

# The Federal-State Policy Exchange

August 27-29 | Cook County, Ill.

Hosted by NCCAE and NACo



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
of COUNTY ASSOCIATION  
EXECUTIVES



## WEDNESDAY AUGUST 27

### 1:30 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. GFOA Headquarters

203 N. LaSalle Street,  
Suite 2700, Chicago, IL  
60601

#### The Big Shift: Federal Policy and Local Government Impacts

Welcome and Introductory Discussion

*The first six months of the second Trump administration have brought sweeping changes to the federal government and its relationship with state and local governments. As the administration pursues efficiency and reform at the national level, certain costs are shifting to the state and local level, prompting a broader discussion about the nature of our country's federalist system. This conversation will bring these challenges to light as we discuss trends in preemption and cost shifting at the federal and state levels.*

- **Jon Cannon**, Executive Director, Nebraska Association of County Officials (moderator)
- **Teryn Zmuda**, Chief Economist & Research Officer, National Association of Counties
- **Eryn Hurley**, Managing Director of Government Affairs, National Association of Counties

### 3:15 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. Cook County Bureau of Administration Building

118 N. Clark St, 4th  
Floor Conference  
Rooms 4S-A & 4S-B

#### Federalism Stress Test: The Future of Chicago Regional Transit

Off-Site Panel

*Chicago's mass transit system is a collaborative effort between county, state and city officials. With federal COVID-era dollars set to expire, the transit system is facing a significant budget shortfall, forcing these three levels of government to collaborate on solutions. Join county, state and city officials as they discuss a real-time example of cost shifts and federalism during intergovernmental changes.*

- **Joe McCoy**, Executive Director, Illinois State Association of Counties (moderator)
- **Jennifer Killen**, Superintendent, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
- **Tom McKone**, Chief Financial Officer, Chicago Transit Authority
- **Tom Rickert**, Deputy Director of Transportation, Kane County, Ill.
- **Elizabeth Gorman**, Board Member, Regional Transit Authority

**6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.**  
**Harry Caray's Italian**  
**Steakhouse**

33 W. Kinzie Street  
Chicago, IL 60654

**Opening Dinner @ Harry Caray's Italian Steakhouse**  
Networking Dinner

## THURSDAY AUGUST 28

**GFOA Headquarters** | 203 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 2700, Chicago, IL 60601

**9:00 A.M. – 9:30 A.M.**

**Minnesota Policy Trends**  
Breakfast and Reflections

- **Julie Ring**, Executive Director, Association of Minnesota Counties

**9:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.**

**Property Tax Reform**  
Presentation and Interactive Discussion

*County governments rely on property taxes as our top source of revenue, yet the property tax remains one of the most unpopular taxes, making it an easy target for state legislators. Nearly every state imposes some kind of limitation on the ability of counties to raise property or other tax revenue, and some states have even discussed eliminating property taxes altogether. Join this session to discuss trends in property tax reform, messaging for advocacy and county-led solutions.*

- **Jon Cannon**, Executive Director, Nebraska Association of Counties (moderator)
- **Shayne Kavanaugh**, Senior Manager – Research, Government Finance Officers Association
- **Hon. Fritz Kaegi**, Cook County Assessor, Cook County Assessor's Office

**11:00 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.**   **Break**



**11:15 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Land Use Authority**

**Small Group Discussion**

*Counties remain deeply tied to land due to their reliance on property taxes, yet their authority over land use varies widely. Some counties include large areas of state or federal public land—outside their taxing and planning authority—while others consist mostly of incorporated land governed by municipalities. In some states, county control is also limited on unincorporated land. This session will explore these differences in county land use authority across states and clarify the county role in planning, zoning, and land use—whether for economic development, business growth, or housing.*

- **Vinson Guthreau**, Executive Director, Nevada Association of Counties

**12:00 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. State Association Show & Tell**

**Lunch Session**

*Join this special “Show & Tell” session where attendees will take turns presenting programs or initiatives which have helped to maximize their associations’ resources.*

- **Carlos Greene**, Managing Director – Retirement Services, NACo EDGE (moderator)

**1:30 P.M. – 1:45 P.M. Break**

**1:45 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.**

### **Navigating AI Policies**

Presentation and Interactive Discussion

*As the use of artificial intelligence becomes more common, county governments are working to develop policies which will allow for the use of AI while keeping important information safe. This discussion focuses on best practices in county AI policies and how state associations can help counties navigate these policies.*

