

# WHY COUNTIES MATTER

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
of COUNTIES

NACo



## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation and infrastructure are critical components that support the economies of our counties and improve the standard of living for all Americans. By providing efficient transportation and transit options such as buses, trains, light rail and subway systems, counties are the driving force connecting communities. Counties invest in building the schools where students learn, the hospitals that treat and provide care to the community and the jails that house and rehabilitate wrongdoers. From cleaning up storm debris and restoring safety to the community to cleaning the water we drink by maintaining reservoirs, purification plants and pumping stations, counties provide the basic services that are often taken for granted.

### Services include:

- ★ Transit
- ★ Roads
- ★ Bridges
- ★ Airports
- ★ Construction of public facilities

- ★ Water and sewage systems
- ★ Solid waste management
- ★ Utilities like gas and electricity

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED  
IN THE OPERATION OF  
**30%** of public airports

COUNTIES INVEST  
**\$52.3 BILLION**  
in construction  
of public facilities  
annually

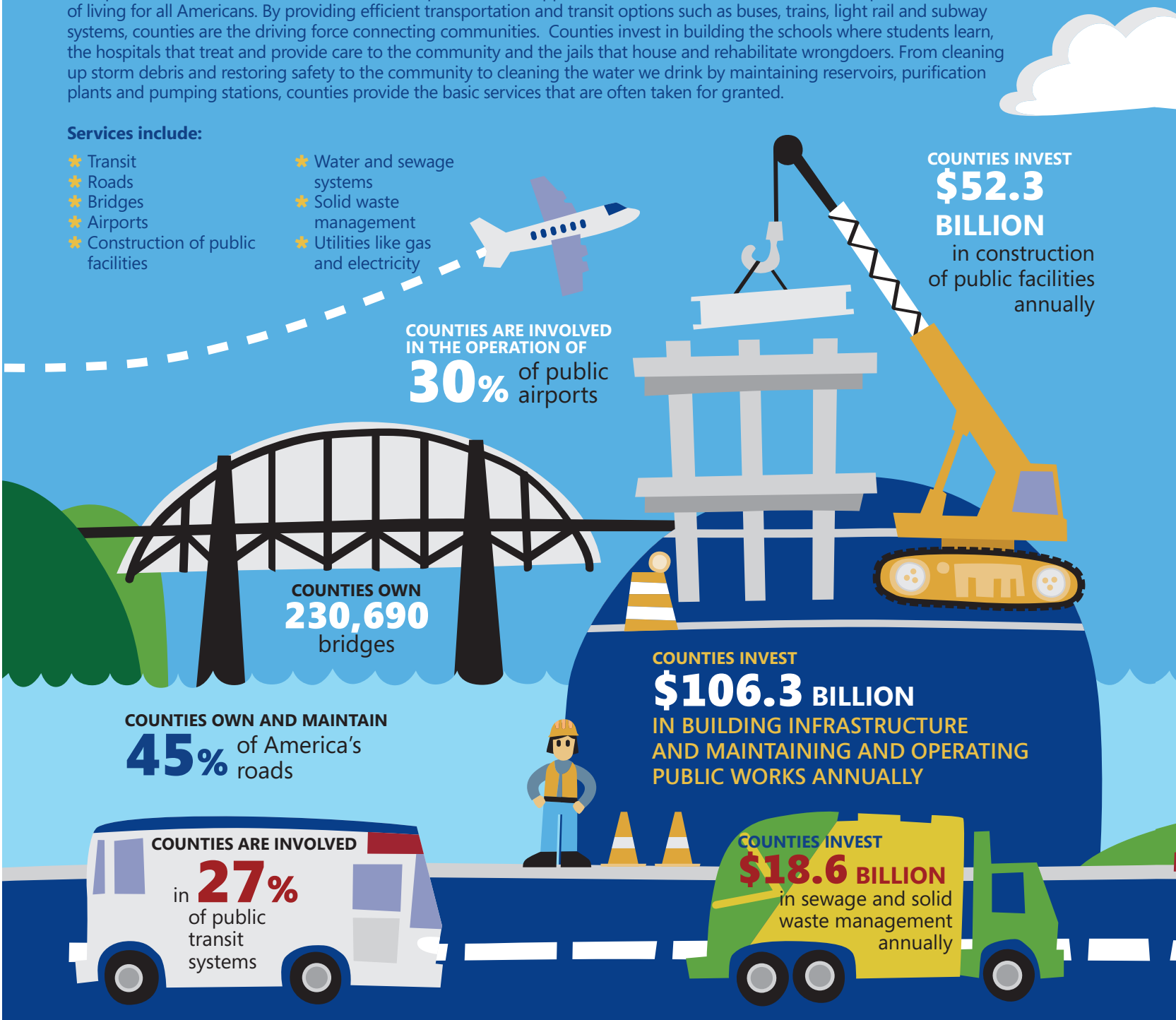
COUNTIES OWN  
**230,690**  
bridges

COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN  
**45%** of America's  
roads

COUNTIES INVEST  
**\$106.3 BILLION**  
IN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND MAINTAINING AND OPERATING  
PUBLIC WORKS ANNUALLY

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED  
in **27%**  
of public  
transit  
systems

COUNTIES INVEST  
**\$18.6 BILLION**  
in sewage and solid  
waste management  
annually





#### COUNTIES SUPPORT

**976** HOSPITALS WITH A TOTAL  
OF **100,378** BEDS THAT  
SERVE MORE  
THAN **15 MILLION**  
