involved in an incident, chances are there was some impact," Gregg said. "Maybe they don't think it's abuse when a child isn't the one being hit at home, but they're witnessing it. Those are things we need to know."

The agency had a clear goal — train law enforcement and other mandated reporters on what was germane to the agency's mission and educate the general public on how to report suspected abuse. The public awareness campaign — Do Ask, Do Tell — was conducted via a training video for the mandated reporters and a public service announcement for the general public.

The training video walks viewers

through some of the specific cases Gregg heard about from "mandated" or "news" reporters—police responding to a domestic incident where a child was present and a drunk-driving stop with a child in the car. It also describes symptoms of child neglect.

"You shouldn't act as a screener for abuse — that's the role of the evaluation expert at children's services," the narrator says in the video. "If you have concerns about a child's well-being, you must report it."

The video was distributed via DVD to police and sheriff's offices, schools, child care centers and other mandated responders. In the months following the campaign, the number of calls to the county's job and family services increased by 9 percent. The overall cost of video, website, DVD and brochure production, along with airtime for the PSA, totaled \$61,000, close to evenly split between six months of PSA airtime and the video production. The agency regularly revisits the campaign on social media.

"It's hard because the higher the number of calls, the closer we are to a more accurate count, but it also means more children are likely being abused or neglected," Gregg said.

He has heard from people who were hesitant to call when they suspected something.

"They'll tell me they didn't want

to report something because the child would be taken away," he said. "We don't want to do that — we'd much rather address the situation and reserve that as a last resort. We always try to work with the family."

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Profiles in Service

J. Walter Tejada

Vice Chair
NACo Immigration Reform Task Force
Vice Chairman, County Board, Arlington County, Va.

Number of years active in NACo: 12

Years in public service: 12

Occupation: Prior to joining the Arlington County Board, I was an investigator, business consultant and congressional aide.

Education: course work in government and communication, George Mason University

The hardest thing I've ever done: moving during my senior year of high school; and as an adult, coordinating a volunteer earthquake relief effort for El Salvador in 2001

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: President William Jefferson Clinton, professional *fútbol* (soccer) player Lionel Messi and comedian George Carlin

A dream I have is to: continue finding ways to protect and empower the most vulnerable members of our society.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: have visited most of the major U.S. national parks, with Yellowstone being my favorite.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: multiple whitewater rafting trips, including paddling in an inflatable kayak down the Durango River in Colorado, where I fell out and thought I was a goner...

My favorite way to relax is: playing competitive soccer.

I'm most proud of: defending hardworking immigrants, who enrich our country, and who are often denigrated and attacked.

Every morning I read: *The Washington Post*

My favorite meal is: fresh oysters with El Salvador's *plato típico*.

My pet peeve is: motorists who drive slowly in the fast lane, holding up traffic.

My motto is: "No Human Being is Illegal;" and, "If It's Sunny, I'll Be Running."

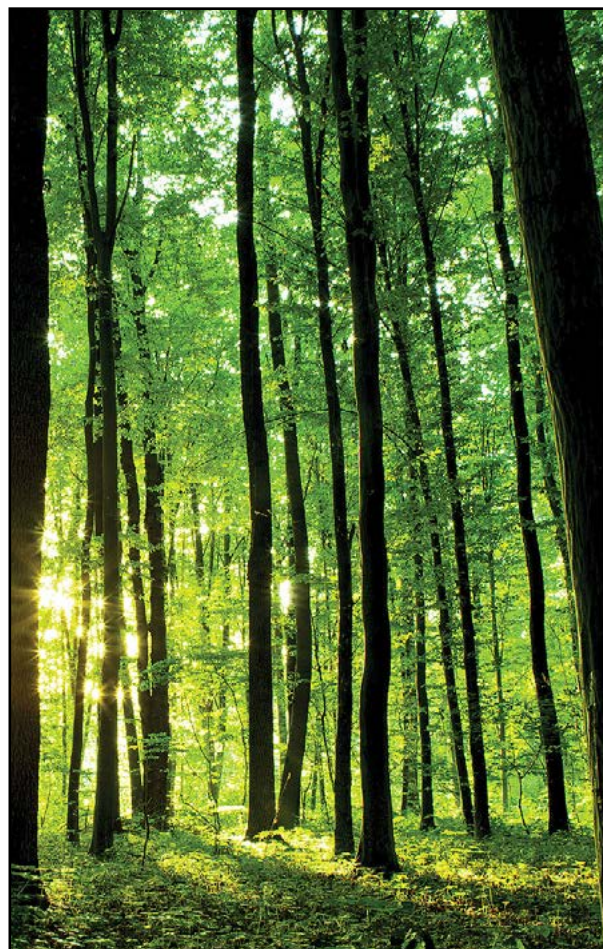
The last book I read was: so many choices, so little time...

My favorite movie is: *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and Mel Brooks' *High Anxiety*.

My favorite music is: *Cumbia* (a popular Latin American genre), and the music of Pink Floyd.

My favorite president is: Bill Clinton.

My county is a NACo member because: of all the benefits and leadership options that NACo provides to localities.



NEW FROM NACO'S COUNTY EXPLORER

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West Virginia county lands Procter & Gamble plant

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Berkeley County, W.Va.'s recent economic development gains are neither fluke nor overnight success story.

Procter & Gamble recently announced it will build a half-billion dollar, 1 million square-foot factory in the county. Landing the consumer products giant — this is only its second new factory in the United States since 1971 — was the culmination of years of effort by the Berkeley County Development Authority (BCDA) and local officials.

“This is a game-changer for us and our economy,” said Stephen Christian, BCDA executive director. “Procter and Gamble is among the top companies in the world, and we really think this validates our location as a premiere location to do business.”

P&G officials said the location will allow it to “rapidly and efficiently” serve retail customers and consumers throughout the eastern half of the country, reaching 80 percent of them within a day’s travel time.

All told, snagging P&G has taken a dozen years of first-slow, then-rapid acquisition of land by the BCDA to create a “mega site.” The plant is scheduled to break ground this spring and open in 2017, create about 1,000 construction jobs and, eventually, 700 full-time positions.

It’s not yet known which of the company’s iconic brands — Tide, Charmin, Mr. Clean are but a few — will be made at the roughly 500-acre site, Christian said. But the company says it will be “multiple brands.” He and state officials believe the company bought room to grow.

“We want to be the new benchmark in the tri-state (West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland) area to do business,” said Doug Copenhaver, president of the Berkeley County Council. Nearly three years ago, Macy’s opened a \$150-million order fulfillment center at another business park in the county, whose seat is Martinsburg.

In the early 2000s, before Christian’s tenure — he’s been with the development authority for almost eight years — the BCDA purchased the first 240 acres that would become the Tabler Station Business and Industrial Park. Several smaller companies are already located there. (The BCDA is an independent public corporation. Its board members are appointed



Photo courtesy of Berkeley County Development Authority

Located at Exit 8 (lower left) of Interstate 81, a planned Procter & Gamble plant will have easy access to a major north-south shipping route. The site is also served by a rail line that will connect it to CSX and Norfolk Southern, and the county’s general aviation airport abuts the industrial park.

by the County Council, which also contributes 8 percent to 10 percent of the authority’s annual budget, Christian said.)

A movie buff, he likened the pursuit of a major industrial company to a scene in *Jaws*: when Roy

SpeedRead » » »

- » Million-square-foot facility to employ 700
- » Local officials expect P&G will expand
- » Berkeley County’s population grew 37 percent from 2000 to 2010

Scheider’s character, upon seeing the giant shark, says, “We’re gonna need a bigger boat.”

In 2012, the BCDA bought an additional 350 acres, creating a site of almost 600 acres along Interstate 81, a major north-south trucking corridor that extends from the U.S.-Canada border to near Knoxville, Tenn. — where two other interstates converge. The following year, it launched the recruitment effort for a “mega-user” to occupy the industrial park.

