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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

VOL. 58, NO. 6

APRIL 20, 2026

Counties push to reform federal permitting rules



Yavapai County, Ariz. Supervisor Nikki Check. Photo by Rich Wills

by **Andrew Nober**

When people get to Yavapai County, Ariz., chances are they're itching to hike. The county estimates 2.2 million of its 3 million annual visitors use its trails, many of which

wander onto federal land.

And like taking a ripe apple off a tree, they're tempted to pull their car onto the side of the road and blaze their own trail.

But that's the kind of thing that the county, and the feder-

al government, want to avoid.

"Some trails are getting overused, which means cultural resources are getting diminished because there's overuse in wilderness areas,"

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Federal election reform proposals duplicate county protocols

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

When President Trump signed an executive order March 31 directing federal agencies to take steps related to voter citizenship verification, mail ballots and enforcement of federal election laws, it seemed to Isaac Cramer like a solution in search of a problem.

That's been a consistent response from county election officials, who feel the same about the SAVE America Act, which has stalled in Congress. Both address citizenship verification and ballot tracking. And both attempt to federalize a responsibility delegated to the states, which is then handled by counties.

"When I was listening to the press conference in the White House while the order was being signed, [I thought] 'They don't have any idea what any of us do, because everything they're talking about, we do that already,'" said Cramer, who is executive director of the Charleston County, S.C. Board of Voter Registration and Elections, and serves as chair of NACo's Elections Subcommittee. "From a county perspective, we look at this and we're like, 'This is going to create significant challenges and hurdles to the voting process.'"

Counties already verify citizenship through a myriad of confirmations with other government databases, and ballot

See **ELECTIONS** page 2

Former Nationals pitcher steps up to the plate for Oklahoma counties

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

As a relief pitcher for the Washington Nationals, Chris Schroder had the outcome of a game on his shoulders. As the

executive director of the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma (ACCO), Schroder's days look different now, but that doesn't mean there is any less pressure.

In Major League Baseball, a few bad games can get you demoted to Triple A, but Schroder said he feels more in the "hot seat" representing Oklahoma's 77 counties than he did on the mound, because of the unpredictable nature of government.

"In baseball, I worked out

of a bullpen, so I would get nervous warming up before coming in the game," Schroder said. "But once I got in the game, at that point it was a battle between the pitcher and the hitter. It wasn't necessarily thinking long term. It was more focusing in, pitch to pitch."

"I think I had a lot more control of the outcome in what I did as a baseball player, whereas sometimes in

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Public unaware of existing election safety measures

From ELECTIONS page 1

tracking has reached the level of sophistication where Cramer's department can watch as absentee ballot requests come in for residents who will be away in each of the 49 other states during the voting period.

"This is not something that someone just woke up, in the last couple months, and said 'We need to start tracking ballots,'" Cramer said. "It's actually one of the safer methods, because we ensure that every ballot that's been sent out, every ballot is received and there's a reconciliation process to prevent double voting."

The timeframes set by the executive order may be frozen by a lawsuit by 23 state attorneys general and the Pennsylvania governor, arguing the

order unlawfully interferes with state election systems and asking for a preliminary injunction to block the executive order from taking effect while the case is litigated.

The order directs the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create and send states lists of individuals confirmed to be U.S. citizens who are old enough to vote in the next federal election and reside in that state, and for the U.S. Postal Service to initiate rulemaking within 60 days on new standards for mail ballots, including envelope markings, barcodes and design requirements. DHS has 90 days from the order to complete its database.

"I do think the timing for all of this is very compressed," said Leslie Reynolds, executive director of the National



Isaac Cramer, executive director of Charleston County, S.C. Board of Voter Registration and Elections, speaks during the 2026 NACo Legislative Conference. Photo by Charlie Ban

Association of Secretaries of State. "I think it will be difficult to meet all of the deadlines in here."

Meanwhile, the SAVE America Act has stalled in the Senate after passing the House, with the potential for being included in a possible third budget reconciliation effort of this Congress. Also focused on confirming citizenship, the bill would require documentary proof of citizenship to be presented in person to county election officials. For states with robust vote-by-mail systems, complying will be a significant undertaking. Oregon has voted exclusively by mail since 1998, and modern county workforces reflect that workload.

"We have none of the infrastructure in place to meet that, let alone of temporary work staff and equipment, buildings and security and technology," said Chris Walker, Jackson County, Oregon's clerk and recorder. "Our full-time

staffing would have to double, if not triple, maybe even more.

"We have 167,000 registered voters. We need, at minimum, probably two years to even form a plan for the acquisition of equipment, contracts, locations, to verify everyone's citizenship in person."

'I think it will be difficult to meet all of the deadlines in here.'

— Leslie Reynolds, National Association of Secretaries of State

Cramer said the public lacks clarity about all of the measures county elections offices employ to secure ballots and voter rolls.

"We just want to make sure that voters know they can trust us," he said. "And any information on changes will come from the election officials and

not from a podcast or cable news."

With the executive order tied up in litigation and the SAVE America Act facing some challenges in the Senate, election officials across the country are focused on administering the primary and general midterm elections.

"There is no way, right now, we can employ any of this, because we already have our designs that have gone through a million different eyes that were also reviewed by the USPS and other entities to ensure that it meets the standards and guidelines, not just for federal requirements of mailing ballots, but also accessibility requirements, too," Cramer said.

But their concerns don't stop when they're off the clock. "When I'm at work, I'm not focusing on what we might have to change if these things pass," Walker said.

"I can't say the same for the middle of the night, when I wake up thinking."

SNAP/STATS

The State of Volunteer Firefighting

- Volunteers:Make up 62% of all firefighters in United States
- From 1983-2026:.....Decrease 884,600 to 635,100 (25% decrease)
- No. of calls:Increased 300% over past few decades
- Aging population:34% are over age 50
- Female vs. Male:.....Women make up 11% of volunteer firefighters

Source: International Association of Firefighters; National Volunteer Fire Council

CEO INSIGHTS | BY MATTHEW D. CHASE

Governing in the ‘Attention Economy’

County leaders face a new governing challenge: Reaching residents in a world where human attention has become the scarcest resource of all.



More than 50 years ago, Nobel Prize-winning economist Herbert Simon proclaimed that “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.” That observation, made in 1971, has never been more consequential.

The scale of today’s “attention economy” is striking. Americans now spend more than seven hours a day consuming digital media including streaming, work-related screen use and social media. A 2023 Pew Research study found that roughly half of U.S. adults say they are online “almost constantly.” For younger generations, the number is significantly higher.

This is not accidental. The platforms driving this behavior are engineered for it. Attention is not a byproduct of the digital economy.

It is the product. Every notification, feed and algorithm is optimized to capture more of our attention. Every finger swipe translates into dollars.

The consequences are measurable: MIT researchers, writing in *Science*, found that

What County Leaders Must Do

- **LEAD WITH CLARITY:** Simplicity is strategy. Plain language and engaging visuals are not shortcuts. These are today’s standards. If your message doesn’t catch your eye or can’t be read with a quick scroll, it will be lost in cyber space.
- **BE PRESENT WITH RESIDENTS:** Multi-channel communication is the baseline, not a luxury. Residents consume content across different platforms, formats and times of day. Identify the two or three channels where your residents are most active and show up there consistently—not just during a crisis. Everyday connections build credibility before you need it.
- **INVEST IN TRUST BEFORE YOU NEED IT:** No message breaks through in a crisis if a relationship was never built. Counties that engage consistently and transparently earn the benefit of the doubt when it matters most. Commit to a regular cadence of multi-channel engagement. Trust is currency. Treat it that way.
- **MAKE ACCURATE INFORMATION SHAREABLE:** We cannot out-algorithm the platforms, but we can design for shareability. This requires content that is clear, credible and formatted for the channels residents actually use. Short videos, infographics and plain language summaries all travel further than PDFs. In a world where misinformation and disinformation spreads by design, accuracy must work just as hard.

false information spreads farther and faster than the truth on social media. For county governments, that is not an abstract finding. It is our daily reality.