PATIENT DAYS



#### COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED

in promoting  
public health  
through more than  
**1,550** local  
health departments

## HEALTHCARE

Counties create support systems to keep you healthy from the time you are born until the time you grow old. Many counties operate hospitals and health facilities that provide clinical services, cancer and cardiac care, and emergency and trauma care. County nursing homes offer restorative care and rehabilitation, and promote quality of life and wellness to the elderly. From preventative measures like administering flu shots to educating the public with health information, county health departments ensure the everyday health of their residents.

#### Services include:

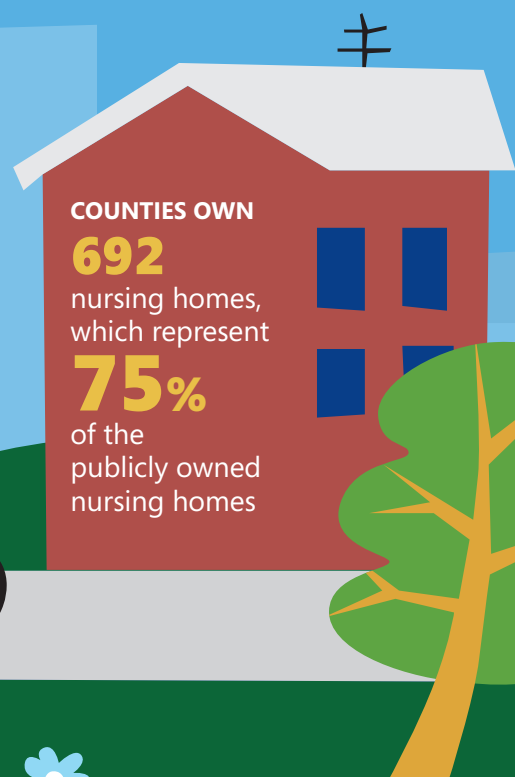
- ★ Hospitals
- ★ Nursing homes
- ★ Behavioral and mental healthcare
- ★ Immunizations
- ★ Testing services
- ★ Indigent healthcare
- ★ Health code inspections
- ★ Health clinics
- ★ Public health

#### COUNTIES INVEST

**\$69.7**  
**BILLION**  
for community  
health and  
hospitals annually

#### COUNTIES OWN

**692**  
nursing homes,  
which represent  
**75%**  
of the  
publicly owned  
nursing homes



## COUNTIES INVEST

# \$70.2 BILLION

**TOTAL** in justice and public safety services annually, of which ...

THERE ARE  
**3,105**  
county police  
and sheriffs  
departments

### JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Counties keep communities safe, by providing law enforcement and promoting crime prevention. From patrolling and policing the streets, to operating and maintaining county detention facilities, to serving as the arm of the county courts, county sheriffs and police departments are the linchpin of the criminal justice system. The other key players in the system are judges, district attorneys, public defenders, court clerks, jail directors and coroners.

