CN CountyNews



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VETERANS GET HOUSING HELP FROM CALIFORNIA COUNTY. PG. 14

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES VOL. 58, NO. 17 NOVEMBER 9, 2026

Midterms advance county officials, Florida property tax cut

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

The midterm elections are sending more than two dozen current or former county officials to higher office, but they also advanced a threat to Florida county funding.

The winning Democratic ticket in Wisconsin will be the eighth in U.S. history to include two county veterans. Gov.-elect David Crowley has served as Milwaukee County executive since 2020, and his running mate, Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski, was the inaugural director of strategy and performance for Arapahoe County, Colo., from 2012 to 2016.

Most recently, Utah had a two-county-veteran administration from 2013 to 2021, when Gov. Gary Herbert (R), a 14-year Utah County commissioner, served with Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox, who spent four years as a Sanpete County commissioner.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) will bring her full-time workplace back to the Twin Cities as governor, 20 years after she finished an eight-year stint as Hennepin County attorney.

In addition to Godlewski, three other county veterans will become lieutenant governors: Jefferson County, Colo., Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper will serve with Gov.-elect Phil Weiser (D); Crawford County, Iowa, Supervisor Dave Milbauer will serve with Gov.-elect Rob Sand; and former Hamilton County, Ohio, Commissioner David Pepper will serve with Gov.-elect Amy Acton.

One former county official and two former county staffers won U.S. Senate seats. Chris Pappas (D) served four years as Hillsborough County, N.H., treasurer. Michigan Democrat Abdul El-Sayed was director of the Wayne County Department of Health, Human and Veterans Services from mid-2023 to mid-2025. Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton (D) served as executive director of the Cook County Justice Advisory Council from 2011 to 2014.

In addition, former DeKalb County, Ga., Commissioner and NACo President Larry Johnson (D) won the 10th District seat in the Georgia Senate.

U.S. House

Ballot counting continues in several U.S. House races, but so far nine first-time members of Congress will come from

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An election worker checks in a voter at a community center. Although counties saw challenges on Nov. 3, Election Day, last week, there were no major issues reported across the country. More than 120 million voters went to the polls for the midterm elections, a significant nationwide increase.

Counties keep elections on track despite machine glitches, flooding and fake texts

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Counties across the country faced obstacles in administering the midterm elections, including voting machine errors, flooding and false text messages sent to voters.

A new feature intended to help Broward County, Fla., poll workers issue the correct ballot in precincts split by redistricting incorrectly flagged some ballots as wrong. The resulting delay of roughly 20 minutes led some voters to leave the polls. The problem was fixed quickly and didn't affect any votes cast, according to Joe Scott, Broward County supervisor of elections.

"This feature was put in place to prevent voters from getting the wrong ballot," Scott said. "So, the initial reports that came out was that everybody had the wrong ballot, which was terrifying. And of course that wasn't the case, it was just that the feature wasn't

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Counties play growing role in fight to lower utility costs for residents

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

As new demands meet a fluctuating supply, energy costs have become increasingly difficult for households, businesses and governments to predict and budget for.

County governments rarely have a direct role in the energy market. That's usually left to state regulators and utility boards. But a new NACo report, "Electricity Cost Trends and Projected Growth." on electricity cost trends finds that counties can often be most effective as advocates, helping lower residents' utility costs by leveraging state programs, local partnerships and proactive outreach.

Kelly Flenniken, recently named president of the Colorado Forum, spent three years as executive director of Colorado Counties, Inc., af-

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County officials can play a role in relationship between utilities and communities

From ENERGY page 1

ter a career with Xcel Energy. She drew on her experience in both energy and local government advocacy to offer insight into the relationship between counties and utilities. County News asked Flenniken how counties can best represent their residents' interests with utilities and state regulators.



How can counties facilitate relationships between communities and utilities?

Not directly from a rate cost perspective, but I've definitely seen communities partner with utilities to mitigate impacts from production and transmission infrastructure. It means talking about community benefits and helping the utility to secure a spot as a good corporate partner and a good neighbor.

What are some hallmarks of good collaboration that you've seen?

It boils down to being honest about impact. From the utility perspective, it's easy for them to say the community impact is not really that big of a deal, but the local government has to be honest about what the impact is and what could help offset that impact. And that looks different in different communities. I've seen communities where that impact is offset by the purchase of a school bus, or park benches or an ongoing sponsorship of the county fair.

What are some of those impacts, those negative externalities?

Some of the biggest challenges are interruptions to the viewshed and land use. It's hard to hide wind turbines or large solar fields, especially on the great plains like in eastern Colorado. I think the concern there … at least what's happening in Colorado, [is] where there is sort of ongoing tension between development and agriculture.

And I think you have a lot of farming communities that maybe aren't farming to the level that they did before, and they really worry that they will never get there if that land is not preserved.

And not every type of agrivoltaic (collocated energy and agriculture) project makes sense everywhere.

There's tension in come rural communities about energy generation taking away from farmland only to be used in urban areas. Has anybody cracked the code on how to how to get along in that situation, or is that pretty much like dogs and cats fighting forever?

I think people would like to believe that it's dogs and cats forever, but I think what's really important is that when you do come to the table with a willingness to actually collaborate, I do think that that can be resolved.

When I worked for a utility, and we needed to permit just an unbelievable amount of transmission infrastructure, we recognized how challenging that was and how much words really mattered. In those communities, it wasn't very effective to tell them that they were part of the clean energy transition or the green economy — that didn't move any hearts or minds. But when we reframed that to talk about how, with the addition of wind turbines, you can have a second harvest. This may actually be the way that you can keep your family farm, and we can sort of augment on your down seasons. That changed the conversation quite a bit.