The development authority began marketing the site in mid-2013. By November, an anonymous

suitor began making inquiries, launching what would be code-named Project Independence. State involvement ramped up in summer 2014.

“We couldn’t have done it without all the support we got from the state and the governor’s office,” Christian said. The state provided \$8.5 million for infrastructure improvements, including roads, sewer, electricity and gas, according to Chelsea Ruby, a spokesperson for the West Virginia Department of Commerce. The project was also eligible for two state tax credit programs that are available to any businesses making major investments in the state.

Keith Burdette, the state’s secretary of commerce, returned Christian’s compliment on announcement day, Feb. 10. “The coordinated efforts of the state, the Berkeley County and the County Council are why we are here today,” he said.

At the local level, Christian said, “The property tax (abatement) is the only thing the county can do from an incentive standpoint.”

Procter & Gamble disclosed its identity in spring 2014. What followed were several months of engineering, infrastructure and transportation analyses: Could the water utility supply the 1 million

gallons per day needed by the mystery company? Yes, the Berkeley County Public Service Water District current pumps almost four times that amount. The industrial park is served by a short line railroad that links it to majors CSX and Norfolk Southern, and it’s about an hour’s drive to Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

The county (pop. 104,000) is the second most populous in the state, after Kanawha County, and has seen its population grow 37 percent since 2000, according to the BCDA. Its labor pool stretches from Winchester, Va. to the south to Chambersburg, Pa. to the north.

Local educational institutions

will play a role in meeting P&G’s workforce requirements. “We are at the very beginning stages of determining exactly what the needs will be for Procter & Gamble,” said Peter Checkovich, president of Blue Ridge Community and Technical College in Martinsburg. “Helping to train a well-developed workforce is one of our primary missions.”

Christian said next steps include targeting strategic suppliers that can provide P&G with raw materials and specialized services. “We’re very much looking forward to capitalizing on it and creating a lot of economic momentum associated with it,” he said.

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County public television helps solve cold cases

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Hudson County, N.J. is tapping into a popular entertainment genre to help investigators close cold cases.

The county's new public access television program *Hudson County's At Large*, tapped into a true-crime craze that has been building since the Fall 2014 debut of the true crime podcast *Serial* and right before the conclusion of HBO's *The Jinx*.

The show won't be confused with the other slickly-produced works of journalism, and Assistant Prosecutor Gene Rubino admits that he and Capt. Keith Lamont Stith — the half-hour show's host — probably shouldn't quit their day jobs. But Rubino is confident that information will reach the right people to make a difference in their investigations.

"With a lot of cases, our leads have gone cold, but that's because they're out of people's minds," Rubino said. "We can get these

SpeedRead » » »

- » Hudson County At Large (itals) solicits public help on cold cases
- » Creative team hopes to film show on location at crime scenes
- » Debut comes in the middle of a renewed public interest in the true crime genre

details out in front of people's eyes and get them talking about the cases and hopefully we'll reach someone who has a tip that can help us.

"We just need a tip here or there and we can examine, knead it and figure out where to go next. These cases can turn on someone remembering something that seems like it's not important until they think about it a certain way."

After airing the first episode in early February, the prosecutor's office received calls from people interested in having the show document their family members.

"That's what we want — participation," Rubino said. "People are watching, talking about this, getting the word out."

The somewhat-limited viewership — Hudson County — doesn't worry Rubino. In fact, the scope is attractive to him because of the amount of control his office has over the information and context in the stories.

"If you had some national TV series looking at one of our cases, it would be a few minutes and they'd have all of the control in telling the stories," he said. "We decide what goes in and we can include simple but important details, like a phone number where people can call in tips. With some other shows people might try calling into the station and the tips might never get where they're supposed to go."

The first airing included Stith's describing unsolved crimes, but Rubino has ambitions for the show's evolution. He wants to take the production to shoot on-location at crime scenes, which he

feels will bring some credibility to the show it won't have if it remains in the studio. He wants to make use of visuals and take on a more narrative style.

Rubino also sees the show as an opportunity to demonstrate what roles his office performs.

"County offices have different responsibilities, and our prosecutor's office is a little different," he said. "In Hudson County, we investigate homicides, but other counties' prosecutors don't do that."

The Hudson Media Group, which produces other public

access shows, does most of the technical work, but Rubino and Stith received a crash course in television work, and Rubino hopes they can refine their production to draw in more viewers.

"I'm excited about where we can go from here," he said. "We're getting calls and ideas for what stories we can tell and we're hopefully growing our audience, and the bigger the audience, the more tips we will be able to generate."

Read this story online at www.countynews.org to see episodes of Hudson at Large.

Income inequality's effect on health examined in 2015 RWJF rankings

RANKINGS from page 1

One trend is that the number of premature deaths is declining nationwide, based on data from counties with populations over 65,000. This has enabled UWPHI to identify the 10 counties with the greatest decreases in premature deaths, to be announced along with this year's rankings.

"A big piece of what we're featuring this year is how to help people drill down into specific measures — to think about how their community is improving," she added, "because that's a more accurate reflection on a case-by-case basis of improvement than simply only looking at their county's rank."

Also new this year will be a measure of income inequality in the rankings' social and economic factors indicators, Van Dijk said. It looks at income distribution as a ratio of the 80th percentile of incomes in a county over the 20th percentile.

"We not only want people to focus on the data and the annual checkup of health but also to pivot from data to action and think about what can we do about it," she added.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Building a Culture of Health, County by County

A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program

On the roadmaps side of the house, the Culture of Health prizes, now in their third year, will recognize more communities this year — 10 compared to six in previous years. Finalists for this year's prizes were announced Feb. 19 and include El Paso County, Texas; Lancaster County, Pa.; Santa Clara County, Calif.; Sonoma County, Calif. and Spartanburg County, S.C. Winners, to be announced this fall, will each receive a \$25,000 prize.

CHR&R will host a webinar April 7, 3 p.m. EDT to provide a County Health Rankings & Roadmaps 101 Website Tour, including:

- How to use the Rankings as a call to action in your community
- The Roadmaps to Health Action Center tools and resources, including an overview of What

Works for Health and the coaching program, and

- RWJF's Culture of Health Prize.

These resources are designed to help communities rally to look at the factors that influence health, choose strategies that work and make changes that will have a lasting impact.

A Roadmaps to Health Action Center includes step-by-step tools and guidance to move from data to action, a searchable database of proven policies and programs that can improve health, as well as how to engage with community coaches, located across the nation, who provide customized consultation to local leaders seeking guidance in how to accelerate their efforts to improve health.

WORD SEARCH

Chautauqua County, N.Y. Facts

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

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- ARKWRIGHT** (town)
- BARCELONA LIGHT** (oldest lighthouse on the Great Lakes, also the first to be lighted with natural gas)
- BELLWETHER** (Chautauqua County voted as expected in presidential elections 1980-2008)
- BROCTON ARCH** (considered the "welcome arch" to the county; a rare, double-span four-way steel arch)
- CASSADAGA** (village)
- CATTARAUGUS** (adjacent county to the east)
- CHARLES WELCH** (founder of Welch's grape juice, jellies and snacks; moved his Concord-grape company's headquarters to Chautauqua County)
- FAY-USBORNE** (historic grist mill)
- FREDONIA GRANGE** (the first grange in the world)
- FRENCH CREEK** (the most biologically diverse riverine system in the Northeast; designated one of the "Last Great Places" by the Nature Conservancy)
- FREWSBURG** (hamlet in Chautauqua County)
- GRAYCLIFF ESTATE** (known as the "Jewel on the Lake," a building complex designed by Frank Lloyd Wright)
- HOLIDAY VALLEY** (ski resort, site of the International Bowhunting Organization world championship)
- JAMESTOWN JAMMERS** (Class-A short season baseball team)
- LUCY-DESI** (museum and national comedy center devoted to the show *I Love Lucy*)
- MAYVILLE** (county seat)
- MODERN SPIRITUALISM** (Universal Religion of; the world center is located in Chautauqua County)
- PEARL ASH** (one of the main sources of capital for the early settlers)
- PORTAGE TRAIL** (skirmishes over possession of this route — French versus English — led to the French and Indian War)
- WINE TRAIL** (the county is known for its vineyards)

Created by Sarah Foote

2015 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and increases services to county residents?