#### Criminal justice components include:

- ★ Sheriffs departments
- ★ County police departments
- ★ County court systems
- ★ Jails and correctional facilities
- ★ Juvenile detention and justice services
- ★ District attorneys
- ★ Public defenders
- ★ Coroners

**\$30.2 BILLION**

IS SPENT ON  
POLICE AND SHERIFFS  
DEPARTMENTS

**\$23.3 BILLION**

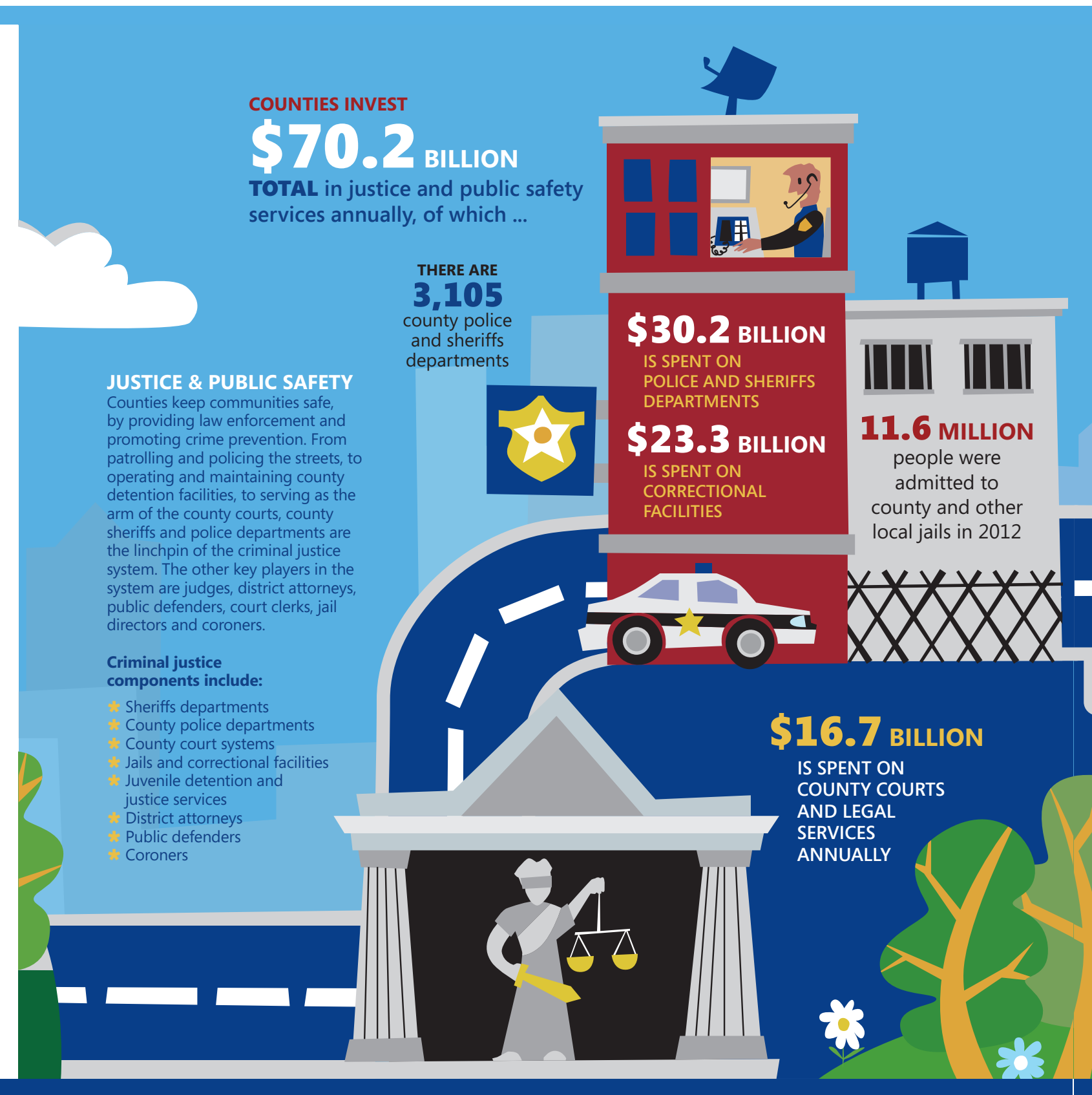
IS SPENT ON  
CORRECTIONAL  
FACILITIES

**11.6 MILLION**

people were  
admitted to  
county and other  
local jails in 2012

**\$16.7 BILLION**

IS SPENT ON  
COUNTY COURTS  
AND LEGAL  
SERVICES  
ANNUALLY



## COUNTY MANAGEMENT

Counties provide vital services to all Americans, from issuing birth certificates and marriage licenses to operating 911 call centers. Counties often build and maintain the parks, swimming pools, community centers and cultural centers where you spend time with family and friends. Counties are responsible for running elections, from presidential to local. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure safe, healthy and resilient communities for their residents.