We started to equate the idea of farming to utility production, and it was like in some ways, you're now not farming potatoes. You're

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AVERAGE	NUMBERS
Average no.:	8 per polling site
Average age:	61-64
Average pay:	$23.60 per hour
Average day:	15 hours on Election Day
Female to male ratio:	2 to 1

Sources: Pew Research Center; Vet the Vote; League of Women Voters

Five things every county official should know about electricity costs

1. Electricity bills have three distinct cost categories, and each is rising for different reasons: The generation, transmission and distribution of electricity each have their own cost drivers

2. Not all customers pay the same way: Utilities calculate these cost categories differently based on rate class (residential, commercial, industrial), the tariff and fees structures

3. Electricity costs differ by market structure: Rural co-ops, municipal, investor-owned and transmission-only providers charge different rates based on demand, regulations, load factor, capacity reserve and the capacity energy market.

4. Electricity costs are recovered differently by utility type: Beyond national price pressures, regional electricity costs are dictated by a jurisdiction's local market structure and size, which determine how costs are borne by the ratepayer

5. Electricity costs are influenced by multiple drivers and pressures: The U.S. electric grid is aging, and the costs of materials, labor, financing, long-term inflation, fuel delivery and upgrades are rising. These factors combined with global demand all play a role in shaping retail electricity prices and ratepayer's bills

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES NACo

CEO INSIGHTS | BY MATTHEW D. CHASE

Innovate Solutions Together: Turning Ideas into Results



Every county faces the same basic challenge: how to turn ideas into results. This premise drives one of NACo's five performance themes, Innovate Solutions Together. We are passionate about helping county leaders turn realities on the ground into practical research, trend insights and peer networks so members can better identify solutions that work locally.

Two of NACo's county innovation programs illustrate how this concept works in practice.

Energy Academy

Counties are on the front lines of America's energy transition, fielding proposals for solar, wind, battery storage and data centers that are reshaping local land use for generations. NACo's Energy Academy, hosted with the National Association of Development Organizations, gives county leaders the tools to manage that change within the scope of their own authorities and terms.

The results are powerful. Morrow County, Ore. is applying what it learned on zoning and community benefit design for a comprehensive approach centered on co-locating energy generation, agrivoltaics and clear decommissioning requirements.

Why? The county is dealing with development proposals covering tens of thousands of acres for solar, more than 1,000 acres for data centers and 50 miles of new transmission infrastructure.

Lyon County, Nev. is its first-ever data center ordinance to preserve the county's rural character. The county is working to set standards for future projects that would prohibit water-consuming cooling systems, encourage lower impact to the energy grid, implement strict noise and lighting rules, and require comprehensive impact analyses.

Marathon County, Wis., chaired by NACo Central Region Representative Kurt Gibbs, has utilized multiple community engagement channels to help inform energy ordinances and specific projects. The county approved an updated BESS ordinance to increase public safety and developed an energy ordinance that requires developers to share engineering plans with the county for review and comments during the state review process.

These efforts are unfolding in real time, as private industry moves at a scale and speed that is near impossible for policymakers at every level of government to keep pace. This has fueled intense public debate, with real political consequences, in county courthouses across America.

Rural Leaders for Economic Mobility

Over an 18-month period, NACo's Rural Leaders for Economic Mobility cohort helped county leaders design local strategies that connect residents to economic opportunity. The results reach into every corner of rural America.

In Jim Wells County, Texas, a $50,000 NACo Research Foundation grant from the Gates Foundation, along with a $100,000 county match, helped secure a $500,000 USDA grant for a new small business and workforce development center that provides entrepreneurship training and shared office space for start-ups.

Audrain County, Mo. delivered regional workforce stability and support services to more than 165 employers with 11,150 workers, helping one employer cut annual turnover from 100 employees to two.

Curry County, N.M. launched Savvy Citizen, a new communications platform now reaching roughly 2,000 residents with real-time county updates and alerts.

Hertford County, N.C. secured a $24 million Community Benefits Agreement tied to an $875 million specialty steel manufacturing project expected to create 625 full-time jobs, alongside a $51 million state-funded inland port with, county-owned barge service.

Holmes County, Miss. — the most distressed county in the state with a 36 percent poverty rate — turned a $50,000 sub-grant into a $1 million state appropriation, advancing infrastructure at a 330-acre county-owned industrial site now positioned for employer tenant recruitment.

San Juan County, Utah engaged eight Navajo Nation Chapter presidents and added a dedicated Tribal Track to its Business Basecamp program.

Venango County, Pa. completed a workforce pilot in robotics, AI and drone technology. Every participant earned at least one STEM credential, with the curriculum built alongside Carnegie Mellon, Slippery Rock and Thaddeus Stevens universities.

And Union County, Ore. surveyed 266 parents of young children to quantify its childcare crisis, then developed architectural plans for a new county-owned childcare facility.

We're curating the full set of Rural Leaders for Economic Mobility outcomes now, so other county leaders and partners can learn from and scale these valuable lessons.

The Throughline

Every one of these counties started in the same place: a local vision, followed by a search for ideas. NACo builds the networks that connect county officials and other experts. Whether it's a zoning ordinance in Oregon, a data center framework in Nevada, an energy working group in Wisconsin or a workforce center in Texas, these counties didn't just learn — they executed.

That's what happens when county leaders Innovate Solutions Together. It's what membership in NACo delivers, county by county, dollar by dollar, decision by decision.

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.

Resources

Check out NACo's Rural Energy Academy webpage for more county examples and resources. Several of these leaders also shared their work at NACo's Energy Symposium in Potter County, Texas. Scan the QR code for more information:

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farming electrons.

I think semantics and words really matter in this conversation.

What should county leaders keep in mind when navigating energy projects?

At least in Colorado, Xcel Energy is one of the top five property taxpayers. And so I think that that's another really important part of the conversation is that counties are so dependent on property tax. That's a double-edged sword for these rural counties where they need the revenue. It's important to remember that infrastructure is more than infrastructure, has it also provides property tax revenue to support government services. In a lot of cases, that's a big payer. And it's a payer that's not going to go anywhere because it's in the ground. Before A-B-C company might go out of business, but the utility is not going to.