This challenge demands adaptation, not retreat.

The counties communicating most effectively in the attention economy are not necessarily those with the largest budgets or the most sophisticated technology.

Consider Arlington County, Va., which is confronting a tougher fiscal environment than in recent history, driven by commercial real estate assessments being down as much as 20% while county expenses are outpacing revenue growth.

Arlington County leaders went to residents early with a plain-language infographic

laying out the hard choices: Potential service cuts, tax rate options and exactly what each penny added to the real estate tax rate means in dollars — \$9.9 million in revenue, and \$88 more per year for the average homeowner.

With roughly 60% of county revenue tied to real estate taxes, residents needed to understand the stakes. The infographic (scan QR code) made sure they could.

Simon’s insight has never been more relevant: When

information is infinite, attention is everything.

The antidote is not just to push out more content. It is about building more credibility.

Does your county have its own playbook now?

In the attention economy, county storytelling is effective governance.

See Arlington County’s budget infographic by scanning the QR code below.



Matthew D. Chase is CEO and executive director of the National Association of Counties (NACo), the only national organization serving America’s 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs.

The “We Are Counties” initiative

“We Are Counties” is a new NACo initiative spotlighting the essential work and issues facing counties. The initiative highlights the role counties play across every part of community life. We want our members to explore the issue areas online and to follow us on social media for the latest from the campaign. Get your county involved and explore our full suite of educational materials diving deep on counties! Scan the QR code for more information.



20 April is
26 National County Government Month

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NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH APRIL 2026

FARM BILL DEBATE MOVES FORWARD IN THE HOUSE

by Owen Hart

Last month, lawmakers took a crucial step toward advancing one of the most important and often overlooked pieces of federal legislation on Congress's agenda: the farm bill. The farm bill is a sweeping legislative package that shapes federal policy on agriculture, nutrition assistance, rural development, conservation and more. Beyond its role in supporting the farm safety net, it authorizes a range of programs that counties rely on to promote food security, advance community development, strengthen local infrastructure and support land stewardship.

The farm bill has been a cornerstone of federal policymaking since the New Deal era, when laws such as the Agricultural Adjustment Acts of 1933 and 1938 helped establish the modern farm safety net. Since then, Congress has typically

renewed the bill every five to six years, updating key programs to reflect changing economic conditions in agriculture and rural America.

Beginning in the 1970s, lawmakers folded the federal Food Stamp program, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), into the farm bill, bringing together farm, nutrition and rural development priorities under one legislative umbrella and solidifying a diverse coalition of stakeholders that has long been central to the bill's passage.

The most recent farm bill, the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, expired in 2023 and has since been extended multiple times amid stalled reauthorization efforts. Most



recently, Congress extended the 2018 law through Sept. 30, 2026, as part of a continuing resolution passed in November 2025.

Debate on the farm bill in the 119th Congress has taken a notably different shape than in past years. In 2025, Congress enacted H.R. 1 (P.L. 119-21), a reconciliation package that addressed some of the farm bill's most contentious and costly issues ahead of full reauthorization. That law updated and expanded commodity support programs for agricultural producers while also enacting major changes to SNAP, including stricter work requirements and significant cost shifts to state and local governments. As a result, lawmakers are

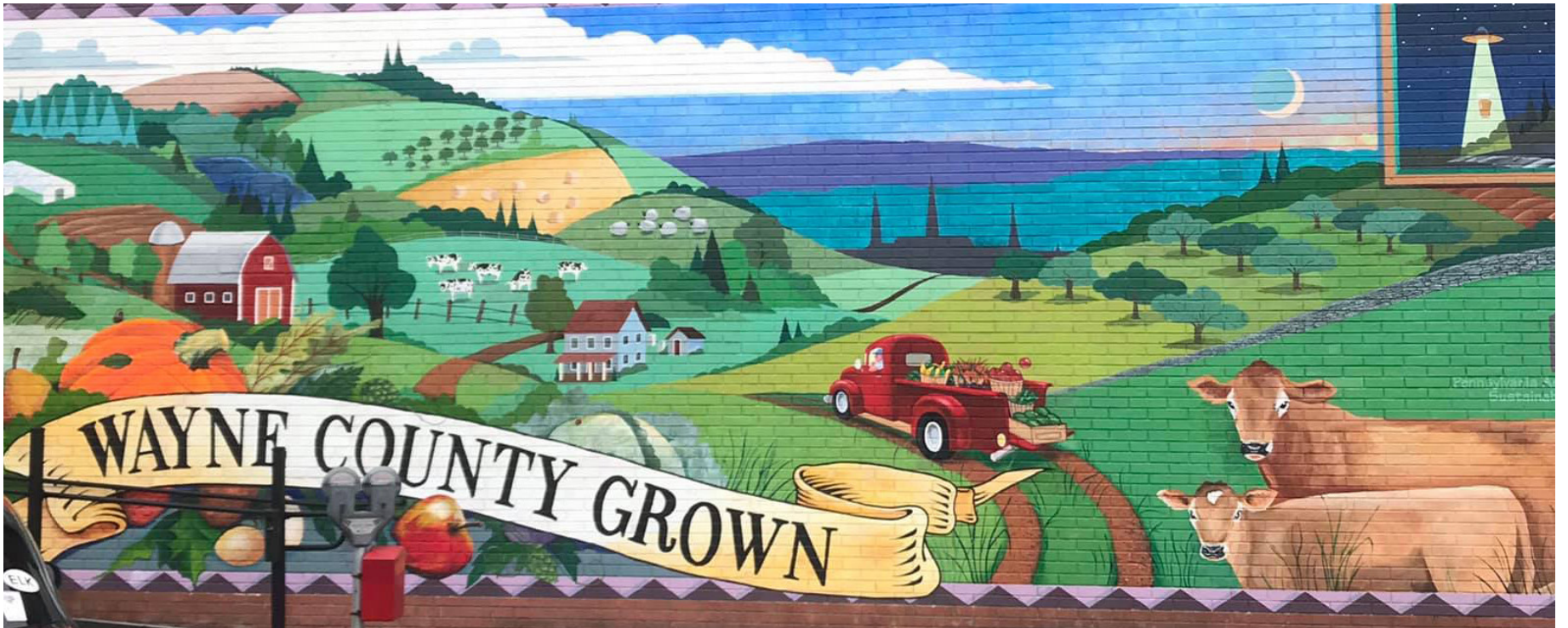
now under renewed pressure to move the remaining pieces of the 2018 farm bill through a new reauthorization package this year.

On Feb. 13, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "G.T." Thompson (R-Pa.) introduced the House's 2026 farm bill, the "Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026." After a markup process lasting more than 20 cumulative hours, the House Agriculture Committee advanced the more than 800-page bill on March 5 by a bipartisan vote of 34 to 17, with support from all Republican members and seven Democrats.

For counties, the House bill contains several provisions with meaningful implications for county governments. Among the most notable provisions, the bill would prioritize funding for rural child-care through existing rural

See LEGISLATION page 11





A mural on the wall of the Here and Now Brewing Company in Honesdale celebrates Wayne County, Pa.'s agricultural community.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS GROUNDWORK

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

All the fuel in the world won't move a car if the engine doesn't work right.

The same goes for rural community development — any money invested in a region is only as good as the planning that a county has done to prepare to make the most of it.

"Rural Development isn't just about funds. It's about how it's executed on the ground," said Kyle Kopko, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania and former executive director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. "It's about the infrastructure and it's also about the capacity, too. I think that we tend to emphasize dollar resources, but there's more to it than just that."