### Services include:

- ★ Record keeping
- ★ Tax assessments
- ★ 911 call centers
- ★ Elections and polling places
- ★ Recreation and parks
- ★ Arts programs
- ★ Housing, community and economic development

EVERY TWO YEARS,  
COUNTIES FUND AND  
OVERSEE MORE THAN

**167,000**  
polling places

THERE ARE ALMOST

**39,000**

total county elected officials.

**711**

are elected  
county executives

AND COORDINATE  
MORE THAN

**704,000**  
poll workers

ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST

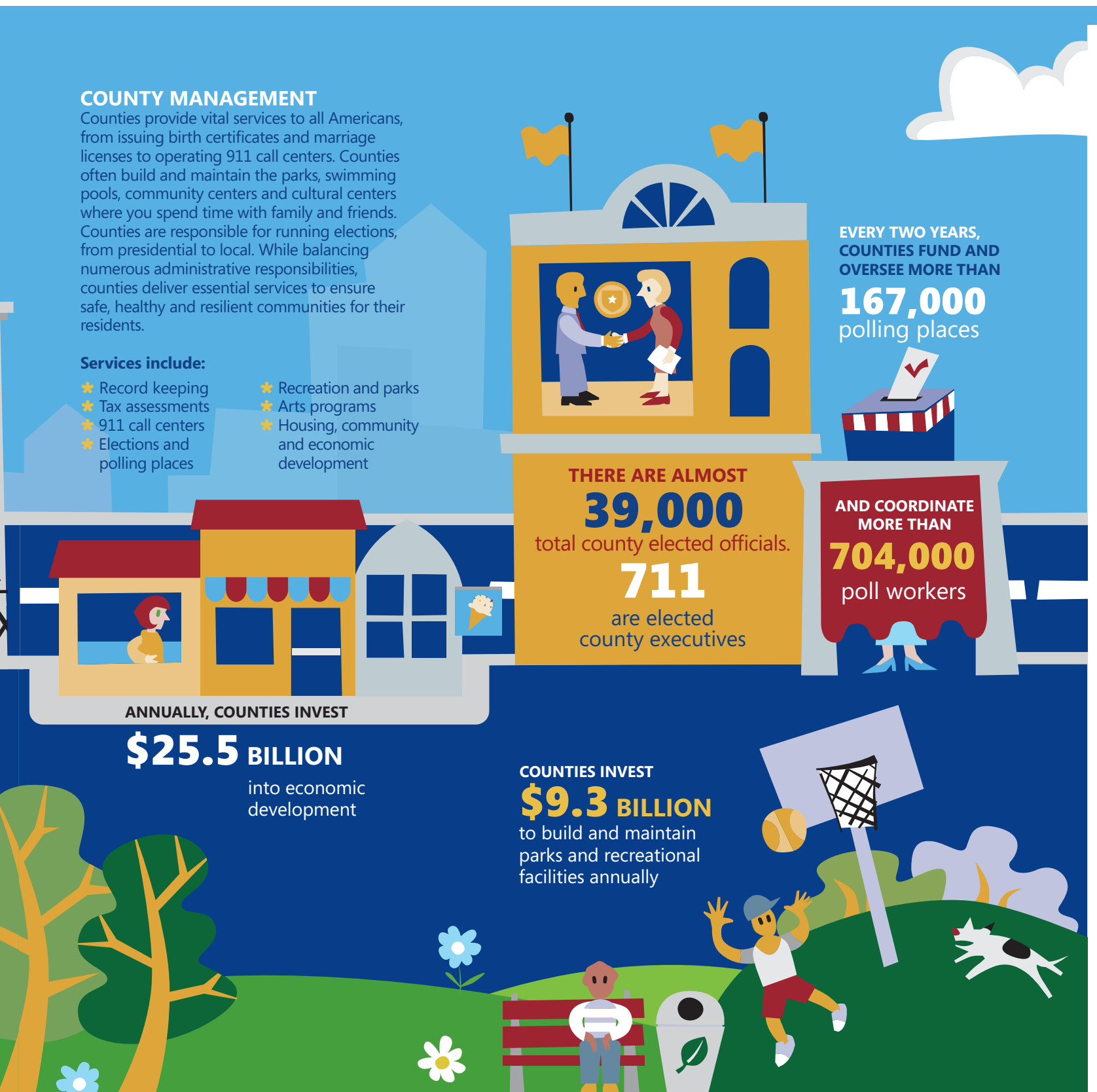
**\$25.5** BILLION

into economic  
development

COUNTIES INVEST

**\$9.3** BILLION

to build and maintain  
parks and recreational  
facilities annually



## NACo — BRINGING UNITY TO THE DIVERSITY OF AMERICA'S COUNTIES

The nation's 3,069 county governments provide the essential services to create healthy, vibrant, and safe communities. Counties support and maintain public infrastructure, transportation and economic development assets; keep residents healthy; ensure public safety to protect our citizens; maintain public information and coordinate elections; and implement a broad array of federal, state and local programs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

People depend on counties to provide services that build, maintain, and protect their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Counties are also an instrumental player in America's intergovernmental system of federal, state, and local governments.

NACo members support state and federal policies and programs that provide the tools, resources, and solutions needed to spur job growth, improve the quality of life for all Americans, and increase the economic competitiveness of America's counties and communities. To accomplish this, NACo adheres to a set of core principles through its core functions.

### NACo's CORE PRINCIPLES



Empower county leaders with new skills, resources and ideas



Assist counties with first-class, cost-effective services



Provide timely, informative and value-added data, knowledge and programs



Promote sound public policies that advance the interests of counties



Exercise sound stewardship and management of NACo's financial, intellectual, and human resources



Enhance the public's understanding of county government

### NACo's CORE FUNCTIONS



Legislative, regulatory, and judicial representation in the nation's capital



Research



Education & technical assistance



Cost-saving programs



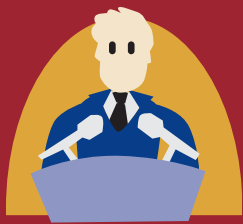
Solutions for critical problems



Innovative programs that meet future county needs