- **Rita Reynolds**, CIO and Managing Director of Technology Programs, NACo
- **Heather Hiester**, Director of Technology Programs and Partnerships, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

**3:15 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.**

### **Walk to Boat Tour**

*Attendees will walk ~0.5 mi (15 minutes) along the Riverwalk to Michigan Ave., cross over the bridge, then descend to the dock along the river close to the bridge. The tour company is **Wendella Boats**.*

**NACo staff will handle all ticketing.** Groups are required to arrive 30 minutes before departure for a security screening and checking-in process. No outside alcohol or weapons are permitted on board. Boarding begins 15 minutes prior to departure, and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. All boats have restrooms and a full bar (card only).

*Our boat is scheduled to depart at 4:00 P.M. and return at 5:30 P.M. Delays are possible due to congestion on the Chicago River.*

**4:00 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.**

### **Wendella Boats**

400 N. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60611  
(closest address to dock)

### **Chicago River Architecture Boat Tour**

Mobile Tour

*Attendees will learn about Chicago's unique architecture on this 90-minute boat tour. This tour will help set the stage for tomorrow's discussion on planning for growth and development.*

**5:30 P.M.**

### **Dinner on Own**

# FRIDAY AUGUST 29

**GFOA Headquarters** | 203 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 2700, Chicago, IL 60601

**9:00 A.M. – 9:30 A.M.**

## **Networking Breakfast**

**9:30 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.**

## **Planning for Growth and Development: Key Challenges and Solutions**

Fireside Chat and Interactive Discussion

*As communities grow and businesses expand, counties play an important role in facilitating and managing this growth to ensure all residents and businesses have access to the services they need. Yet, the varying levels of authority counties have across states create challenges for growing communities. This discussion will examine key issues counties face in managing development, including utility infrastructure (especially for high utility users, like data centers) and environmental and watershed impacts.*

- **Candace Meredith**, Deputy Director, Nebraska Association of Counties
- **Javier Fernandez**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Omaha Public Power District

**10:30 A.M. –11:30 A.M.**

## **The Future of Federalism**

Closing Discussion

*As cost shifts and preemption reshape our nation's federalist system, this closing, forward-looking conversation will focus on what these shifts mean for our nation's intergovernmental system in the future. Attendees will have the opportunity to reflect on these changes and discuss how to best position counties for an expanded leadership role moving forward.*

**11:30 A.M.**

## **Forum Ends**

Boxed lunches available

## SPEAKER BIOS



**Javier Fernandez**

Omaha Public Power  
District

**Mr. Javier Fernandez** has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of OPPD since 2021. He joined the utility in 2017 as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Fernandez came to OPPD from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Department of Energy, in Portland, Oregon. He had been with the federal power marketing organization since 2012, most recently serving as executive vice president and chief financial officer. He previously served as senior vice president of Fixed Income Capital Markets for D.A. Davidson & Company and vice president of Public Finance for Seattle Northwest Securities Corporation.

He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, a master's degree in business administration from Yale University and a Utility Management Certificate from the University of Idaho.



**Elizabeth Gorman**

Regional Transit  
Authority

**Ms. Elizabeth “Liz” Doody Gorman** is a seasoned public sector strategist, energy sales leader and infrastructure policy expert with more than two decades of experience in government, transportation and energy efficiency. She serves as a Director on the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Board, representing suburban Cook County and providing oversight for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace.

Ms. Gorman is the Owner and Founder of ONORACH, LLC, a Cook County-certified Women Business Enterprise delivering strategic advisory in infrastructure planning, energy performance contracting, and public sector procurement. She has been elected four times as a Cook County Commissioner.



**Heather Hiester**  
County  
Commissioners  
Association of  
Pennsylvania

**Heather Hiester** is the Director of Technology Programs and Partnerships for the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), where she leads statewide technology innovation, cybersecurity initiatives, and strategic vendor partnerships. She directs the Pennsylvania County AI Collaborative, a first-of-its-kind initiative uniting all 67 counties to establish governance frameworks, prioritize AI use cases, and create shared-service models for responsible AI adoption. With more than 20 years of leadership experience in technology program management, Ms. Hiester has overseen multimillion-dollar initiatives, built high-performing teams, and guided large-scale system implementations that improved efficiency and outcomes across county government. Under her leadership, the AI Collaborative is preparing to launch an AI Starter Kit with policy templates, a vendor matrix, and training resources to accelerate secure, practical AI deployment.