Scan the QR code to read "Electricity Cost Trends and Projected Growth."



Former Colorado Counties, Inc. Executive Director Kelly Flenniken acknowledges her introduction, alongside Jerimiah Rieman, director, Wyoming County Commissioners Association, at the 2025 National Council of County Association Executives Washington, D.C. fly-in. Photo by Charlie Ban

Ballot measures included property taxes, data centers and more

From MIDTERMS page 1

county ranks, and two former members will return to the Capitol.

- Cook County, Ill., Commissioner Donna Miller (D) won the state's 2nd District.
- Bucks County, Pa., Commissioner Bob Harvie (D) won the state's 1st District.
- Miami-Dade County, Fla., Commissioner Oliver Gilbert (D) won the state's 24th District.
- Henrico County, Va., Commonwealth's Attorney Shannon Taylor (D) won the state's 1st District.
- Former Salt Lake County, Utah, Mayor Ben McAdams (D), who served one term in Congress, will return in the state's 1st District.
- Los Angeles County, Calif., Supervisor Hilda Solis (D), a former representative and secretary of labor, won the 11th District.
- In Texas, Bexar County Sheriff's Deputy Johnny Garcia (D) won the 35th District, and former Fort Bend County Constable Trever Nehls (R) won the 22nd District.
- Former Sonoma County, Calif., Supervisor Mike McGuire (D) won the 1st District.
- Former Wayne County Prosecuting Attorney Christina Himes (D) won Michigan's 10th District.

Vote counting continues in several races, including:

- Washington's 4th District, where Yakima County Commissioner Amanda McKinney (R) was leading John Duresky (D) with nearly 55% of the vote, with two-thirds of the vote counted.
- Washington's 5th District, where former Spokane County Prosecutor Carmela Conroy (D) was trailing incumbent Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R) with 49.2% of the vote, with 62% reporting.
- Arizona's 5th District, where former Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb (R) was leading Elizabeth Lee (D), with 86% of the vote counted.
- San Francisco County, Calif., where Supervisor Connie Chan (D) was trailing Scott Wiener (D) with 44.54% of the vote, with 57% reporting.



Wisconsin Democratic gubernatorial candidate David Crowley, former Milwaukee County executive and lieutenant governor running mate Sarah Godlewski, former director, Arapahoe County, Colo. Office of Strategy and Performance, embrace at an election-night event Nov. 3 in Milwaukee, Wis. Crowley defeated U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-Wis.) to become the state's first Black governor. Photo by John Moore/ Getty Images

Ballot measures

In Florida, 62% of voters approved Amendment 3, which increases the homestead tax exemption for non-school property taxes, lowers the cap on assessed value increases and requires counties and municipalities to spend property tax revenue on public safety, education, infrastructure, natural resource projects and flood control, local bonds, employee retirement benefits and government operations.

Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) said he will call a special legislative session to implement the amendment.

The Florida Association of Counties warned that the amendment would devastate county revenues without reducing the demand for services. Gulf County, for example, would lose $3.5 million a year from its general fund. Miami-Dade County anticipates a $385 million drop in the first year of implementation, and Leon County projects a $71 million drop.

"Florida voters have decided, and Amendment 3 has passed. Counties respect that decision and will focus on implementing it responsibly," FAC said in a prepared statement. "Our priority remains strong local communities and the critical services residents rely on every day, from public safety to emergency response to infrastructure. Florida's counties will work with the Governor, the Legislature, and the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission to make the transition carefully and to protect the quality of life Floridians expect."

> The Florida Association of Counties warns the amendment would devastate county revenues...

Wyoming voters rejected a similar proposal. Voters in Louisiana, Tennessee and North Carolina also considered measures that would affect property taxes:

- Louisiana voters approved an amendment allowing surviving spouses of veterans to transfer property tax exemptions to a new home.
- Tennessee voters passed an amendment prohibiting the Legislature from establishing a state property tax.
- North Carolina voters narrowly approved an amendment requiring the Legislature to pass laws limiting how much local governments may increase property taxes.

Although voters in many municipalities across the country decided ballot measures on data centers, only one such measure applied countywide: in Morgan County, Ill., where it passed with 88.3% of the vote.

Several states, including Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas and Kansas, voted on ballot measures affecting election administration, including voter ID requirements and language limiting voting to U.S. citizens.

Arizona voters passed Proposition 319, which will prohibit state and local authorities, including counties, from using photo enforcement systems to enforce certain traffic laws.

Lame duck

The 120th Congress begins Jan. 3, 2027, leaving legislators two months to pursue their priorities before leadership changes. Congress faces a Dec. 11 deadline, when the current fiscal year 2027 continuing resolution expires.

The CR extended government funding, as well as authorizations for surface transportation and other federal programs. It also delayed implementation of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) proposed Uniform Guidance rule.

Before the CR and the 119th

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Counties tackle technical errors to administer secure elections

From ELECTION page 1

working properly."

The technical issue is a reminder for election workers to be proactive and test extensively before something has the chance to go wrong, Scott said.

"The feature was a good idea, just something went wrong, and I think we definitely should have done more robust testing … and that's what we will do in the future," Scott said. "So, that will be the new protocol, just like we do with a lot of other things. There're probably some other things that haven't gone wrong yet that we should do more robust testing on, and that's been the conversation internally among the leadership team here."

Flooding in Broward County also forced officials to move one polling place because voters would have been unable to reach it, according to Scott.

"There was one way to get to that building, and you couldn't pass that road, so we needed to move," Scott said. "Our 26-foot truck was able to go in there, get the equipment, get everything and move it to another [location] just a couple precincts away.

"… It would've been a problem if there wasn't enough parking [at the new polling location] or enough space, there'd be crazy lines, so this was a location where we could fully set up the second precinct with all the same equipment, the same number of booths, the same number of our scanners. Everything would be the same, and also parking was ample."