He sees a great example in the northeastern corner of his state, in Wayne County. A 13-year-old organization, Wayne Tomorrow, has convened nearly every civic group in the area to ensure that everyone knows where movement is happening, with hopes of coordinating efforts in the county of 51,000 resi-

dents. If there's a way to the Wayne County Community Foundation, The Stourbridge Tech Hub, Lackawaxen River Trails and the Greater Honesdale Partnership, along with private sector organizations like banks, can offer thoughtful feedback on development opportunities, it's likely to happen because of the organization's monthly meetings, which draw nearly three dozen attendees.

Sponsored by the county and led by Commission Chairman Brian Smith, Wayne Tomorrow was an opportunity for the county's leaders to emerge from a bubble.

"The three of us [commissioners], often think we have the best answer, but by the time we read up on an issue, talk with each other about an issue and really try to compromise, to come to a good conclusion on an issue, we found out that the original answer that we may have thought was clearly [option] A, B or C," he said. "It turns out to be D, E or F, and it's something that really does work for the best interest of everybody in the public."

Kopko said the term "rural development" can alienate some people, which is why Wayne County's collabora-

tive approach works in representing the perspectives shared by so many participating groups.

"There's concern from some stakeholders that rural development means the urbanization of rural areas, or it means changing its character," he said. "No, that's not what this is about. This is about sustainability, and making sure a community is resilient."

At the same time, Kopko noted that assumptions also run in the opposite direction when it comes to rural communities.

"I think a lot of folks automatically say rural equals agriculture, but there's every type of industry and sector in rural," he said, particularly in Pennsylvania communities that centered on mining.

When rural counties are challenged to think big, though, Smith points to the outcome that went the other way thanks to consultation with Wayne Tomorrow partners. When the county commissioners brainstormed a "recovery campus," combining services for re-entry, substance use disorder, adult education and more, the feedback ultimately drove a different approach.

"We ended up taking that whole recovery-to-work thing and splitting it up, and we're actually able to accomplish the things we wanted to accomplish by piecemealing it

out somewhat simpler," Smith said. "It's easier for people in the public to consume one topic at a time, rather than to complicate a whole campus

with a bunch of different topics. We learned some very valuable lessons about trying to do too many things at once."

Wayne Tomorrow centers its operations around hearing all perspectives, which Smith admits can bog down the process and scare off some people. But he likes the results.

"If you force yourself to listen to people, that's how we... you... get more informed," he said. "It's not so simple to sit around and hear things that maybe you don't agree with or that originally you don't think are valid opinions, but even if you don't react right away and you go home and think about it, you really can come around to something that's more palatable for everybody."

Contrary to Kopko's example, agriculture has played a part in Wayne County's history and development, and it's a topic Smith broached to build consensus among the organizations.

"I felt that one of the first things we should try to work

on is agriculture, because every one of us needs to eat," he said. "We've all heard 'no farmers, no food,' but I don't care what your political party

'This is about sustainability and making sure a community is resilient.'

— Kyle Kopko
executive director
CCAP

is. We should all be able to agree that we need to eat, and there are some fundamental things that we need to have in place to have farmers be able to stay economically feasible, and not only for the farmers who are

here to stay in business, but those next-generation farmers who are going through our schools."

Wayne Tomorrow was able to successfully lobby the local school system to restore an agriculture program, which Smith had been told for almost two decades would not be possible.

He also eyes another educational initiative.

"Civic education," he said. "So even when you graduate high school, most people have learned about the federal government. Most people have learned about state government, but, you know, there's no civics course about county governments. So, there's real difficulty when you expect the public to know what you're doing here at the county level." **CN**



FEDERAL BROADBAND FUNDING'S LONG JOURNEY

by Seamus Dowdall

Over the last decade, federal broadband policy has shifted from incremental support for deployment to a full-scale push to close the nation's digital divide. From the American Rescue Plan Act to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, Congress and federal agencies have directed unprecedented resources toward rural and unserved and underserved communities.

As projects move into construction and early networks start coming online, county leaders face a new phase of the work: Ensuring that funded builds are completed as promised and network reliability keeps pace with a fast-approaching AI-driven economy.

Historic federal infusion

At the start of this decade, "once in a generation" federal investments in rural broadband expanded significantly, with a clear objective: Close the digital divide by financing last-mile infrastructure and related community needs. Counties became central actors — often coordinating with peer counties, state counterparts, regional partners and internet service providers to translate flexible federal dollars into buildable projects. The results have been broadband connectivity projects that are locally coordinated and have increased resident buy-in.

Mapping and accountability

Congress pushed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to launch a national broadband mapping effort intended to pinpoint which homes and businesses lack high-speed service.

The FCC was tasked with improving the accuracy of provider-reported coverage —



by moving from a census block reporting model to a location-by-location model — increasing visibility into claimed covered areas and directing federal funds to unserved areas. Counties championed a process that permitted robust challenges to agency and provider claims to ensure residents had true access to claimed coverage.

Visible but uneven progress

As funding moves from planning to deployment, counties are beginning to see projects advance from grant awards to "shovel in the ground." Some networks backed by earlier-in-the-decade investments are starting to come online. Even so, county officials say a central question persists: Will unserved pockets re-emerge as programs and technologies change? The question leaves a further, more immediate uncertainty in the air: How will our built networks manage the shift in demand for services that AI will bring to our economy?

When programs strand communities

With all of the successful federal funding streams that have emerged for broadband across the last decade, county leaders often point to one as

offering an opportunity for a lesson learned: The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). In too many areas, providers that committed to build under the RDOF program as far back as 2019 later defaulted on their bids, due to elevating material costs or lack of continued incentive to serve the awarded area. The result, counties say, was worse than delay: Some communities became ineligible for other funding streams because they were counted as future RDOF builds — even when that future connectivity never materialized.

Not a one-time project

The experience of the last decade is reinforcing a long-standing reality in telecommunications: Building and maintaining networks is an ongoing public need, not a single one-time construction effort. Much of the nation's 20th-century telecom backbone was built under a monopoly model before the industry's breakup in the 1980s and the rise of regional competition in the 1990s. Then the internet reshaped the entire ecosystem, turning "telecom infrastructure" into a sophisticated blend of systems that collectively deliver modern connectivity.

That complexity collides with economics. Internet service providers can typically achieve higher returns in urban and suburban markets than in rural areas, where fewer customers

must support more miles of infrastructure. Federal policy has long tried to bridge that gap. Under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the FCC is required to pursue "universal service," including the principle that rural residents should have access to services comparable to urban residents at reasonably similar rates.

To make that possible, the FCC uses subsidies — including the Universal Service Fund — to offset the difference between rural build costs and what can be recovered through consumer rates alone. For counties, the takeaway is practical: Even as one-time grant programs expand infrastructure, long-term viability often depends on sustainable operating models and complementary federal support tools.

Affordability remains part of 'access'

Availability is only one part of connectivity. Since 1996, the Lifeline program has aimed to make communications services affordable for eligible households — first for telephone service and later including broadband. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary Affordable Connectivity Program received an uptake rate of nearly 23 million households — a sign that relief in monthly internet service bills was in high demand when remote connectivity was essential for public health.

By offering affordable connectivity options to connect-

tivity, more residents can connect to government services, education, telehealth and the modern economy. County officials say that without affordability options, new networks can still leave residents effectively disconnected.

Resilient networks for an AI-era economy

Counties are weighing broadband as foundational infrastructure for the next wave of economic and civic life. As artificial intelligence and advanced digital services reshape workplaces and labor markets, communities will need new education pathways, digital literacy and reskilling opportunities — none of which scale without reliable connectivity. Leaders also increasingly frame telecommunications resilience as essential infrastructure, comparable to water, power and roads, with public-private partnerships and security considerations becoming part of routine planning.