Ms. Hiester is widely recognized as a national voice in county government innovation and a leading force in shaping how artificial intelligence will transform public service.



**Hon. Fritz Kaegi**  
Cook County Assessor

**Hon. Fritz Kaegi** is the Cook County Assessor. Since assuming office in 2018, Fritz has brought fairness, ethics and transparency to the Cook County Assessor's Office with a vision focused on operational changes, technological upgrades, and the elimination of favoritism. These changes have increased predictability in the assessment system and spurred investment in Chicago and Cook County.

Prior to beginning his career in Cook County government, Hon. Kaegi spent more than 20 years valuing assets as a mutual fund portfolio manager and analyst. In his 13 years at Columbia Wanger Asset Management, Hon. Kaegi served as a financial steward, helping average families save for retirement and focusing on small companies operating around the world. He holds the Chartered Financial Analyst and Certified Illinois Assessment Officer designations. He is also a member of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO).





**Shayne Kavanaugh**

Government Finance  
Officers Association

**Mr. Shayne Kavanaugh** is the Senior Manager of Research for GFOA and has been a leader in developing the technique of long-term financial planning and policies for local government. He started GFOA's long-term financial planning and policy consulting offering in 2002 and has been working with governments on financial planning and policies ever since. Most recently, Mr. Kavanaugh has pioneered the use of computer simulation to “stress test” the long-term financial position of local governments.

Prior to joining GFOA, Mr. Kavanaugh was the Assistant Village Manager for the Village of Palos Park, Illinois. He received his MPA degree from Northern Illinois University.



**Jennifer Killen**

Cook County  
Department of  
Transportation and  
Highways

**Ms. Jennifer (Sis) Killen** serves as the Superintendent for Cook County, Illinois, bringing 26 years of experience to her management of Departmental operations. Ms. Killen was a key orchestrator in the transformation of the Department from a roads-centric environment to a culture with a broader range of transportation projects. She co-led the completion of the Department's long range transportation plan, establishing policy priorities to guide holistic infrastructure investment to address local and regional project needs through strategic partnerships. She was named ASCE Government Civil Engineer of the Year in 2024. As Superintendent and a licensed Professional Engineer, Ms. Killen is responsible for all aspects of multimodal transportation facility planning, design, construction and maintenance.



**Tom McKone**

Chicago Transit  
Authority

**Mr. Thomas McKone** currently serves as CTA's Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer. In this role, he has responsibility for the agency's \$2.2 billion operating budget, \$7 billion capital program, treasury operations and debt administration, accounting, payroll, business development and revenue, and the agency's performance management program. Through this vast CTA leadership experience, Mr. McKone has been an integral component of the agency's accomplishments, including achieving annual balanced operating budgets, securing TIFIA loans for major CTA capital projects, reaching unprecedented levels of employee recruitment and training and modernizing related processes, managing the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as establishing an industry-leading performance management unit.

He is a graduate of the University of Chicago with a Master's in Public Policy and a B.A in economics and statistics from Northwestern University.



**Tom Rickert**  
Kane County, Ill.

**Mr. Tom Rickert** is the Deputy Director of Transportation for Kane County and spent most of his career as the Executive Director of the Kane Kendall Council of Mayors for regional coordination. He has been a community planner for thirty-five years with a professional emphasis in land use, environmental, and transportation planning. Mr. Rickert is the Chief of Staff for Kane County Division of Transportation and supervises various staff activities in the areas of planning, budget development, engineering, permitting, project management, highway maintenance, and public services such as the County's paratransit program Ride In Kane. He also oversees the development of the County's Long Range 2050 Transportation Plan to include Highway, Transit, and Bicycle planning. As Executive Director of the Council of Mayors for Kane and Kendall Counties, Mr. Rickert does his best to represent Kane County and 38 municipalities on various regional, state and federal transportation policy issues. His staff also assists with and coordinates many of the federal transportation funding programs available for local agencies in Kane County.

## Notes



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