Roughly 124 million people voted in the 2026 midterm elections, according to preliminary data from the University of Florida Election Lab.

Voting machines across Westchester County, N.Y., were unable to accept paper ballots on Election Day. The Westchester County Board of Elections initially said the thickness of the paper ballots caused the issue but later removed that explanation from its statement. Ballots were instead placed in designated orange emergency ballot bags.

After the polls closed on election night, the county's Board of Elections released a joint statement saying the ballots were secure. They were being taken under police supervision from polling locations to the Board of Elections facility, the statement said and would remain under police protection until counting began at 11 a.m. the next morning, Nov. 4.

"All procedures, under the direction and oversight of the Board of Elections Commissioners, will be carried out in an orderly, transparent and efficient manner, consistent with the security requirements established and the standards of election administration that Westchester County voters expect and deserve," the statement reads. "We remain committed to protecting the integrity of the election and ensuring that every lawful vote is counted."

> 'It's kind of like preparing for a party and you don't know how many people are going to show up.'
>
> *Aaron Kelley, Jefferson County, Texas*

In Fulton County, Ga., more than 1,000 early voting ballots were not scanned properly because of technical issues at two advance voting locations. One scanner malfunctioned, reporting a paper jam error when none had occurred. The other shut down when a voter using a wheelchair accidentally rolled over its power cord, and efforts to restart it were unsuccessful.

The County Board voted to rescan the ballots affected by the malfunction and to move the memory card from the scanner that shut down to another scanner to finish processing. If the transfer is unsuccessful, those ballots will also be rescanned.

Some Fulton County voters also reported receiving false text messages telling them to vote at incorrect polling locations. Fulton County said on social media that it did not send the texts and that voters should verify their polling place on the Georgia My Voter Page or by calling the Elections Hub and Operator Center.

Allegations of touchscreen machines switching votes gathered tens of thousands of likes, shares and views on social media leading up to Election Day. Jefferson County, Texas, removed three voting machines after reports of ballot selection issues, tested them and found no errors, according to Aaron Kelley, Jefferson County clerk and elections manager.

"Our emphasis was having the voters double check," Kelley said. "There's a review process in the software, and then in Texas law, they have two opportunities to go back to the check-in table, spoil the ballot and receive a new one."

Despite the usual election difficulties, the county successfully administered the election, Kelley said.

"[We faced] a lot of obstacles," Kelley said. "Anytime you're running something this big, and with the kind of advertising dollars that were going into this, and then voter expectations, it's kind of like preparing for a party, and you don't know how many people are going to show up, or where they're going to show up.

"So, the logistics side of it was the biggest part of it, but we well succeeded." CN

From MIDTERMS page 4

Congress end, in the period known as the "lame duck," NACo will continue to engage with Congress on several priorities, including:

Government funding: NACo urges Congress to pass either a full FY 2027 appropriations bill or another CR to prevent a government shutdown and keep key programs funded in the new year.

OMB rule delay: The proposed OMB Uniform Guidance rule would significantly affect counties' ability to deliver key services using federal funding. Counties and other intergovernmental partners, are urging Congress to further delay implementation.

Surface transportation: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) expired Sept. 30. While Congress extended its authorities, many programs funded through the law's "Division J" have lost funding. NACo is pushing Congress to either pass a multiyear surface transportation reauthorization bill or extend IIJA's authorities and the programs funded through advance appropriations.



Permitting: The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act (BAAJA) would overhaul the nation's permitting laws to speed up infrastructure project timelines while preserving opportunities for local input. NACo is calling on Congress to pass BAAJA before the end of the year.

Secure Rural Schools: The Secure Rural Schools program provides critical funding to counties with significant National Forest System land. The program expired Sept. 30, creating fiscal uncertainty for forest counties. NACo is asking Congress to pass the Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2026 (S. 5608), which would reauthorize the program through FY 2029. CN



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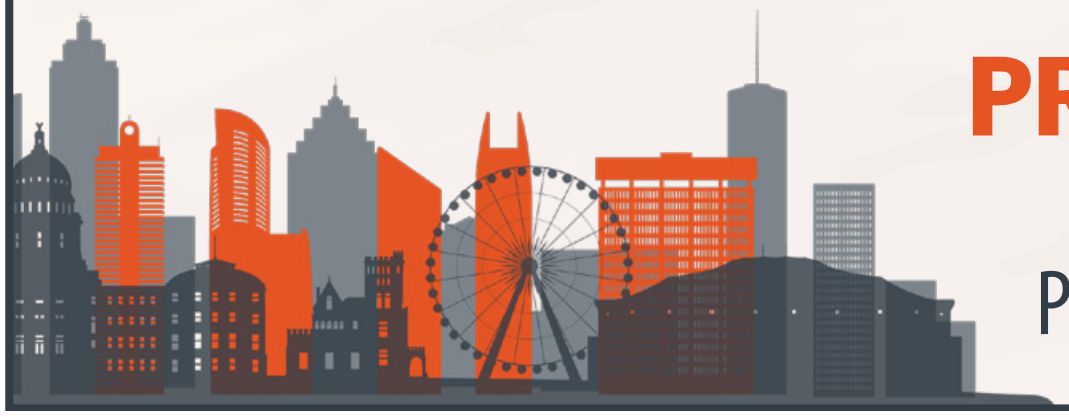
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PREPAREDNESS SUMMIT

PreparednessSummit.org

Counties meet on substance use disorder services

by Hannah Fitzmaurice



A Prevention Links staff member shows Supporting Families Impacted by Substance Use Peer Exchange attendees around the organization's Union County, N.J. offices. Photo courtesy of Union County

Danielle's daughter passed away, leaving her as the primary caregiver of her one-year-old granddaughter. Marcos cycled in and out of jail for years before getting sober, then relapsed after his wife was murdered. Jessica has sustained multiple years of sobriety, though it has not been without its challenges. Last year, she experienced a domestic violence situation and she is undergoing chemotherapy for a cancer diagnosis.