What counties can do now

Congress has several levers to keep broadband progress moving, including direct grants and loans for deployment, support for devices and connectivity for distance learning and telemedicine, and funding to strengthen or "harden" county information technology and operational technology systems. Federal policy can also continue to set standards that promote a competitive, customer-responsive broadband market — an obligation rooted in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

For county leaders, the message of the decade is clear: Federal dollars are finally translating into real-world builds, and we need to meet the moment. As the innovation economy moves forward, counties will continue to maximize efforts to ensure their residents are connected to high-speed broadband. **CN**

Dowdall is a legislative director in NACo's Government Affairs department.



SPOTLIGHT ON:
**FARM
BILL**

COUNTIES CONCERNED FARM BILL DOESN'T ADDRESS SNAP CUTS, COST SHIFTS

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

As the farm bill moves to the House floor, county officials in the 10 states that administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are expressing concern over the legislation not addressing H.R.1's cuts and cost-shifts to the nation's largest food safety net program.

The goal of a farm bill is to support rural communities, and give them the resources they need to thrive, said Stearns County, Minn. Commissioner Tarryl Clark. Without addressing H.R.1's changes to SNAP and Medicaid, that can't be fulfilled, she noted.

"Whether it is food and nutrition and being able to have a community that is able to keep a grocery store or to have those kinds of resources going back to the community, being able to have a doctor or telemedicine," Clark said, adding "if we don't have those components, it is very difficult to see how many of our communities can afford to survive, let alone thrive."

Stearns County has roughly 717,000 acres of farmland, which makes up around 73% of its total land area. It's the top milk-producing county in Minnesota, and is home to over 500 dairy farms. Moving a farm bill is "critically important" to the county, Clark said, but she's "very concerned" about the effect of cuts to food assistance on her constituents, as well as to the local economy.

"For rural communities — our grocery stores, our egg producers, our seniors, our kids, our veterans, our families — there's a lot of impact," Clark said. "And I think that's part of the unintended consequence, because people in Congress, and I'm sure in the administration, aren't wanting to negatively impact folks

in that way.

"But with inflation right now, with rising grocery prices, it's not translated into more money for our farmers, it's translated into more costs for the people who really need SNAP, and that means it's also translated into bigger problems for our grocery stores."

If the federal government is going to mandate changes, states and counties should be equipped with the resources to comply with them, she said.

"These extra costs in our state, right now it's looking like it could be an increase in county property taxes, just to comply with what the federal law is," Clark said. "And that shouldn't happen."



'These extra costs... could [mean] an increase in county property taxes.'

— Tarryl Clark
Stearns County, Minn.

In accordance with H.R.1, the federal government will reduce its share of SNAP administrative costs to 25% from 50% — shifting the remaining costs to states and counties — on Oct. 1.

Ohio, another state in which counties administer SNAP, is set to face a \$70 million budget shortfall from



Stearns County is Minnesota's top-milk producing county and is home to more than 500 dairy farms, according to The Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

the administrative cost shift alone — \$51 million of which will be shifted to the state's 88 counties. Montgomery County's portion of the cost is estimated at over \$3.2 million, according to Michelle Niedermier, director of the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services.

"SNAP is one of the most critical programs," Niedermier said. "We can't retroactively feed people, so we need to get it right, right out of the gate."

Montgomery County is discussing increasing staffing positions to accommodate both the added administrative burden SNAP workforce requirements will create and the increase in people receiving the food assistance benefits since the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of Montgomery County residents receiving SNAP increased by more than 14,000 between 2019 and 2025.

"I'm very fortunate to have county commissioners and county administration who understand that if we just instinctively match the cuts with staffing reductions, the [SNAP payment] error rate would be astronomical," Niedermier said. "... I will say this is a conversation that has been in motion because our numbers did not go back to pre-pandemic levels after unwinding, so our caseloads have already been incredibly large, and I think we've reached that tipping point of

trying to do more with less."

Under H.R.1, states with SNAP payment error rates exceeding 6% will be required to cover between 5% and 15% of benefit cost errors. Clark said she doesn't think it's realistic for Stearns County to get its error rate below 6% by Oct. 1, 2027, and is hoping to see the implementation deadline extended, as well as federal funding to update the technology Minnesota counties use to administer SNAP, which dates to the 1980s.

"We work hard on trying to keep this down, but there are still some real error rates, and some of them are from the people who are applying, and some of it is staff errors because of old technology," Clark said. "... Particularly for states in which counties administer these programs, delaying the [implementation] dates would really make a difference in working with the state, as well as our counties, to get the error rate where it needs to be."

Although nothing has been established, Niedermier said she's heard "rumblings" in peer groups and associations, such as the National Association of County Human Services, about the possibility of Ohio having to end the pro-

gram due to cost shifts the state and local governments can't sustain.

"That 10% [benefit cost error coverage] would be devastating," Niedermier said. "I truly don't know how we would make that up in the state of Ohio ... We know that that would just be devastating to the population and the vulnerable individuals and families who rely on those funds to help stretch their food budget."

House Republicans are looking to bring the farm bill for a floor vote the last week of April, Politico reported on April 14. As the legislation moves along, Clark said she wants to see some tweaks "at minimum" that would help counties implement the mandates in more effective and efficient ways, such as changing how the SNAP payment error rate is calculated and devoting more resources to updating systems.

"Nothing's done until it's done," Clark said. "... With this bill, particularly with food assistance being such a big part of it, it's important that members of Congress can step back and really think about, 'What are they hearing from their communities? What are their communities saying about what they are able to do on their own?' Because it is critical."



Clark



Niedermier

Schroder leads the charge for counties in Oklahoma after pro baseball career

From PITCHER page 1

government, the control can be out of your hands, whether it's the legislature, or other issues."

In Schroder's first major league win, in 2007, he was tapped to pitch an inning after Barry Bonds hit his 756th home run, breaking the all-time record. The energy in San Francisco's AT&T Park that day was electric, he said.

"The whole stadium just flashed on every pitch," Schroder said. "Everybody taking a picture, trying to catch the home run."

There's nothing that com-

pires to the rush of taking the mound, Schroder said.

"You can't really get that anywhere else," Schroder said. "Especially as a reliever, warming up in the sixth or seventh inning and getting that call to run out of the bullpen in front of 40,000 people. I mean that's a moment."

"It's hard to describe that feeling — especially those first few times you do it — but it's such an adrenaline rush to be out there competing and playing the game you love in front of so many people."

After pitching professionally for a decade, Schroder retired and returned to familiar ter-

ritory: County government. Schroder's father, Keith, served as a county commissioner in Kingfisher County, Okla. for 20 years and Chris interned for ACCO in college, working on road and bridge projects.

Throughout the years, Schroder kept in touch with his ACCO colleagues. They watched him play during his time at Oklahoma City University, and when he made it to Triple A, he would drop in to the office when he was in town for a game. It felt natural to return after leaving baseball.

"[ACCO] always felt like home to me," Schroder said.

Schroder worked for the OK Cooperative Circuit Engineering Districts Board for 11 years before becoming ACCO's executive director in 2021. In baseball, Schroder's objective was straightforward. In government, the landscape is always evolving. Every day on the job is different, but that's what Schroder loves about it.

"Just when you think you've had all the questions from counties, it seems like every day, every week, you're getting something new that you haven't experienced or there's new programs, say ARPA, coming down from the feds — it's always changing," Schroder said. "And on a county level, it's always changing."

As ACCO executive director, Schroder serves as the voice of counties at the state level. Property taxes are a "hot button topic" right now for the Oklahoma Legislature, he noted.

"Whether that's adjusting it, lowering it, different home-steads or how much it can increase," Schroder said. "But, we also push that it funds a



Chris Schroder on the mound, pitching for the Washington Nationals baseball team. Photo courtesy of Chris Schroder

lot of essential services — law enforcement, health departments, fairgrounds, transportation, roads and bridges — so, it's something we have to educate on."