For 45 years, NACo has recognized outstanding efforts in county government through the Achievement Awards Program. Awards are given in 21 different categories including children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, health and many more. For more information on this year's awards cycle and to begin your application visit:

www.naco.org/achievementawards

QUESTIONS? CONTACT

awards@naco.org

DEADLINE:

March 27 11:59 p.m. EDT

NACO National Association of Counties
TM

IRS seeks feedback on 'Cadillac Tax' exceptions

On Feb. 23, the IRS issued a notice seeking comments as it prepares to develop regulations for the Affordable Care Act's so-called "Cadillac tax" that is set to take effect in 2018, including on potential "excepted benefit[s]" that would not count toward the tax, *Modern Healthcare* reports.

Background

Under the ACA, most employer-sponsored health plans with annual premiums of more than \$10,200 for individuals or \$27,500 for families would pay a 40% excise tax on the portion of the premiums that exceeds those thresholds. The tax is set to take effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

According to *Modern Healthcare*, the tax was designed to help pay for the ACA and to help reduce health spending. However, some stakeholders, including unions, are opposed to the tax and say it will result in more health care costs being shifted from employers to employees and result in less generous collectively bargained benefits.

Several U.S. companies already have taken steps to scale back generous coverage plans in advance of the tax taking effect, *Modern Healthcare* reports.

Notice Details

In the notice, IRS said that vision and dental benefits might not count toward the tax. In addition, the agency proposed that employee assistance programs that provide counseling, such as for substance use disorders or family issues, also count as an excepted benefit.

In addition, IRS raised the possibility of adjusting the dollar-limit thresholds of the tax for plans that have "employee populations with age and gender characteristics that are different from those of the national workforce" (Herman, *Modern Healthcare*, 2/24).

IRS also noted that the ACA allows for the dollar-limit thresholds to be raised for employers with a majority of employees who are engaged in "[h]igh-risk professions" (IRS notice, 2/24). The department detailed several specific examples, including con-

struction workers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, miners and individuals who "repair or install electrical or telecommunication lines." IRS is seeking comments on whether additional guidance on "high-risk professions" is needed.

Next Steps

IRS is seeking comments

on the notice through May 15. In addition, IRS is expected to soon release an additional notice regarding how the tax should be assessed and calculated (*Modern Healthcare*, 2/24).

(Reprinted with permission from *California Healthline/iHealthBeat*, Feb. 25, 2015.)

NACo opposes excise tax on health insurance benefits for county employees

A policy resolution, adopted at the 2014 Annual Conference in New Orleans, states: "The National Association of Counties (NACo) opposes the taxation of health insurance benefits to county employees through the application of the ACA excise tax on health insurance benefits for county employees, the capping of the tax exclusion for employer-based defined contributions made by counties and any new taxes which would apply to the health benefits that counties provide to their employees."

The association has closely focused on the tax, also known as the "Cadillac tax," and will respond to the IRS' notice requesting comments. NACo has also analyzed the impact of the tax on counties and presented its findings in a number of formats.

In December, NACo released a 12-page publication on the tax's impact on county governments. The publication, *Excise Tax on High-Cost Employer-Sponsored Health Coverage: What Counties Need to Know*, can be downloaded at no cost from NACo's website at www.naco.org/publications. It also produced a webinar, *The Excise Tax on High-Cost Health Insurance and Your County*, and a conference workshop, *Health Policy Outlook: What Lies Ahead for Counties as Employers*. Recordings of both the webinar and workshop can be found on NACo's website.

For more information contact: Mike Belarmino, associate legislative director for tax and finance, mbelarmino@naco.org, or Brian Bowden, associate legislative director for health, bbowden@naco.org.

NACo joins 'Campaign to Change Direction'

By BRIAN BOWDEN
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson, Douglas County, Neb., chair of NACo's Health Steering Committee, joined leaders from government, nonprofit and the business community to announce The Campaign to Change Direction, a national initiative to create a new story in America about mental health, mental illness and wellness.

The campaign, launched March 4 at a mental health summit in Washington, D.C., included a keynote address from First Lady Michelle Obama, an appearance by the Academy Award-winning producer of *Silver Linings Playbook*, Bruce Cohen, and a performance by G.R.L., a musical group that was personally touched by the issue when their lead singer, Simone Battle, committed suicide in September 2014.

Inspired by discussions at the White House National Conference on Mental Health in 2013 and led by the nonprofit orga-

nization Give an Hour, "Change Direction" is a response to the way society addresses mental health. One-in-five Americans lives with a diagnosable mental health condition, and counties are a major cornerstone for behavioral health services.

Through more than 750 behavioral health authorities and community providers, counties plan, operate and finance community-based services for persons with mental illnesses, substance use conditions and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Borgeson, who spoke at the launch event, said, "As county leaders, we are committed to improving the responsiveness, coordination, accountability and integration of person-centered behavioral health services in appropriate settings.

"And this extends to our nation's heroes who reside in our communities...our veterans and their families, who face unique barriers to accessing services. We are in your communities and we care — and we will continue to give a voice to those who feel like they have none."

What's in a Seal?

Chautauque County, N.Y.



The seal of Chautauque County, N.Y. is an updated version of a previous seal. The current seal's imagery reflects the primary components of the county's geography and economy. Chautauque Lake — the largest of the county's six lakes — is located at the center of both the county and the seal, while the top right of the seal shows the sun shining over stylized fields.

Chautauque County is largely agricultural, with its northern border on Lake Erie at the heart of the grape-wine belt. As the state's largest producer of grapes, Chautauque County plays a pivotal role in the Lake Erie Wine Trail and is the heart of the Concord grape industry. However, the seal also reflects the county's urban characteristics: the buildings on the left of the seal represent industry, specifically Dunkirk and Jamestown, the county's two industrial centers.

Chautauque County occupies the extreme southwest corner of New York state, bordering Lake Erie to the north and the state of Pennsylvania to the west and south. Established in 1811, it encompasses 1,065 square miles and has a population of 130,000.

Michelle Henry, Chautauque County historian, contributed.

2015 FEMA preparedness award open to applicants

The application period for the 2015 Individual and Community Preparedness Awards is open until April 10. The awards highlight innovative local practices and achievements by recognizing individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions toward making their communities safer, stronger, better prepared and more resilient.

Emergency management is most effective when the whole community is engaged and involved. Faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies, the private sector, tribal organizations, youth, older adults, people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs and all individual citizens can make a difference in their communities before, during, and after disasters.

FEMA will review all entries and select the finalists. A distinguished panel of representatives from the emergency management community will then select winners in each of the following categories:

- Outstanding Citizen Corps Council
- Community Preparedness Heroes
- Awareness to Action
- Technological Innovation
- Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness
- Preparing the Whole Community
- Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team Initiatives
- Outstanding Citizen Corps Partner Program
- Excellence in Volunteer Sustainability

Winners will be announced in the fall of 2015 and will be FEMA's honored guests at a community preparedness roundtable event. The winner of the Preparing the Whole Community category will receive the John D. Solomon Whole Community Preparedness Award.