All of them received help from Prevention Links, a nonprofit that has partnered with Union County, N.J. to provide prevention education, parenting programs and peer support for those struggling with substance use. And in Jessica's case, gives them a chance to give back as peer specialists.

Nearly 50 county leaders visited Union County in September for the Supporting Families Impacted by Substance Use Peer Exchange to discuss how counties can promote the wellbeing of children, youth and families affected by substance use disorder.

Prevention Links offered not just services, but a community that understands exactly what they are going through. However, recovery does not happen through one program alone — families need a network of treatment, peer support and other services. These stories underscored a central theme of the peer exchange: substance use disorder (SUD) rarely affects just one person, but often the entire family unit.

Debbie-Ann Anderson, director of Union County's Department of Human Services, saw changes recently in her county.

"There's been a huge shift, and especially during the COVID era, when we had a lot of opioids on the streets disproportionately across the county and communities, that really, there were no real substance use disorders on record until COVID," she said. "We took a larger look at how we really look at prevention, education, and intervention as we moved forward."

Substance use touches nearly every aspect of family life, from parent-child relationships to maternal and infant health and kinship caregiving arrangements. A 2025 analysis estimated that nearly 19 million U.S. children live with a parent or caregiver who meets the criteria for a SUD, and children exposed to parental substance use face higher risks of early substance use and mental health challenges. This reinforces the importance of intervening at the family level, rather than treating substance use as solely an individual concern. Counties are often at the front lines of this issue, which gives them an important role in building coordinated systems of support for the whole family, not just the person directly impacted.

While community-based partnerships are critical to establishing effective local support infrastructure, counties can further strengthen these efforts by leveraging state and federal resources. The peer exchange explored how to draw on state and federal resources to expand and sustain support for families affected by substance use. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) presented their funding opportunities to attendees.

> "We took a larger look at how we really look at prevention, education and intervention."
>
> *– Debbie-Ann Anderson, Union County, N.J.*

SAMHSA funds work across the prevention-to-recovery continuum, including its Services Program for Residential Treatment for Pregnant and Postpartum Women, a companion State Pilot Program for Treatment for Pregnant and Postpartum Women and a range of youth-centered program supporting young people with SUDs and their families.

ACF offers regional partnership grants that connect child welfare systems, SUD treatment providers and CBOs, along with technical assistance through its National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. Together, these programs reinforce a broader lesson from the peer exchange: counties don't have to build this infrastructure alone.

Several takeaways emerged from the two days of discussion:

The value of listening to people with lived experience and the critical role they can play supporting others through recovery

The need to treat substance use as a family issue that considers the needs of both children and caregivers

The fact that trusted CBOs like Prevention Links often already have the expertise and infrastructure counties need to reach impacted residents

The availability of state and federal partners ready to help sustain this work over the long-term

As counties consider how to apply these lessons at home, the next step is to discover where the gaps are and identify the opportunities to strengthen support for families impacted by substance use.

Behind national statistics are real people, like those county leaders heard from at Prevention Links. With one in four U.S. children living with a parent or caregiver who has a SUD, this is an issue nearly every county will encounter, regardless of size or geographic location. Counties should take inventory of the supports they already offer, identify where gaps exist and lean on state and federal partners to help fill them. Recovery is rarely a solitary journey – it is a family and even community process, and counties are well positioned to bring these systems of care together.

Fitzmaurice is a research associate at the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Agency Directors and previously served as a Behavioral Health and Justice intern in NACo's County Practices and Innovations department.

Cybersecurity group retools after funding cut

by Charlie Ban
senior writer



MS-ISAC Senior Vice President Carlos Kizee outlines the organization's membership structure while presenting to NACo's County Technology Advisory Council. Photo by Charlie Ban

Rumors of the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

The nonprofit, known as MS-ISAC, has lost all of its federal funding but has resolved to remain a resource for state and local governments in cyber threat prevention, protection, response and recovery.

In March 2025, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency cut $10 million, about half of MS-ISAC's budget. The rest of its federal funding ended in September 2025, when CISA's cooperative agreement with MS-ISAC's parent organization, the Center for Internet Security, expired. Once free and used by more than 18,500 government entities, MS-ISAC has moved to a membership model to replace the lost funding. Carlos Kizzee, senior vice president of MS-ISAC strategy and plans, told members of NACo's County Technology Advisory Council during the group's October meeting in Washington, D.C., that the shift to memberships has helped the organization tailor its offerings to its members.

"When federal funding ceased, the Center for Internet Security said we had two choices: We can either stop what we're doing completely and restructure, or we can continue," he said. "That would have been about $1 million a month, and the Center for Internet Security agreed to continue providing services. If you were to stop them with the cessation of federal funding, you would be harming a lot of government entities."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has designated MS-ISAC as a key cybersecurity resource for state, local, tribal and territorial governments. When one member government encounters a cyber threat, the organization alerts the rest of its membership.

"We're helping someone today with something that appears to be novel but trending," Kizzee said. "We want to immediately capture that in an alert and push it out across our membership, so everyone is aware."

MS-ISAC offers memberships to single organizations, groups of organizations, state governments and large jurisdictions, as well as statewide memberships that cover every level of government within a state. Sixteen states have those. Dues for single- and multiple-organization memberships are based on operating budgets, and the other options are priced by population. For organizations with annual operating budgets under $25 million, single-organization dues top out at $1,495 a year, and those organizations can request a hardship waiver when they sign up, which provides a free first year of membership.

"The MS-ISAC is not just a service provider, it's not a contractor, it's not a vendor," Kizzee said. "The MS-ISAC is all of our members." As a member-driven organization, he said they listen to their needs and develop services to address gaps in the market — particularly services they either cannot afford or cannot find commercially.

Kizzee said MS-ISAC has grown beyond sharing threat information to providing affordable services, along with support for managing and implementing them.

Members also help decide how MS-ISAC adjusts its offerings.