ACCO 'always felt like home to me.'

- Chris Schroder, executive director, ACCO

It's important that counties have a seat at the table, so that they can help inform policy by sharing on-the-ground impact, Schroder said. The best part of being ACCO's executive director is getting to work alongside the county officials, he noted.

"There're so many different personalities, and you go through an election cycle, you get a whole group of new ones," Schroder said. "... There're a lot of other ar-

eas that most of them have been in, in their career before they run for office, so being a resource for them, helping them answer questions, getting them through difficult situations and forming a lot of really good friendships is [my favorite part of the job]."

Schroder's father taught him to approach every day doing the best he can, which is advice he's applied to his careers in baseball and county government, he said.

These days, Schroder has a "worn-out" shoulder and has been out of major league baseball longer than he was in it, but he's taken the field in a new role, as a coach for his daughters' softball teams.

"That's kind of my fix," Schroder said. "It's not baseball, but it's close. I've come to really like softball, and I love being around the girls. You can work all day, and then go up to the practice field, and it's like a stress release." **CN**

PALM BEACH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



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UPCOMING SALE DATES

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May 16, 2026

June 20, 2026

July 18, 2026

November 7, 2026

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FL, 33411

DURING STORE
SALE HOURS:

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BIDDING HOURS:

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SALUTE TO COUNTY LEADERS: Lenny Eliason

A NACo Board member since 2005, Lenny Eliason has served on the Athens County, Ohio Commission since 1998 and will leave office at the end of the year. As NACo president in 2011-2012, he started what became the Healthy Counties Innovation Council and capped off his year by hiring Matt Chase to succeed Larry Naake as executive director.

When did you know county government was your calling?

During my previous career in broadcasting, I saw that the county commission was where decisions were made and things happened. I realized I needed to get a seat at the table.

What's your proudest achievement in Athens County?

I helped create the County Employee Benefits Consortium of Ohio, which is now 28 years old. We save counties millions of dollars on health-care. I served on the board for its existence all the way to last year, and served as president of it for about five years.

What did you learn from NACo that you brought home to Athens County?

How to build relationships and work across lines and make sure to find people that I can talk to when I have problems. That's one of the biggest things that I found as I built a lot of lasting friendships and I was able to bounce ideas, issues problems off other people in a very safe place.

How did you change as a county leader over your tenure?

I'm a lot more patient now than I was when I first took office. I learned that change in government and in counties is like turning an ocean liner, it's long and slow. You have to learn how to work through the system. To get things changed and improve them. You can't just commit and do it overnight.

Why are you optimistic about the future of county government?

County government is where the rubber meets the road and people are given their services. It's closest to the people, and it always has been. That's the thing that county government does best, is providing the primary functions that people need.

What advice do you have for your successors?

Make sure you have an open mind. Learn how to build relationships. Learn how to compromise. And remember that you're here to serve the people.



Athens County, Ohio Commissioner Lenny Eliason and Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Toni Carter prepare for the Healthy Counties Innovation Council meeting during the 2019 Annual Conference in Davidson County, Tenn. Photo by Jessica Yurinko



CN SPOTLIGHT

Cook County Board President **Toni Preckwinkle** (center) celebrates solar energy expansion with a ribbon-cutting, highlighted by a 1.5 MW installation at the Skokie Courthouse, completed in April 2026.

Photo courtesy of Cook County, Ill.

Build healthier counties with NACo

NACo's Live Healthy Discount program

delivers health savings to county residents at NO COST to the county.

Live Healthy has saved residents **more than \$720 million** on their prescriptions.



Prescriptions

Up to 80% savings on generics and up to 40% on name brand medications at more than 65,000 pharmacies across the nation



MinuteClinic® Savings

Save 15% at the medical walk-in clinic located in select CVS Pharmacies® using the Live Healthy Prescription Discount Card. Counties can earn up to \$2,000 per month—\$1 for every Live Healthy prescription claim submitted.

Enroll now at NACorx.org

*The Live Healthy program is not insurance. Prescription savings may vary by drug and pharmacy; discounts are only available at participating pharmacies. Health and dental discounts are subject to coverage and are available in every state except Washington. MinuteClinic discounts are available in 33 states and the District of Columbia

Counties seek cooperating agency role in permitting process

From SPEED ACT page 1

said Yavapai County Supervisor Nikki Check. “The U.S. Forest Service identified this — they’d love to see that roadside parking go away and shift to a more appropriate area for recreation. And the county is willing to go in and do what we can, if it’s adjacent to a road that we maintain.”

But federal involvement means federal permitting, and that can transform even minor projects into major undertakings.

“There’s 100% agreement on what needs to happen,” Check said about the project, but “instead of applying for a grant to do the work ... we are applying for a ‘scoping grant’” to fund an environmental review. “That’s money that could be going to something that is actual and tangible.”

That issue extends to other projects that would benefit Yavapai County. When federal permits are involved, she adds, it takes up time and money, forcing difficult trade-offs.

“Dollars are being spent now on scoping instead of being spent on infrastructure,” she said.

The challenges, however, extend beyond just roads and public lands. Any time a project is supported by federal funding or crosses federal lands, counties must comply with federal permitting requirements, affecting everything from housing to telecommunications infrastructure to roads and bridges.

Some Yavapai County homeowners want to donate land to the county for a park.



The Community Development Block Grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, could help make that happen, but accepting federal funding would trigger an environmental review, and Check says that adds time and uncertainty.

Across the country, county leaders are dealing with the same challenges as Check and Yavapai County. Slow, complex permitting regulations tie up critical projects, driving up costs for taxpayers and delaying improvements that would benefit constituents.

Looping in county leaders from the beginning is one reform that Check says would lead to better outcomes for all. For Yavapai County and others across the United States, the need for county input is particularly acute. The environmental review process allows

county leaders to provide the county perspective for federal land-use planning, and, as stewards of natural resources, counties support the intent of environmental protection statutes.

As cooperating agencies, counties would have a seat at the table from the very beginning and could provide valuable input on how projects would impact their communities.

This would add an important perspective to federal permitting decisions.

“It’s that happy middle, where you know enough details about what’s happening and the potential problems and impacts and scope” of projects, Check said.

County leaders are not the only elected officials with permitting reforms on their minds. The issue has been a major topic for the 119th Congress, and NACo is advocating for chang-

es that would streamline federal permitting and permanently bring counties into the decision-making process.

Most federal permitting laws have not been meaningfully updated in decades, and permitting reviews can add years to even simple projects.

Congress is considering legislation that would reform the permitting process. The bipartisan SPEED Act (H.R. 4776), led by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) and Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine), passed the House of Representatives with NACo’s endorsement.

The bill would make common-sense reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the most widely invoked federal permitting law, and would codify the county role as a cooperating agency.

The Senate is engaged in permitting legislation negotiations and is expected to pro-

pose a comprehensive permitting package.

“As federal permitting reform package negotiations in the Senate progress forward, county leaders should reach out to their Senators to tell how permitting reform will allow them to better deliver infrastructure projects for county residents,” said Charlotte Mitchell Duyshart, NACo associate legislative director for Environment, Energy and Land Use.

Congress doesn’t have to look far to see why permitting reform is necessary. In January, a major Washington, D.C.-area sewer line failed, dumping millions of gallons of wastewater.

Reporting from local news outlets revealed that DC Water, the county-owned utility that owned the sewer line, had been trying to repair the pipe for eight years but were delayed by permitting reviews since the pipe crossed federal public lands.

Permitting reform would help deliver projects across the country. As Congress considers comprehensive permitting reform legislation, NACo urges county leaders to reach out to their representatives and share their role experiences in federal permitting.