These awards are an opportunity to acknowledge the work an individual or organization has done to build a more resilient nation. More information about the awards is available at www.ready.gov/citizen-corps/citizen-corps-awards.

To be considered for this year's awards, all submissions must be received by April 10 at 11:59 p.m. EDT and must feature program activities taking place between Jan. 1, 2014, and April 10. Applications should be submitted to citizen-corps@fema.dhs.gov.

CONFERENCE PHOTO REVIEW



Photo by David Hathcox

Members of NACo's Executive Committee take the stage: (l-r) Matt Chase, NACo executive director; Immediate Past President Linda Langston; Second Vice President Bryan Desloge; First Vice President Sallie Clark; President Riki Hokama; Commissioner Tim Josi, West region representative; Commissioner Christian Leinbach, Northeast region representative; Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, South region representative; and Commissioner Cindy Bobbitt, Central region representative.



Photo by David Hathcox

Jerry Abramson, director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, brings the Administration's greetings to conference attendees.



Photo by David Hathcox

This year's NACo Corporate Award went to Aetna for its sustained leadership and support of the association and the nation's counties. Showing off the award are: (l-r) NACo President Riki Hokama; Cain Hayes, head of Government-Sector & Labor Division, Aetna; and Matt Chase, NACo executive director.



Photo by David Hathcox
(Right) Brian Keierleber, Buchanan County, Iowa engineer, collects business cards from participants at the County Transportation and Infrastructure Driving Economic Growth workshop.



Photo by David Hathcox
Commissioner Lee May, DeKalb County, Ga. interim CEO, campaigns for the NACo second VP slot at the conference's luncheon.



Photo by Jack Hernandez
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) talks backstage with Berks County, Pa. Commission Chair Christian Leinbach and First Vice President Sallie Clark.



Photo by David Hathcox

Obama Administration officials brief the Immigration Reform Task Force.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

Maricopa County, Ariz. Recorder Helen Purcell presents the Information Technology Committee's report to NACo's Board of Directors as Bert Jarreau, chief innovation officer, looks on.



Photo by David Hathcox

U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.) (center) poses with her award at a reception honoring former county officials now serving in Congress. Grisham, a former Bernalillo County, N.M. commissioner, was an honorary co-host of the event. Also pictured are Sharon Stover, county clerk, Los Alamos County, N.M., and NACo President Riki Hokama.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

Theresa Speiker, Contra Costa County, Calif. and member of NACo's Health Advisory Board, questions panelists at the health care breakfast roundtable discussion.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

A view from the top of NACo's Membership Booth.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

NACo conferences introduce members to new concepts and new colleagues such as Wanda Gibson, chief technology officer, Fairfax County, Va., and George Bowman, Jefferson County, Ala.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, National Governors Association vice chair, tells the Board of Directors that he believes in the power of associations and the need for NGA and NACo to work together.



Photo by David Hathcox

U.S. Rep. David Joyce (R-Ohio), a former Geauga County, Ohio prosecutor, poses with his award at a reception honoring former county officials now serving in Congress. Joyce was an honorary co-host of the event. Also pictured are: (l-r) Otto Nicely, Defiance County, Ohio; Daniel Troy, Lake County, Ohio; Joyce; and Michael Halleck, Columbiana County, Ohio.



Photo by David Hathcox

NACO First Vice President Sallie Clark introduces U.S. Labor Secretary Tom Perez.



Photo by David Hathcox

Exchanging views: Sonny Brasfield, (l) County Commissioners Association of Alabama executive director, and Tom Dale, commissioner, Canyon County, Idaho.



Photo by David Hathcox

Larry Ellerston, Utah County, Utah, wields the mike during the integrity and civility management workshop.

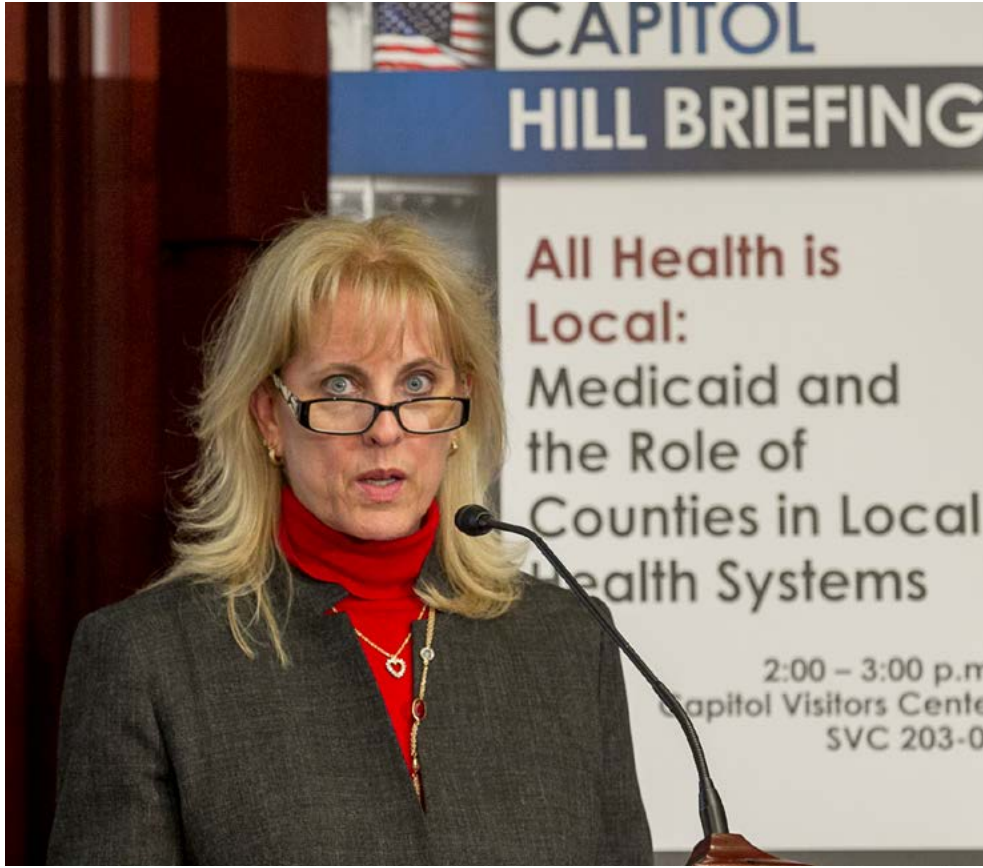


Photo by David Hathcox

Health Steering Committee Chair Mary Ann Borgeson kicks off a second NACo Capitol Hill briefing: This one on the role of counties in local health systems.



Photo by David Hathcox

(Left) NACo Transportation Steering Committee Chair Peter McLaughlin explains the importance of long-range, stable transportation funding to the nation's counties at a Capitol Hill briefing during the conference. Looking on is NACo Executive Director Matt Chase.



Photo by David Hathcox

It was a packed room for the Hill briefing on NACo's priorities for transportation funding.



Photo by David Hathcox

(Top) It was standing room only for the session on NACo's Economic Tracker.



Photo by David Hathcox

Buckeyes travel together: (l-r) Daniel Troy, Lake County, Ohio; Julie Ehemann, Shelby County, Ohio; Gary Lee, Union County, Ohio; Michael Halleck, Columbiana County, Ohio; and Debbie Lieberman, Montgomery County, Ohio.