"Based on feedback we've received from local governments, from cities, towns, counties, we recognize that while states may have their own incident response capabilities, mechanisms, contracts, providers and so on, not every local government does," Kizzee said. "And so local governments tend to have a higher interest in incident response, in self-assessments and in the protective [domain name system] service."

He also said MS-ISAC does not aim to compete with private sector vendors.

"As a nonprofit, we're not here to make a profit or compete with the commercial market," he said. "What the MS-ISAC is for is to cover that gap that may exist between what's commercially available, what I can afford, what I can maintain, what I can manage." CN



One-stop center keeps youth out of court

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

To better support at-risk youth, Calcasieu Parish, La., built its Multi-Agency Resource Center, a "one-stop-shop" model that proactively connects young people with community supports before they're involved with the justice system.

Since opening in 2011, the center has served 22,486 youth, providing 46% of them with immediate services within hours, diverting 88% from formal court processing and keeping 39% from even light touch justice system involvement, according to Anthony Celestine, director of Calcasieu Parish's Office of Juvenile Justice Services.

"We realized that there was a gap in service, and we needed to expedite that front end of our system and increase opportunities to have more meaningful contact with families," Celestine said.

"… We wanted to make sure that we were addressing the needs of the whole child, and we wanted to provide effective services in a timely manner."

The Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) brings together juvenile justice, education and community partners into a single centralized hub to serve at-risk youth between the ages of 6 and 17 in matters related to truancy, ungovernability and runaway behavior.

"We needed a single point of contact to address front-end support services, and we needed an outlet for law enforcement, schools, community providers, as well as families to refer to our system directly," Celestine said.

"So, we saw that need for change, and really realized that sometimes without net widening, if you don't work with families or young people early on, they will likely return in new circumstances that will leave them caught up in our system and have less productive outcomes."

The center is open from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday and has a 24-hour helpline for those in need of immediate support.



The Multi-Agency Resource Center in Calcasieu Parish, La., uses a one-stop shop model to connect young people with community supports.

Putting the services under one roof has helped families get support more quickly, according to Celestine.

When a youth is referred to the MARC, they and their family undergo a number of screenings to help determine what type of support they need.

That process has cut the time it takes to connect them with community services from several weeks to just two to three hours.

"We get all the pertinent information and start addressing some of the domains that they're struggling in to direct them to the appropriate services," Celestine said.

"Whether it's anger management, maybe it's conflict resolution, maybe it's [functional family therapy]."

> 'We needed a single point of contact to address front-end support services.'
>
> – *Anthony Celestine, Calcasieu Parish*

Youth served through the MARC are also less likely to reoffend: The recidivism rate dropped from 26% to 12%, according to an outcome study by the Vera Institute of Justice.

"The rate of recidivism in doing it in that way is astronomically low," said Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Gene Pittman.



A hallway at the Multi-Agency Resource Center.

"It's incredible what a little bit of intervention and diversion will do."

The center also helps law enforcement get back on the streets faster, with an average turnaround time of roughly 10 to 12 minutes.

Before the MARC was created, the only option law enforcement had when dealing with youth was putting them in juvenile detention, which resulted in lower-level juvenile offenders filling up the detention center's limited capacity, Pittman noted.

"In the meantime, we're not solving the problem, and we're busy, and it takes guys time and away off the road working on family issues, which is what most of these involve," Pittman said.

"… There's only so many beds [in juvenile detention], and then when you would have a serious gun crime or a violent crime involving a juvenile, the beds were full, so using the MARC as a diversionary tool has kept that limited number of beds from being full, which also means that we can put serious juvenile criminals in juvenile detention, and they're not walking the streets."

Over the years, the MARC has evolved from a diversion tool for youth who have committed misdemeanors to one that also supports them before they're justice-involved, according to Joshua Campbell, the MARC's assistant director.

"Let's say a law enforcement officer goes out to the home, and a youth is exhibiting some behaviors that are very concerning, but it's not a legal issue," Campbell said in a video published by the parish's Police Jury.

"That law enforcement officer can, in turn, refer the family to the MARC. You can let the parents know, 'This is not enough to formally charge youth, but I do see that you need some assistance.'

"… It's the old adage of if you provide someone with a support, they will use it. We've found that if we give families the opportunities, they are going to take advantage of them."

The center is an Annie E. Casey Foundation national learning hub site, serving as a model training site for juvenile assessment centers interested in replicating the work. Celestine's advice for localities looking to do something similar: Bring everyone to the table.

"This doesn't happen overnight," Celestine said.

"Our collaborative team met for over two years, stamping out every aspect of this process. You have to have trust in your community.

"The school system has to trust you, Child Protective Services has to trust you, law enforcement, your health community, families, court, the prosecutors and your staff in and of itself has to be able to trust the process. It has to be a meaningful system where you have voluntary referrals."

In 2017, 348 youth were booked into the Calcasieu Parish Juvenile Detention Center.

This year, the parish projects it will book only 72, according to Celestine.

"We're keeping a huge number of kids out of that formal court process, or it's being delayed, so we're doing more on the front end to keep those children out of the back end of our system," Celestine said.