Check knows exactly how important that role is.

“Counties are absolutely the best partner to make projects more productive ...more effective and more efficient,” she said. **CN**

Nober is a legislative assistant in NACo’s Government Affairs department.



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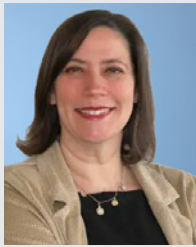
jobs.naco.org



ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

• **Claire Gordon** has joined NACo as managing director of integrated media and content. She previously spent nine years at the Urban Land Institute, most recently as vice president of Content Marketing Strategy. She earned a master's degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary.



Gordon

• **Eisha Mishra** has joined NACo as director of Digital and Social Media. She previously served as chief strategist for Publicity and as digital engagement director at the U.S. Department of Labor. She earned a bachelor's degree in public relations, advertising and applied communication from Penn State University.

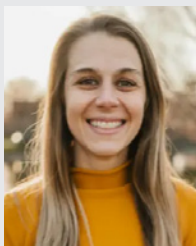


Mishra

• Executive Director **Matt Chase** has joined Partnership on AI's Labor and Economy Steering Commit-



Hart



Butz

tee, where he will help develop recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers to increase the likelihood of positive economic outcomes through deployment of artificial intelligence.

• **Owen Hart** is now a senior rural development fellow. He previously served as an associate legislative director.

• National Center for Public Lands Counties Director **Gregory Nelson** spoke on wildfire recovery at the "After the Flames" conference in Kittitas County, Wash.

• Associate Program Director **Shelby Butz** participated in the Midwestern Governors Association MID-GRID Quarterly Symposium in Marion County, Ind.

• Digital Editor **Charlie Ban** attended the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma Conference in Cleveland County.

GET TO KNOW...

East Carroll Parish, Louisiana

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

East Carroll Parish, La., established in 1877, is named for Charles Carroll, the last living signer of the Declaration of Independence. The northeastern-most parish in Louisiana, East Carroll borders Arkansas and the Mississippi River. Lake Providence, the parish seat, sits on a seven-mile lake of the same name, which has the largest Louisiana inland port and is one of the fastest growing in the United States based on tonnage.

During the Civil War, Union troops attempted to dig a canal connecting the

Mississippi River to Lake Providence as part of the Vicksburg campaign to overtake the last Confederate-controlled section of the Mississippi.

East Carroll Parish is situated in the Louisiana Delta Region, which creates the alluvial soil that helps grow its cotton, soybeans and corn. Nearly 75% of the parish land is devoted to agriculture. Lake Providence is home to the Louisiana State Cotton Museum, which features life-sized dioramas, farming equipment and a recreation of a juke joint.

Bayou Macon Wildlife Management Area, which sprawls across more than 45,000 acres throughout East Carroll and the neighboring Madison Parish, is a prime spot for hunting, fishing and birdwatching. The bayou and its surrounding land



were once used for agricultural purposes, but restoration efforts have returned much of the area to its natural conditions.

In 1907, President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt hunted black bears in East Carroll Parish, prompting the area to be renamed from "O'Hara's Switch" to "Roosevelt" in honor of the president's visit. Roosevelt later created the National Wildlife Refuge System, which manages 23 refuges across 29 of Louisiana's parishes, protecting more than 550,000 acres of critical habitats, including coastal marshes and cypress swamps. Specialized habitats help restore native wildlife, including the Louisiana black bear.



Clifford Berryman's cartoons of Roosevelt led to the creation of the teddy bear

Get to Know features new NACo member counties, parishes and boroughs.

Counties will be watching to see if final farm bill delivers tools, flexibility, partnership

From LEGISLATION page 4

development programs, modernize key broadband initiatives, enhance agricultural conservation efforts, improve rural workforce development programs and expand public lands management tools and authorities that counties often rely on to address wildfire risk and treat landscapes.

At the same time, the bill raises several concerns from a county perspective. While it expands eligibility and program access in some areas, it does

not provide corresponding new funding for rural development programs, which could worsen existing oversubscription and make it more difficult for counties to compete for limited federal resources. The bill also includes language preempting state and county authority over pesticides, raising concerns about local flexibility and the ability of county governments to respond to community-specific land use, public health and environmental considerations.

With committee approval secured, House leadership is



now working to identify a window for consideration of the bill on the House floor. The timeline for Senate Agriculture Committee action on its own version of the 2026 farm

bill remains unclear.

Lawmakers still face a long road before a final farm bill can become law. Major obstacles remain, including narrow margins in both chambers, ongoing disagreement over provisions already addressed in H.R.1, political pressures tied to the 2026 midterm cycle and the approaching Sept. 30 expiration of the 2018 farm bill extension.

As Congress works toward full farm bill reauthorization, county leaders will be watching closely to see whether the final package delivers the tools,

flexibility and federal partnership needed to meet the realities facing communities on the ground. NACo will continue engaging with lawmakers and the administration to ensure county priorities remain part of the conversation as the 2026 farm bill takes shape. **CN**

Hart is a senior rural development fellow in NACo's County Practices and Innovations department and was previously a legislative director in NACo's Government Affairs department.

BRIGHT IDEAS | FULTON COUNTY, IND.

After Adding a Mobile Assessor's Office, Indiana County Sees Tax Appeals Plummet

PROBLEM: Homeowners unable to visit the main office resorted to appealing their property valuations.

SOLUTION: After a mobile office was introduced, the county saw tax appeals cut in half.

by **Meredith Moran**
staff writer

Amid shifting property tax policy and high rates of foreclosure in Indiana, the Fulton County Assessor's Office established a mobile office, which provides education on property valuations, property tax exemptions and the tax billing breakdown. Since its launch, the number of tax appeals filed in the county are down by half, according to Fulton County Assessor Kasey Lee.

Fulton County is known for its lakes, where many residents have second homes, noted Lee. That, in addition to many residents working outside of the county, led to a gap where large swaths of the population couldn't come into the office during work hours to learn more about the process and ask questions, resulting in higher rates of tax appeals.

"We're an ag county, so we're very rural, we don't have a lot of industry," Lee said. "We have plenty of people that leave [the county] to go to work, so the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. [Assessor's Office hours], I was finding was just not a good fit, so my office decided to take it upon ourselves to offer them something a little unique."

The mobile office offers after-hours and weekend support in five locations across the county. Lee also hosts a "County Hall" to provide education on the entire cycle of tax valuation to payment and any recent changes to the process. Most questions are about market factors, according to Lee.

"I break down the whys,



the what's and the where's of everything from the tax valuation to the tax rate changes," Lee said. "Indiana is currently undergoing a massive property tax rehabilitation, where they're eventually going to try to do away with our property taxes, so the changing landscape of deductions and credits and cost table changes — we're covering it all."

For the 2025 assessment year, Indiana increased the residential cost per square foot significantly. Lee said her home went up \$90,000, while others, particularly the lakefront properties, were raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"And we didn't even reassess them, that was just those changes [at the state level]," Lee said. "So last year, we had such an insane influx of people asking questions."

Creating the mobile office allowed the Assessor's Office to meet demand, providing more homeowners with one-on-one support, Lee said.

"We sit and individually break down everything that's on their property," Lee said. "We look at the 'before,' we look at the 'current,' we see what changes happen. We dive in. They've gotten to the point they bring photos [of their home], so we can see interior pictures."

Bill Hewitt, president of a lake association in Fulton County, said the mobile of-

fice has "absolutely" made the property tax process easier and he's seen the benefit firsthand in his community.

Before the mobile office, property taxes were "real confusing," Hewitt said. "Third-party vendors assessed them too much in most cases, because they didn't understand the situation of the home — what it was made out of, when it was added to, that sort of thing — so, Kasey has helped a lot of people around here ... get their taxes straightened around."