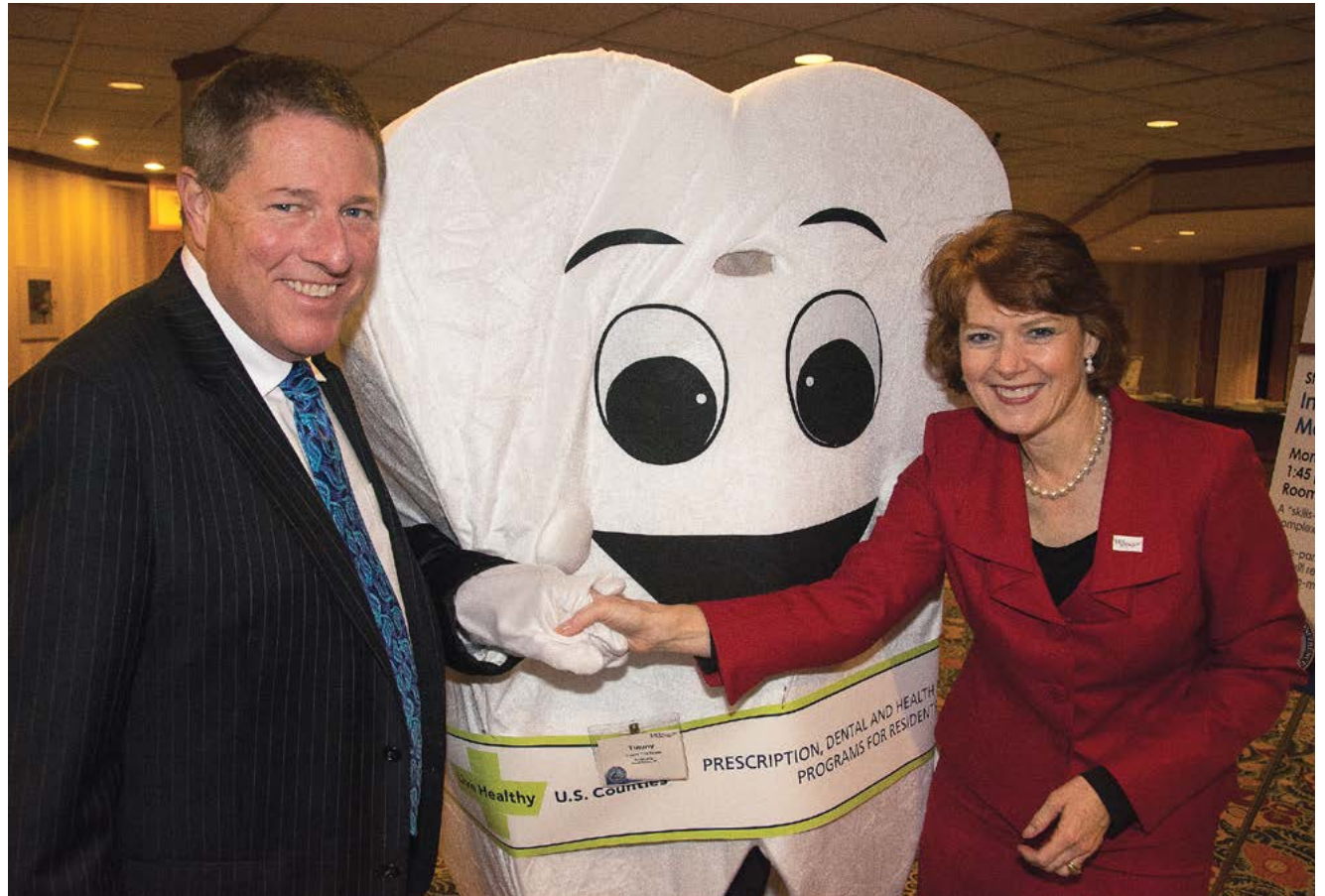


Photo by Jack Hernandez

Second VP Bryan Desloge and First VP Sallie Clark greet Timmy the Tooth. Timmy, NACo's new mascot for its member dental program, made his debut at the Legislative Conference.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

(Right) Hawai'i County Council Members Valerie T. Poindexter (l) and Maile Medeiros participate in the breakfast roundtable health care discussion sponsored by Aetna.



Photo by David Hathcox

NACo's County Leadership Institute (CLI) alumni and friends at the CLI reception: (l-r) C. Marty Cassini, Broward County, Fla.; Chris Craft, St. Lucie County, Fla.; Melissa McKinley, Palm Beach County, Fla.; Julie Rogers, Kalamazoo County, Mich. and Tony Michelassi, DuPage County, Ill.

Eastbound trains cross more heavily populated areas

TRAIN TRAFFIC from page 1

town from emergency services on the other side of the tracks, slowing response time.

“There were survey stakes in the ground, we realized something had to be done,” Opat said. “The railroad companies weren’t talking to the cities or the county; only

when pressed did they present any information. We didn’t have any other tools, other than to try to make a purchase at the crossing.”

That came four days after 21 of 105 cars derailed in Jo Daviess County in northwestern Illinois, with five catching on fire. There were only six homes within a square mile of the accident, and only two

of seven people in that area chose to evacuate. The only casualty was a woodchuck caught underneath one of the burning cars.

Since the fire resulting from a derailment in Quebec, Canada in July 2013 killed 47 people and destroyed 30 buildings, nine trains on U.S. routes have derailed and caught fire, thanks to Bakken oil they were shipping, in: Pickens County, Ala.; Cass County, N.D.; Lynchburg, Va., and Fayette County, W.Va, in addition to Jo Daviess County. None of those derailments happened in heavily populated areas, but in the eastern United States, particularly the Mid-Atlantic, more often than not a train will be passing moderate population centers, and the rail lines eventually converge in urban areas with more dense populations, which causes concern.

In February 2014, the railroads agreed to upgrade tanker cars and slow down trains in major cities, and the U.S. Department of Transportation required the companies shipping the oil to test it for proper classification and later required replacement of leaky tanker car valves.

Communication about Cargo

Emergency Manager Chuck Pedersen said Jo Daviess County was accustomed to high volumes of Bakken oil coming down the tracks since the North Dakota boom started nearly 10 years ago. The county works closely with Canadian National and BNSF, which provide projections for the traffic flow on their lines. Jo Daviess County also participates in a five-county consortium, including Carroll County, Ill.; Grant County, Wisc. and Dubuque and Jackson counties in Iowa, all of which straddle the Mississippi River near Wisconsin and Illinois’ border.

“It’s very good cooperation between the agencies,” Pedersen said. “Since the accident, we’ve gotten together with the railroad, the EPA and state EPA and talked about cleanup. When the accident happened, BNSF came with its own fire and hazmat crews to put the fire out.”

States’ communications with counties regarding crude oil transport on trains has improved in the last year, following a May 2014 emergency order by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The order required all railroads carrying 35 tank cars or more of Bakken oil, amounting to more than 1 million gallons, to notify State Emergency Response Commissions about the operation of those trains. The state

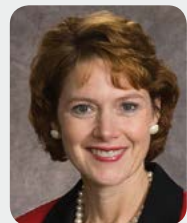
North American train derailments involving Bakken crude oil since July 2013

- July 6, 2013, Lac-Mégantic, Quebec: multiple tank cars erupted and caught fire, death toll was 47.
- Nov. 8, 2013, Pickens County, Ala.: 90 train cars, “some dozen” cars (of the approximately 30 that derailed) burst into flames.
- Dec. 30, 2013, Cass County, N.D.: “at least a dozen” cars involved.
- Jan. 7, 2014, Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, Canada: 16 cars believed to have derailed.
- Jan. 20, 2014, Philadelphia County, Pa.: seven cars of 101-car train affected.
- Jan. 31, 2014, Perry County, Miss.: 18 to 24 cars of the 85-car train derailed and began leaking. 12 families evacuated.
- April 30, 2014, Lynchburg, Va.: 15 tankers involved, James River affected.
- May 10, 2014, Weld County, Colo.: six cars of a 100-car train derailed.
- Feb. 16, 2015, Timmins, Ontario, Canada: 29 of 100 cars derailed, and seven crude oil tank cars caught fire.
- Feb. 16, 2015, Fayette County, W.Va.: At least seven tank cars catch fire.
- March 1, 2015, Orleans Parish, La.: New Orleans Fire Department says 2 train cars carrying crude oil have derailed in the city but no oil spilled.
- March 5, 2015, Jo Daviess County, Ill.: 21 of the 105 cars, containing Bakken formation crude oil, leave the track and catch fire.
- March 7, 2015, Gogama, Ontario, Canada: 5 cars landed in water, some on fire.