"Because once you take a child out of their home environment, that's a very tragic experience for them to go through … So, the work that we're doing matters. We're seeing positive outcomes, and we're extremely proud of this process." CN

CN SPOTLIGHT

ADMINISTRATORS TALK TURF AT COUNTY-OWNED STADIUM



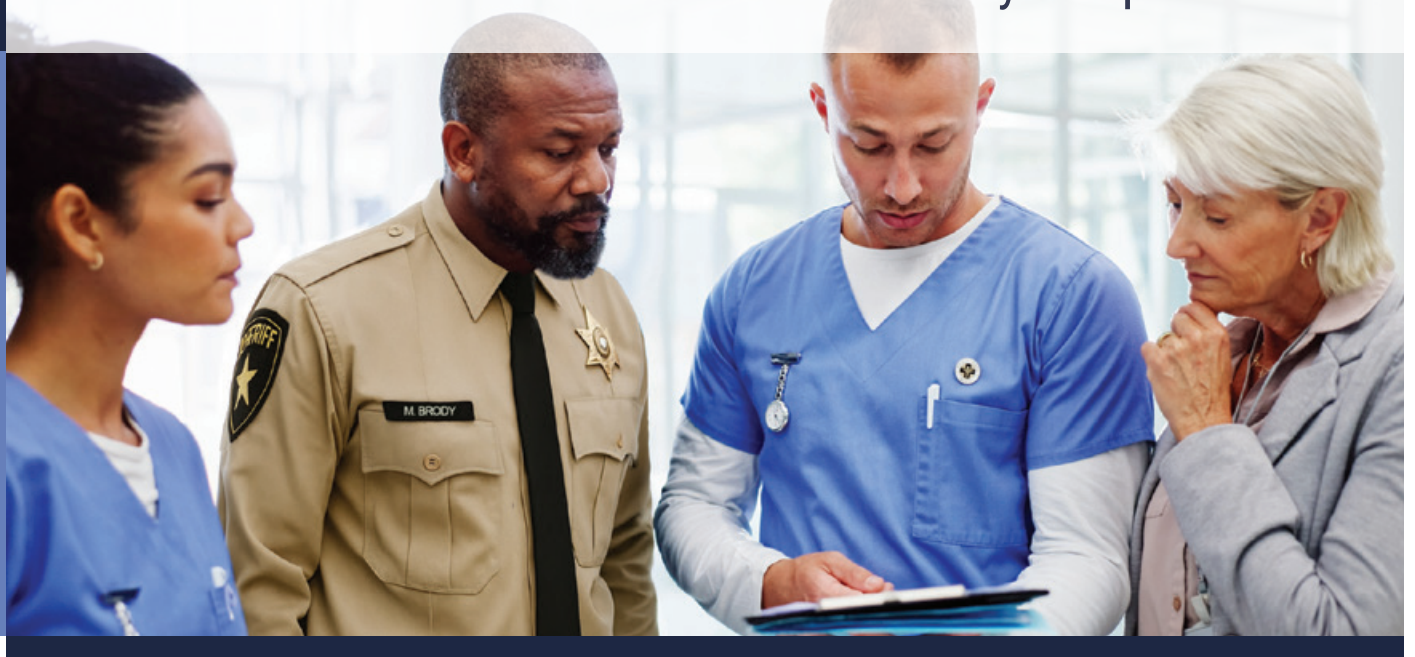
Large-county managers and NACo staff tour Allegiant Stadium in Clark County, Nev. during the recent 2026 Business of Counties meeting. From left: NACo Senior Legislative Director Brett Mattson; NACo EDGE National Director of Executive Relationships Craig Holmes; Baltimore County, Md. Administrative Officer D'Andrea Walker; Sacramento County, Calif. Administrator David Villanueva; Walker's sister, Dallas County, Texas Administrator Darryl Martin, Wake County, N.C. Administrator David Ellis and a Las Vegas Raiders employee.

Photo by Charlie Ban

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SALUTE TO COUNTY LEADERS:

Jim Schmidt



Lincoln County, S.D. Commissioner Jim Schmidt voices his opinion during the NACo Board of Directors meeting during the 2025 Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

After a mid-term appointment to succeed a late commissioner, Jim Schmidt stayed on the Lincoln County, S.D. Board of Commissioners for 28 years. A former teacher, school counselor and community college president, he was active in local economic development efforts and philanthropy and will retire at the end of the year. Gov. Larry Rhoden (R) appointed Schmidt to the South Dakota Board of Economic Development in 2025. He served on NACo's Board of Directors and as chair of the Rural Action Caucus.

How has Lincoln County changed over your tenure?

When I started, our population was around 8,800. Now we're at 78,000 and should hit 100,000 before too long. We used to be very rural, and now we're essentially a bedroom community for Sioux Falls, and it's not done yet. The community growth is such that what were once separate, distinct towns of 500 or 1,000 people, it's getting to the point where it's hard to tell where one ends and the other begins.

A $54.4 million interstate interchange project is going to be a total game changer, because it opens the county to the west, and the cities out there are going to experience a tremendous amount of commercial and residential growth from that.

The harder problem with growth is that you have a lot of people who don't want to admit that you're a growing county, so you get a backlash. They're anti pipeline, anti-wind farms, anti-solar farms. They're just opposed, because they see a life-changing kind of a thing approaching.

What insights have you gained from connecting with leaders of other growing counties through NACo?

When you talk to counties from other states that are on the periphery of a major city, they talk not just about the infrastructure challenges but also personnel, the fact that you need more people working for the county.

When I started with Lincoln Ccounty, we had a sheriff and a deputy and we have almost 30 deputies [now]. We never had labor unions and now we have two, possibly three, so there are a lot of issues related to growth beyond just the physical aspect.

Working with commissioners from larger counties really contrasts how our county government is still very part time. You put in full-time work, but it's a part-time role. You end up shouldering a lot of responsibilities and paying for many things yourself if you want to get things done. But at the same time, those larger counties have a lot more roles and responsibilities.

What challenges have you seen your state's counties face in recent years?

South Dakota counties are going to face something related to migration within the state, because you're seeing people from the center of the state move out to either end, to Sioux Falls or Rapid City. That's going to leave the middle of the state more or less drained of its population.

All the little towns that are out there struggle just to survive, and counties do too, and I think in the near future, some of our smaller counties are going to have to merge some services or combine offices to cut costs. I think they'll leave their county seats as a voting place or someplace where people can go pay their taxes. And others will try to attract data centers to expand their tax base. We have a hearing coming out on that ourselves, and it looks like it's going to be a shootout.

Looking at a difficult issue like regulating data centers, are you sorry you'll be retiring and missing the challenge?

Maybe if I was 40 years younger, I'd be looking forward to a fight like this, but I'm looking forward to perusing other ventures and saving my energy! This is going to be a chance to do some different things with my time.