Lee said increasing community education has helped ease taxpayers' frustration with the process.

"It's a huge ball of wax that we've taken on, but we love it," Lee said. "We love being able to educate them. They come in hot and they're very upset, but when people leave, they might not like it, but they don't feel like they've been singled out, they're understanding the process better."

"So, even as things progressively get higher, they're not as angry. They want to know what changed, but they come at it with a more level head than the aggressive nature that we've seen in the past."

The Assessor's Office hasn't hired additional staff for the extended hours, but established a wider scheduling structure, so a staff member might work four hours in the

evening instead of four hours in the morning, Lee said.

"If there's more people that go past those times, then I stay until they're done," Lee said. "So, nobody gets turned away."

In February, Indiana reported the highest foreclosure filing rate in the country.

"We're at the stage where almost everything that is residential, commercial or ag has gone up almost 40% in the last two years," Lee said. "... So, we're really trying to work hard to keep these people in their homes."

"Even though we have to follow the state guidelines, we try to really look and dive into everything, and as long as we



LEE

stay equal with all the situations, we try to make concessions for our constituents here to help them keep their home and keep a decent tax bill as best we can."


New Indiana legislation is set to provide significant property tax relief by expanding the homestead deduction, intro-

ducing a 10% homestead tax credit (capped at \$300) and phasing in new deductions for rental properties.

The Assessor's Office offers the ability to file for any exemptions a homeowner qualifies for, even though it doesn't traditionally fall under its purview, and automatically starts the paperwork process to file a homestead when someone builds a new home, Lee noted.

"We found that when people build a home, they don't remember that they have to file their homestead and then they have a horribly shocking tax bill, so we start that process for them," Lee said. "... We're trying to be as open and transparent and helpful as we possibly can when we do these mobile offices."

Prior to the creation of the mobile office, tax appeals in Fulton County surpassed 100 a year, with 20 or more going to the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals for resolution. In 2024, zero appeals went to the board. The appeal process can be "very long and drawn out," so cutting that down is beneficial for everyone, Lee noted. Fulton County is the only Assessor's Office in the state to hold Saturday and evening hours for the public.

"We progressively are at a stage where our board is only hearing appeals that do not actually have to do with the rise in valuation, it typically just has to do with an actual status change that we ourselves can't make," Lee said. "That's huge, because my fellow counties around us have 60-plus appeals going to boards, so the education — the knowledge of how things work and how we evaluate things — is really paying off in the end." 

Fulton County earned the 2025 "Best in Category" award for Civic Education and Public Information for its mobile assessor's office initiative.

WORD SEARCH

PARK COUNTY, WYO.

Created by Mary Ann Barton

H N X R J M W O Y Y H R G H O S T P B E
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 E J K I H B P U Y L H Z J D U D B P F T
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CODY: The county seat, Cody, is named after Col. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody.

FIRST: The nation's first national forest, Shoshone National Forest, was established in 1891 and is in the county.

GEOGRAPHY: The county measures about 6,967 square miles.

GHOST: The county includes a "ghost town" called Kirwin that was abandoned after an avalanche and poor returns on mining.

HISTORY: The county was created in 1909 out of Big Horn County.

INDUSTRIES: The main industries in the county are tourism, service industries, retail trade and construction.

NEWSPAPER: The *Cody Enterprise* was founded by "Buffalo Bill" Cody and newspaperman John Peake in 1899. It continues to publish twice weekly.

PEAK: The highest peak in the county is Frances Peak, at 13,158 feet

elevation.

POPULATION: The county population is about 30,000 residents.

PUBLIC: Nearly 83% of the county is publicly owned (national parks, forest service, Bureau of Land Management).

RANCH: At nearly 100,000 acres and in business for nearly 150 years in the county, Pitchfork Ranch is on the market for more than \$50 million.

RESTAURANT: Buffalo Bill's Irma Hotel Restaurant was established in 1902 and still welcomes guests today; signature dishes include prime rib and bread pudding with whiskey sauce.

RODEO: The Cody Stampede Rodeo is a major historic local event.

YELLOWSTONE: The county includes more than 53% of Yellowstone National Park. The county gets its name from the park.

WYOMING: The county is located in the northwestern section of Wyoming.

CN SPOTLIGHT

Frederick County, Md. Executive Jessica Fitzwater (left) accepts a ceremonial \$3 million check in federal funding for a new youth center from Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) (center).

Photo courtesy of Frederick County, Md.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

GRAHAM KNAUS

NACo Board Member
National Council of County Association Executives

Number of years active in NACo: 11

Years in public service: 27

My first NACo event was: 2015 Annual Conference in Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Occupation: CEO, California State Association of Counties

Education: Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science/Public Policy from UC San Diego, Master of Public Administration from the University of Southern California

The hardest thing I've ever done: Work with struggling middle schoolers in East Oakland for two summers (and I loved it).

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Robin Williams, Abraham Lincoln, Louis Armstrong.



KNAUS

I'm most proud of: My three beautiful and amazing daughters.

Every morning I read: *The Hill*

My favorite meal is: Enchiladas.

My pet peeve is: A mess. I really like things lined up — on a desk, a counter, wherever.

My motto is: Give each other more grace AND don't be a jerk.

The last book I read was: "How to Win an Information War" by Peter Pomerantsev

My favorite movie is: "The Candidate" (1972, starring Robert Redford)

My favorite music is: I have a very diverse play list, so I will say listening to acoustic guitar.

My favorite U.S. president is: Abraham Lincoln

My county is a NACo member because: California is a 100% state!!!

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have 28 tattoos. Actually, that's not true, but I did live on a commune when I was 4 years old.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Scuba dive!

My favorite way to relax is: A morning bike ride followed by a backyard baseball game and a nap with my dog.

A dream I have is to: Travel through Europe on a road bike.

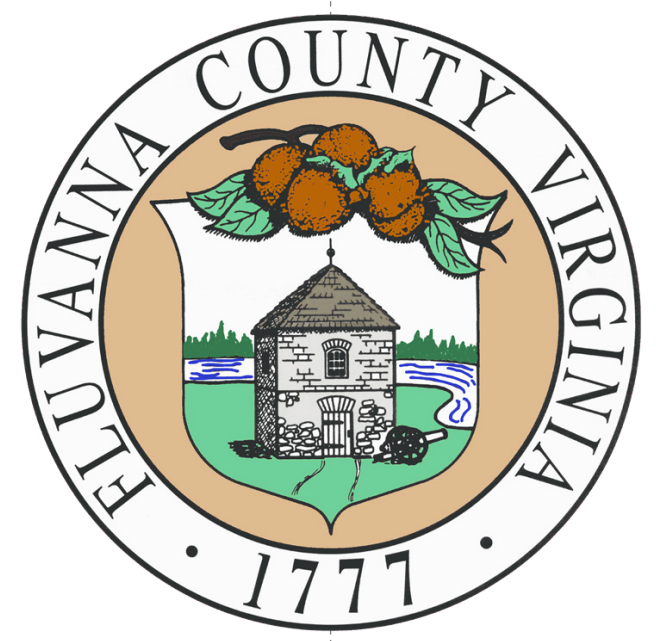


BEHIND THE SEAL

FLUVANNA COUNTY, VA.

Fluvanna County, Virginia's seal incorporates the Revolutionary War arsenal at Point of Fork, at the confluence of the James and Rivanna rivers. Built in 1781, it served as a training ground for American troops and as an encampment for federal troops during the Civil War.

The persimmon trees depicted on the seal grow throughout the county.



The seal includes "1777" to commemorate the year in which Fluvanna County was formed from Albemarle County.

CALIFORNIA

• The **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Board of Supervisors is making moves to strengthen oversight and enforcement against **fraud in the home health and hospice industry.**

The effort comes amid a rise in fraudulent practices by some providers, including billing for care not delivered and enrolling patients using stolen identities — putting patients at risk and undermining the integrity of the healthcare system, the county noted.