Compiled by Sarah A. Foote, editorial assistant.

NACo on the Move

► NACo Officers and County Officials



Sallie Clark

• NACo First Vice President **Sallie Clark** and three other county officials — **Janet Weir**, commissioner, Stark County, Ohio; **Jennifer Montgomery**, supervisor, Placer County, Calif., and **Marie Lopez Rogers**, supervisor, Maricopa County, Ariz. — have been selected to participate in *Governing’s* inaugural Women in Government Leadership Program.

• NACo Executive Director **Matt Chase** and **Natalie Ortiz**, senior research analyst, visited the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, N.Y. March 18–20, where Chase was a panelist at the Roundtable on Pretrial Practice.

► NACo Staff

• March 21–22, **Emilia Istrate**, research director, and **Cecilia Mills**, research assistant, exhibited on behalf of NACo at the Spring Conference at the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania in Dauphin County (Harrisburg). On the 22nd, Istrate presented on research projects at NACo and the benefits of membership.

• **Paul Beddoe**, deputy legislative director; **Brian Bowden**, associate legislative director for health; **Maeghan Gilmore**, program director; and **Kathy Rowings**, program manager, represented NACo at a forum in Cook County, Ill. on connecting the justice-involved population to Medicaid health coverage, March 17. The forum was sponsored by the Center for Health and Justice at Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC). Cook County was featured at the forum.

• **Yejin Jang**, associate legislative affairs director for justice and public safety, briefed program staff at the MacArthur Foundation on juvenile justice legislation March 19.



Arthur Scott

• **Arthur Scott**, associate legislative director for rural development, met with Iowa state transportation and human services directors during the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) Spring Instruction School, March 10–12. Scott worked with ISAC staff addressing key mental health, transportation and infrastructure related issues.

► Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director of membership marketing, will be speaking and exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the MAS Minority Caucus Annual Conference in Lauderdale County, Miss. on March 31–April 3, 2015.

• **Alex Koroknay-Palicz**, membership coordinator, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Michigan Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Ingham County on March 30–31, 2015.

• **Koroknay-Palicz** will also be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma Spring Conference in Norman County on April 1–3, 2015.



Paul Beddoe

commissions then disseminate that information to local emergency responders in a variety of ways.

Montana Gov. Steve Bullock links to the regular updates from the rail companies on his “Transparency in Government” website. Arkansas’ Department of Emergency Management sends email updates to the counties. Virginia contacted emergency managers in counties and independent cities along routes with a baseline of oil-carrying capacity, and updates them if the load is expected to increase by more than 25 percent.

It hasn’t all been easy. Internal confusions at the Indiana Department of Homeland Security delayed disclosure to 12 counties by four months, according to a WISH-TV News investigation. In West Virginia, Kanawha County Fire Coordinator C.W. Sigman referred to a year-long struggle with the state to access information, which the county eventually received by circumventing the state and going directly to CSX. The railroad then offered three days of free training on handling Bakken oil car derailments, attended by roughly 100 emergency responders. West Virginia now offers emergency responders access to an encrypted state Department of Homeland Security network, but the Feb. 16 CSX derailment in Fayette County, W.Va was a surprise to local officials.

“What those trains were carrying, it was kind of an afterthought,” said Sheriff Steve Kessler. “It wasn’t a secret what those long trains were carrying because we’d see it all the time.”

One house was damaged in the resulting fire, but Kessler considers the county lucky because the river was frozen, limiting water contamination, and because of the accident’s location.

“If it had been half a mile down the road, it’d have been a different story,” he said.

And Hennepin County hopes its suburbs aren’t one of those “different stories.”

The railroads may try to circumvent the county’s land purchase with their eminent domain powers, and the county’s best defense will be public safety, with regards to both the Bakken oil volatility and the long trains, according to Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, who serves as chairman of NACo’s Transportation Steering Committee.

“We can only hope the interest in public safety is sufficient there,” he said. “The improvement in train cars is welcome but that’s not guaranteed. The improvements in information are helpful, but still, the volatility, the danger and the disruption of the community are on a lot of counties’ minds.”



News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

• If marijuana is legalized in the state, county officials want to be ready for it. Representatives from **MENDOCINO, HUMBOLDT, TRINITY, DEL NORTE, LAKE** and **SONOMA counties** recently participated in the Northern California Regional Summit on the **Economic Impacts of Legalized Cannabis**.

Other state and local officials, and representatives from the **CALIFORNIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES** and the Rural County Representatives of California also attended, the *Ukiah Daily Journal* reported.

"We're working as a region," said Carmel Angelo, Mendocino County CEO. "Cannabis issues are regional issues, particularly for smaller, rural counties."

Mendocino County Supervisor John McCowen added that it appears the state Legislature is developing a medical pot framework. "Most people, including backers of initiatives, see that as the precursor for full, adult-use legalization."

• An oil company, Citadel Exploration, has sued to invalidate **SAN BENITO COUNTY'S voter-approved fracking ban**. The outcome could affect a growing trend among California cities and counties that are trying to stop the controversial oil-drilling method, officially known as hydraulic fracturing, according to the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Last November, 59 percent of San Benito County voters approved Measure J, the fracking ban.

If Citadel succeeds, it could affect places such as **SANTA CLARA, ALAMEDA, MONTEREY, BUTTE** and **SANTA CRUZ counties**. Their Boards of Supervisors approved countywide fracking bans last spring.

• **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** and other local lawmakers have a "toxic trio" in their sights: three **chemicals commonly used in nail salons**.

A group of local governments is encouraging salon owners to switch from products that contain formaldehyde, toluene and dibutyl phthalate (DBP), which can cause a range of health disorders. DBP has been banned in Europe as harmful to pregnant women, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* reported.

"What's key is that wherever people work, they should be safe," said Cindy Chavez, Santa Clara County supervisor. "I'm looking at



Photo courtesy of Fairfax County Park Authority

► VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX COUNTY Supervisor Gerry Hyland pets one of the four-legged attendees at **The Ides of Bark**, an event his office sponsored at a county park. There was nothing to "beware" of here on March 15, the date that proved fatal to Julius Caesar. For the 1,100 humans and 300 dogs that were there, it was a day of fun. Activities included doggie bowling, agility tunnel and high jump, a coolest trick competition, a dog-washing station — and also vendors and opportunities for dog owners to register their canine companions.

a group of women of childbearing age, working in shops that sometimes aren't very well ventilated. This is good for them and good for the customer."

The **CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO** was the first locality in the state to create a healthy nail salon program in 2010. Since then, similar models have been adopted by **SAN MATEO** and **ALAMEDA counties**.

► COLORADO

Residents concerned about a proposed wind farm have sued the **EL PASO COUNTY** commission to stop its construction.

The plaintiffs allege the County Board went too far when it approved a transmission line for the project, *The Gazette* reported.

In 2013, the board approved NextEra Energy Resources' plans to build at least 126 wind turbines at a site in the county's eastern plains. Homeowners are worried about the effect an aerial transmission line could have on their health and property values.

► ILLINOIS

COOK COUNTY Sheriff Tom Dart is looking for ways to keep low-level, **nonviolent offenders out of his jail**. Recently, he cited

the cost of incarcerating three inmates — charged with petty thefts or loitering — who, collectively, spent 227 days in jail at a cost to taxpayers of \$47,900, the *Chicago Sun Times* reported.