## THE DIVERSITY OF COUNTIES

No two counties are exactly the same. Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments were established in Virginia. Ever since, county governments continue to evolve and adapt to changing environments and populations, with Petersburg Borough, Alaska, incorporating as recently as 2013. Counties are diverse in the way they are structured and how they deliver services to their communities. States decide counties' roles and responsibilities. States can allow counties to govern themselves by granting them home rule authority, which gives counties varying degrees of power to decide their own structural, functional and fiscal organization. Counties' demographic, geographic and economic characteristics dictate how they deliver services to their communities. The organization and structure of counties are tailored to fit their communities' needs and characteristics.



**38,968**  
total county elected  
officials



**\$482.1**  
BILLION  
total expenditures  
annually



**3.3**  
MILLION  
county employees



Service to  
**305**  
MILLION  
county residents

- \* Los Angeles County invests \$18.9 billion annually — or more than 23 of our state governments each year.
- \* If Cook County, Ill., were a state, it would be bigger than 30 states in population.
- \* Almost 70 percent of counties have less than 50,000 residents.
- \* One in four acres of county land is federally owned. In the West, one in two acres of county land is federally owned.

[WWW.NACO.ORG/COUNTIESMATTER](http://WWW.NACO.ORG/COUNTIESMATTER)

## NACo's VISION: HEALTHY, VIBRANT, SAFE, AND RESILIENT COUNTIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



### NACo's MISSION

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America's 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money.

### SOURCES

The annual investments are 2007 figures. NACo Analysis of Census of Governments' Data, 2007; NACo Data on county elected officials, April 2014; NACo Analysis of U.S. DOT Data, 2011; U.S. DOT, 2012; NACo Analysis of U.S. FTA Data, 2011; NACo Analysis of U.S. FAA Data, 2010; NACo Analysis of American Hospital Directory Data, 2011; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Data, April 2014; National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2013; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013; NACo Analysis of County Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, 2008-2010; NACo Analysis of U.S. Election Commission Data, 2012; U.S. Census, Population Division, Vintage 2013.



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