“Fraud in home health and hospice care is not just a financial crime — it is a direct threat to the health and safety of some of our most vulnerable residents,” said Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath. “Stronger coordination and accountability across every level of government is essential to protect people and restore trust in these critical services.”

• The **MARIN COUNTY** Board of Supervisors is considering awarding more than \$800,000 to fund **affordable housing.** This would include money from Measure W, which was passed by voters



CALIFORNIA

• The **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY** Museum is featuring an exhibition on “**Chinese Pioneers: Power and Politics in Exclusion Era Photographs.**” This exhibit explores the social, political and judicial disenfranchisement of Chinese Californians — as well as moments of Chinese agency and resilience — in the decades before and after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The exhibit examines how photography played a potent role in both Chinese people’s interactions with the dominant culture and in the government’s fledgling systems of registration, identification and surveillance.

in west Marin County in 2018. The measure established a 4% tax on short-term rentals to fund affordable housing in

coastal areas. A nonprofit has applied for the money to repair a housing development.

• **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** has launched a new interactive dashboard that gives residents a real-time look at the region’s **affordable housing inventory.** The tool shows 127 housing developments with 9,516 affordable units, including 1,051 under construction and 1,625 in the pipeline. It also includes 1,276 designated as permanent supportive housing.

The dashboard offers users a clearer picture of how affordable housing is growing across the region, including for those with income restrictions, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and those with disabilities.

IDAHO

A tragic crash involving a family of four last month is prompting a push for a new **dive team** in **BOISE COUNTY,** KTVB-TV reported. The fatal March 7 crash sent a family into a reservoir, where a father and his child did

FLORIDA

The recipient of the 2026 David J. Krings County Administrator of the Year Award is **Michele Lieberman, ICMA-CM, CPM,** in recognition of her exemplary service and enduring contributions to county government and the county management profession.

With more than two decades of local government experience, Michele currently serves as county manager of **ALACHUA COUNTY,** having previously served as Alachua County attorney. Nominated by peers and colleagues, she was evaluated through a rigorous, peerdriven review process and chosen for consistently embodying the values that defined the award’s namesake, David J. Krings — integrity, humility, professionalism, and service above self.



Lieberman

not survive. In response, the community is rallying to establish a dedicated Public Safety Dive Team for Boise County Search and Rescue (BCSAR).

Officials say that during underwater emergencies, BCSAR, the Boise County Sheriff’s Office and local fire and EMS teams often must wait for dive teams from

neighboring counties — a delay that can mean the difference between rescue and recovery. Braden Campbell, a BCSAR member leading the initiative and a first responder at the crash, said such incidents are especially difficult when families and children are involved, noting that first



COLORADO

We often see **makeshift memorials** created along local roads, streets and highways where loved ones died in vehicle crashes, and many friends and relatives take pride and find comfort in those creations, KRDO-TV reported.

However, **EL PASO COUNTY** officials say that the collection of crosses, photos, flowers, stuffed animals and other items, pose a concern because there is no policy to manage them, maintain them and keep them consistent.

The county is about one month into a new policy approved by commissioners to address that concern — a policy that many local governments already have. Joshua Palmer, the county’s chief engineer, said that the policy helps the county remain accredited by the American Public Works Association.

The new policy requires a citizen to apply; if it’s approved by the county’s chief engineer, the applicant must pay a \$100 fee and receive a blue, personal sign for the lost loved one that will remain at an approved location for five years.

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KENTUCKY

Morehead-**ROWAN COUNTY** County E9-1-1 is launching a new “**Adopt a Dispatcher**” program to recognize the crucial work of emergency dispatchers, according to WTVQ-DT.

The program gives the community a chance to learn who is on the line and show appreciation for the first line of communication during an emergency. Community members can participate by writing a thank-you note, putting together a care package, or making any gesture big or small.

responders never want to receive those calls.

MARYLAND

● **BALTIMORE COUNTY** leaders are working to strengthen **animal welfare laws** with the introduction of three proposed bills, WJZ-TV reported. The legislative package, co-sponsored by Councilmen Julian Jones, David Marks and Izzy Patoka, aims to modernize county code, close legal gaps and better protect the health and welfare of animals, officials said.

County Executive Kathy Klausmeier said cruelty and neglect too often go unnoticed and stressed the need to ensure pets are in safe, caring homes while supporting responsible owners. Jones described the effort as a “com-

plete overhaul” that addresses loopholes and updates standards that have not been revised in several years.

● **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** was set to host a free legal clinic recently for residents who are in the country lawfully and who may be eligible to apply for **U.S. citizenship**. Montgomery County Council President Natali Fani-González, a naturalized citizen herself, described her experience.

“I was very nervous throughout the whole process,” Fani-González said. “Not just during the time of presenting the application, but through the interview, doing the test,” she said.

NEW JERSEY

The **BURLINGTON COUNTY** commissioners have



NEW YORK

Summer is on its way and with it, stinky compost bins — although a new program is poised to alleviate the stench and get more people to recycle their food scraps, the *Ithaca Voice* reported.

Curbside composting diverts organic waste such as food scraps and yard trimmings from landfills, significantly reducing harmful methane emissions and lowering municipal waste management costs.

The **TOMPKINS COUNTY** Department of Recycling & Materials Management launched the **Fork ‘em Over Curbside composting** pilot April 1. The pilot expands the county’s already robust food scraps recycling program by providing free curbside pickups of food scraps within the city of Ithaca.



OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY is launching **free rural shopping shuttles** to help residents reach nearby communities for shopping and other needs.

The new shuttles are in part thanks to a partnership with Ride Connection, which will offer two communities free rides twice a month. The service expands on the existing free dial-a-ride service, providing weekday connections to rural residents.

amended the county’s **farmland preservation** rules so that towns will no longer have to contribute a cost share for most preservation deals.

The change was recently approved by the commissioners and will spare most municipalities the expense of contributing local funds to farmland preservation deals without impacting the county’s aggressive preservation

goals. Under the previous rules, most municipalities were required to contribute between 5% to 20% of the cost to preserve a farm. This policy was put in place decades ago when the county had just begun collecting its dedicated tax for farmland and open space preservation and park development, and resources were limited. The county’s new

policy eliminates this requirement for local cost share under most circumstances.

TEXAS

LUBBOCK COUNTY Judge Curtis Parrish is overseeing double the number of **mental health cases** compared to 2023, a dramatic increase he attributes largely to THC products, KCBT-TV reported. County records show 180 mental health applications were filed in 2023 and skyrocketed to 353 in 2025.

“It is becoming almost a daily thing. We’re having two and three of these a day,” Parrish said. Judge Parrish says while not all cases stem from THC, he believes it is playing a big part in the spike.

A Yale School of Medicine study notes that THC is strongly correlated with an increased risk of developing mental health issues. Key associations include a higher risk of schizophrenia and psychosis, as well as worsened anxiety and depression.

Send your news and photos to Editor Mary Ann Barton: mbarton@naco.org.



WASHINGTON

The **SPOKANE COUNTY** Board of County Commissioners welcomed dozens of local elected officials, law enforcement leaders and community partners recently to celebrate the groundbreaking of the new Spokane County **P.A.T.H. (Prevention, Assessment, Treatment, and Healing) Crisis Relief and Sobering Center**. This expansion represents a significant step forward in Spokane County’s ongoing efforts to address behavioral health and substance use needs across the region.

County Commissioner and Board Chair Mary Brooks thanked the many elected officials who worked to provide funding for the \$21 million project. “Together, this investment reflects a shared commitment to building a more responsive, coordinated, and compassionate behavioral health system — one that meets the needs of today while preparing for the future,” Brooks said.

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