"This is a place that's supposed to be for violent people — people who hurt people, people who shoot people — not folks who steal, not folks who trespass on someone's property," Dart said of the county jail.

The sheriff is proposing legislation to require judges to dispose of cases such as trespassing and shoplifting within 30 days of arrest. Alternatively, he'd be okay with their being released on a non-cash bond or electronic monitoring until their trials.

It's not a space issue: only 8,500 detainees are currently being held in a jail designed to house 11,000, he added. "Capacity is not the issue; it's the issue of the wrong people taking up jail space."

► KANSAS

A bill moving through the state Legislature, House Bill 2404, would allow counties to let voters decide whether to **do away with county property taxes** and replace revenues with higher sales taxes.

SEDGWICK COUNTY Commissioner Karl Peterjohn is a strong

proponent of the measure. "I view this as an effort to grow jobs here in Sedgwick County," he said, according to a KAKE News report.

However, his colleague, Commissioner Tim Norton, isn't as convinced, saying, "I still believe that you'd have to prove to me that going all sales tax would be the right way to go."

The county currently derives 53 percent of its revenues from property taxes.

► MARYLAND

Nanny-state intrusion or good public policy? Opponents of **MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S** proposed **ban on cosmetic pesticides** used to keep lawns green and growing would say the former.

Residents who oppose the ban have packed County Council chambers for recent meetings, and council members have been flooded with emails — pro and con, according to *The Washington Post*.

A trade association for the pesticide industry and lawn-care companies have also joined the "anti" camp. They contend that state and federal regulations wouldn't allow the products to be sold if they weren't safe when used correctly.

No final action on the measure is expected before June.

► MICHIGAN

Gov. Rick Snyder (R) has signed two bills that will dissolve **county gun boards**. It's part of an effort to streamline the process to obtain a concealed weapon permit. Until now, the gun boards have been responsible for reviewing and approving the permits.

The bills will transfer those duties to county clerks and the Michigan State Police. The police would run background checks on applicants according to *The Times Herald*.

► NEW YORK

County clerks are pushing legislation that would require **updated photos on driver's licenses** and a bigger share of motor vehicle transaction fees for the counties.

The state now keeps 87.3 percent of revenue collected when transactions are processed at a local Department of Motor Vehicle office.

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY Clerk Mary Lou Rupp told the *Watertown Daily Times* that New York and Nevada are the only two states that don't require motorists to have an updated picture on their licenses.

She said outdated photos defeat the purpose of using a driver's license to verify identification. The two DMV issues were top priorities identified at the annual county clerks' conference in Albany.

► OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY will recoup \$4.4 million from a lawsuit against the contractor and subcontractors involved in installing decking on a county bridge. The **decking fell apart** soon after the installation was completed. After an 11-day trial, a jury concluded that while all the parties were negligent, the county was only responsible for 22 percent, *The Oregonian* reported.

► PENNSYLVANIA

Jail crowding, cost and a federal court ruling all factor into decisions by almost half of the commonwealth's counties not to hold people that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents want detained on **possible immigration violations**.

Thirty-two of the 67 counties don't honor requests for detainer requests, 20 do, 11 don't have a clear policy and four counties don't have jails or prisons, according to a Temple University and American Civil Liberties Union study.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Springtime Greening of the Gardens and Workforce

It is springtime again, thanks to the movement of the earth on its 23.4-degree axis tilt. Despite all the physics involved, it is much more fun to think from the heart rather than the brain when it comes to the wonders of nature. Spring is the time for me to plant my raised bed garden.

This year's "crop" will be potatoes, carrots, lettuce and zucchini, not to mention a half-dozen blueberry bushes. I find it ironic that this city-raised public administrator now lives in the country, has three John Deere tractors, and is planting stuff in a miniscule six-by-five-foot garden box. I wonder if I could qualify for a federal farm subsidy?

The metaphor of springtime involves growth, a time to plant seeds, and a season of renewed hope. It is a time for nurturing and a time to appreciate possibilities. All of the latter do not necessarily involve the color green, although my Irish friends and colleagues might well disagree.

“Imagine the added value of adjoining cities and counties creating common training programs and sharing resources.”

Renewal, growth and the hope for a productive future are human resources issues as well as agricultural ones. Spring is a great time to encourage continued education and employee development. What a great time it is to create opportunities for people to contribute even more to the workplace. What a time it is to appreciate and recognize the achievements of our colleagues.

Doing all of these things at work and within our families represents the planting of seeds for future improvement. We can nurture this improvement by being mentors as well as role models for others. We can “fertilize” — sorry, I tried not to use that word — by

creating strong relationships with community colleges and universities, and with community organizations such as Rotary, to help create internships, scholarships, lecture series and other learning opportunities. The same is certainly true for the shared use of local museums, performing arts venues, planetarium facilities and much more.

A prior HR Doctor article (“I Never Metaphor I Didn’t Like”) presents examples of partnerships to enable public agencies to provide no-cost and compelling training programs.

Finally, dare I say, how about sharing training resources by means of inter-agency consortia? Imagine the added value of adjoining cities and counties creating common training programs and sharing resources.

Springtime planting and nurturing later lets you enjoy and marvel at the growth in your own garden, in your own organization and your own life. Give it a try.

This might mean learning new facts and techniques about your own particular job. It might mean acting on a personal goal of growth and improvement such as losing excess weight or giving up smoke inhalation.

It could also be as simple — and as important — as deliberately taking time to hug your kids, your spouse and the dog. Tell them how

proud you are of them for their own growth and development.

The 23.4-degree axis tilt opens up possibilities that are exciting for scientists as well as for parents, colleagues at work and elected and appointed officials.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor

Financial Services News

eConnectDirect receives positive feedback

By KELLY BOGGS
FSC OPERATIONS SPECIALIST

Since announcing its partnership with Multi-Bank Securities, Inc. (MBS) in September 2014, the NACo Financial Services team has witnessed eConnectDirect, a platform for members to manage fixed-income investments, gain traction and attention from NACo's members.

Thanks to the support of both MBS and NACo members, the rollout has been largely positive and continues to gain momentum.

At NACo's recent Legislative Conference, Financial Services made it a priority to harness the enthusiasm and insights of both the state association executive directors and financial experts, and received feedback that was both encouraging and optimistic.

Updated Numbers

MBS reported at the conference that it has a total of 60 counties with eConnectDirect. Additionally, MBS reported that NACo's endorsement of the tool has had a positive impact on many prospective user's opinion of the platform.

Since September 2014, MBS — sometimes in collaboration with NACo — has conducted a multitude of webinars for all local government entities, including 123 for counties. Live webinars earned high praise from several conference attendees; many identified online demonstrations as the easiest way to witness how the tool is user-friendly and straightforward.

Productive Focus Groups

NACo Financial Services and

MBS jointly hosted several interested individuals in a focus group meeting for a demonstration of eConnectDirect and discussion about the program.

NACo Financial Services has made keeping the states involved a high priority during this rollout, and this gave the team an opportunity to gain insight from those who have the best interests of counties at heart. Response to the tool was supportive and affirmative, and NACo Financial Services will focus on moving forward with that in mind.

Informative Workshop

In the interest of providing some economic context for both users and non-users of eConnectDirect at the conference, Jim Powell, senior vice president of MBS, joined a panel on the impact of changing interest rates. It was moderated by NACo Chief

Financial Officer Dave Keen, and attendees left with a greater understanding of how interest rate shifts can directly impact county budgets; increased awareness of varying state policies and restrictions; facts about best practices in the investment field, and recommendations for how to cultivate positive relationships with brokers.

Powell was joined by David Messerly of FHLBanks; Richard Gould, treasurer of Greene County, Ohio, and John Tuohy, deputy treasurer of Arlington County, Va.

To schedule a webinar or demonstration on eConnectDirect, please contact Kelly Boggs at kboggs@naco.org or 202.942.4290 for more information.

Skamania County, Wash. opens first government-owned pot shop

NEWS FROM *from page 18*

► SOUTH CAROLINA

The state House refused to distribute up to \$10 million to 22 counties to cover part of their **cleanup costs from 2014's ice storm**.

The February 2014 storm coated a wide swath of the state in up to an inch of ice. The White House approved Gov. Nikki Haley's (R) request for federal disaster relief, allowing local governments to be partially reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA paid \$55 million, leaving an estimated cost of \$18.4 million to 22 counties, according to the state Emergency Management Division.

After the state's previous major ice storm of 2004, the state covered half of what FEMA didn't fund, the Associated Press reported. The ice storms disproportionately affected the state's poorest and most rural counties.

► TENNESSEE

The state Legislature is considering a bill that would ban county employees such as teachers from

servicing on county legislative bodies. The bill would only apply to county employees seeking a seat in the same county by which they are employed. The legislation wouldn't prevent current officeholders who are also county employees from seeking re-election while they continue to serve on the legislative body.

County employees serve in elected roles throughout the state, including several teachers serving in the General Assembly. The bill, *The Tennessean* reported, could potentially disqualify a large portion of rural county employees from holding county offices, because the county itself or the local school district could be one of the largest local employers.

The bill's sponsor said state employees are already prohibited from serving in state offices, and this would prevent any other potential conflict at the county level.

► VIRGINIA

The **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY** Board of Supervisors has approved the development of a facility to **process yard waste,**

food scraps and wood waste at the county's composting facility, part of a public-private partnership.

When fully developed, the facility will recycle over 80,000 tons per year of organic waste into compost, soil products and non-synthetic fertilizers; it will also generate baseload renewable energy. Acreage at the facility will yield sustainable and locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables for sale back into the community.

The completion of the new facility is scheduled for July 2017, according to *American City and County*.

► WASHINGTON

The county's first **government-run recreational marijuana store** opened in **SKAMANIA COUNTY**. The proceeds from sales at Cannabis Corner will go to fund a variety of grants in the county, KGW News reported.

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



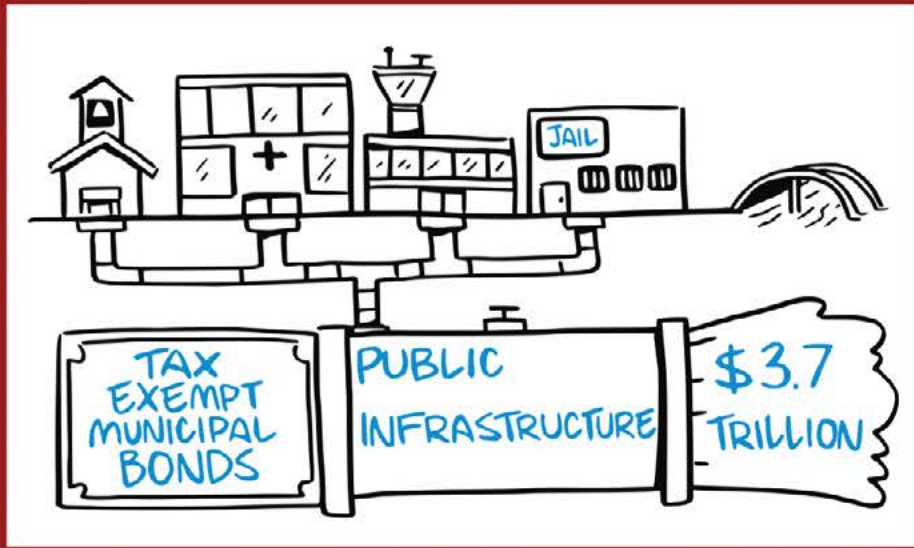
FEDERAL POLICIES MATTER TO

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

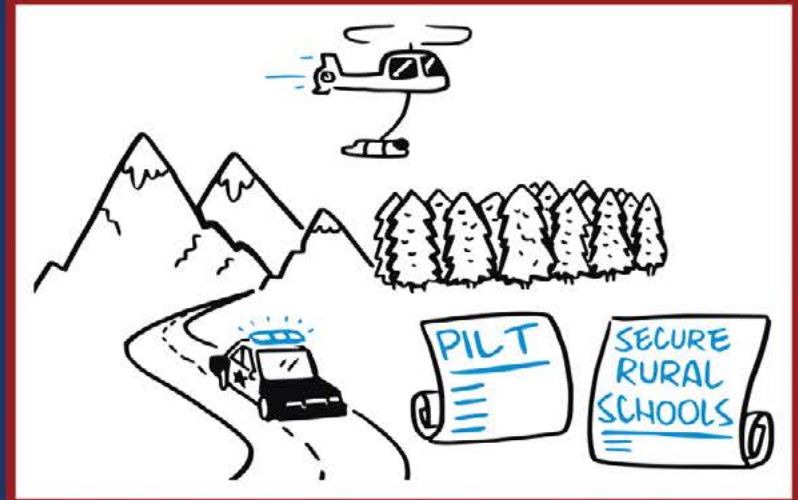
MATTERS TO AMERICA

The public service mission of our nation's 3,069 county governments is clear: foster safe, healthy and vibrant communities. To achieve this shared goal, members of the National Association of Counties stand ready to work with our federal partners to:

PRESERVE THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF MUNICIPAL BONDS



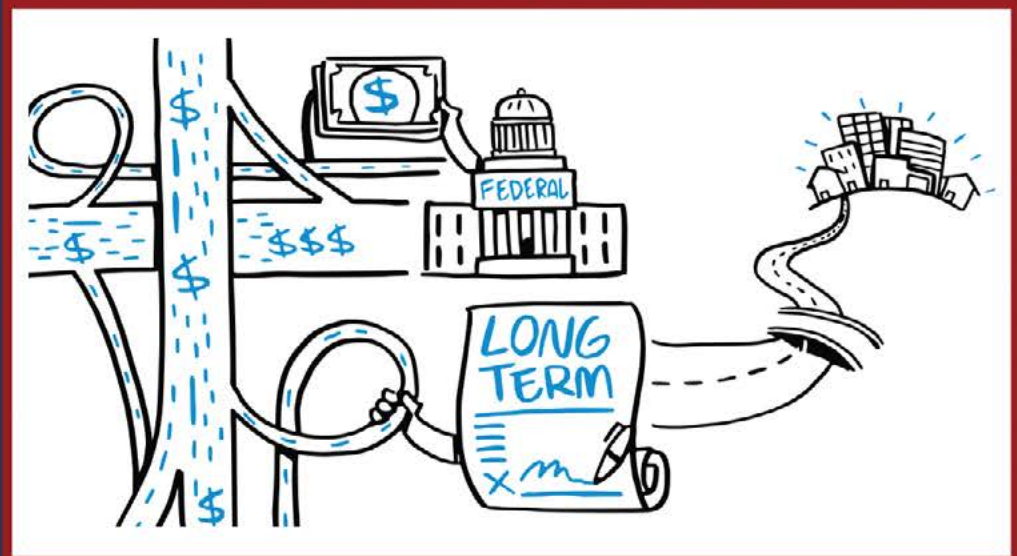
ENSURE FULL FUNDING FOR THE PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS PROGRAMS



CREATE A CLEAR, WORKABLE DEFINITION OF "WATERS OF THE U.S."



FIX THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND AND PASS A LONG-TERM SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION BILL



ENABLE COUNTIES TO COLLECT EXISTING SALES TAXES ON REMOTE AND ONLINE SALES



LEARN MORE ABOUT AMERICA'S COUNTIES AT www.NACo.org/CountiesMatter