How should a new county official coming into office get involved in federal advocacy like you have?

Lincoln County will pay for commissioners to go to NACo conferences, and I recommend the Annual Conference to see all of what NACo has to offer.



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Legislative Conference
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SPONSORED CONTENT

Douglas County Amazon Business Agreement Brings Price Certainty to Everyday Purchasing

Counties seeking greater budget certainty and procurement compliance now have a new option. In September, Douglas County, Neb., acting as Lead Public Agency, awarded a Master Agreement to Amazon Business. The agreement is available nationwide through Public Promise Procurement (PPP), NACo's cooperative purchasing program.

The contract was publicly bid through a nationally advertised request for proposals and evaluated by a multi-county panel from Douglas, Maricopa, Sacramento and El Paso counties. The Douglas County Board of Commissioners approved the award July 14 and the contract was finalized in September. Counties can adopt the agreement under cooperative purchasing authority rather than conducting their own solicitation, subject to local procurement rules.

Price ceilings that support forecasting

The Master Agreement provides access to Amazon Business's multi-seller platform with over 300 million items. And unique among cooperative offerings, the Douglas County Master Agreement includes eight operationally focused catalogs with fixed ceiling prices: office, school, hotel and medical supplies; information technology equipment, peripherals and supplies; janitorial and sanitation; breakroom supplies and equipment; and maintenance, repair and operating items.

Price ceilings give finance and purchasing staff a predictable upper limit on routine purchases, which makes it easier to build supply budgets and compare actual spending against forecasts. No matter the market volatility, prices will not go above the ceiling but will drop as the market drops. Amazon Business analytics and spend visibility tools provide reporting for budget planning and audit accountability. Counties can also set policies that prefer small, diverse or local sellers.

Built to work with what counties already have

The contract works with existing Amazon Business Prime agreements, whether offered through a state association or entered directly by a county. State association programs provide Prime benefits, while the PPP contract adds a publicly bid foundation for pricing and terms. Counties keep their current accounts, approvals, tax-exempt purchasing and internal controls. Counties new to Amazon Business can use the agreement to establish that relationship with public-sector pricing and terms already negotiated.

A recording of the introductory webinar held Oct. 22 offers further details on the bid process, contract terms and Amazon Business capabilities. Access the recording at https://www.naco.org/event/naco-public-promise-procurement-launches-new-amazon-business-contract.

Getting started

Registering with PPP is simple. Counties can register online to access contract materials and stay informed as new contracts are added: https://publicpromiseprocurement.org/register/

Adopting the agreement is just as easy: send one email to NACO-PPP-Contract@amazon.com. The county's Amazon Business account executive then handles activation.

PPP is owned and operated by NACo, with no private equity partners. Proceeds from the program support the work of NACo and state associations of counties across the country, including advocacy, education and research.

Questions? Contact Anthony Chapman at achapman@naco.org.

Scan the QR code for more information:



The Live Healthy prescription discount program for residents will conclude on December 31, 2026.

Key Dates:

November 13:

- Digital card access removed
- Last date for counties to order physical materials
- Communications plan available to counties to share with residents at naco.org/livehealthy

December 31:

- Last date for using physical discount cards at pharmacies

Questions? Email LiveHealthy@naco.org

The Live Healthy prescription discount program is for county residents. Other NACo programs for county employees, including the PBM savings program through Public Promise Insurance, are not impacted by this change.

BRIGHT IDEAS | SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIF.

County Pairs Veteran Housing with On-Site Support Services to Speed Self-Sufficiency

PROBLEM: Veterans experiencing homelessness faced financial barriers to housing and had trouble reaching supportive services.

SOLUTION: Build an apartment community for veterans with supportive services on site.



Liberty Lane is a San Bernardino County, Calif. apartment community for veterans and their families experiencing homelessness.

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

John Davis had been living in his car for over two and a half years, moving from campsite to campsite every 14 days, when his engine light came on. Unsure where to turn, Davis — who served more than 20 years in the Navy — called the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which connected him to temporary housing.

After a year of living in a veterans' transition home, Davis got connected to Liberty Lane, a San Bernardino County, Calif., apartment community for veterans and their families experiencing homelessness.

Davis moved into Liberty Lane soon after the community opened in December 2025. It's given him long-term housing security, in addition to on-site access to supportive services, including counseling, career development and mental health services.

"Being here at Liberty Lane, you feel like you're building a home atmosphere," Davis said. "Being around other people who have experienced some of the things that you have experienced, it's inspiring, and it makes you feel good to be able to look and think about where you was and where you are now, and it gives you a bright outlook on your future.

"It makes you feel motivated to be in this kind of atmosphere, knowing that there are folks who are willing to provide services to help you stay focused on what you should be doing."

Davis periodically meets with a Veterans Affairs counselor on-site, and it's been "really helpful" to have such accessible supportive services, he noted.

"Liberty Lane has really brightened my future up," Davis said. "At one time, I wasn't able to get an apartment because of the traditional way that most places require … you have to have a deposit and first month's rent.

"I couldn't afford that because I didn't have any money saved up and I was living paycheck to paycheck, but Liberty Lane made it manageable because they're helping you do that, along with [offering] other programs."

Co-locating supportive services with housing on the campus helps the veterans become more self-sufficient more quickly, according to Derek Armstrong, San Bernardino County Community Development and Housing's deputy executive.

"What we've seen and what we're trying to do as a county overall is really to focus on the care continuum," Armstrong said. "However, a person enters that care continuum — whether they're homeless, substance users, whether they're justice-involved — they all start at different places and have different needs.

> "Being here at Liberty Lane, you feel like you're building a home atmosphere,"
>
> *- Veteran John Davis*

"So, trying to find that pathway to get them from where they're at, their vulnerable state, to becoming stabilized, developing individual plans to either get them workforce training, mental health services, gainful employment and then get them to stable situations so that they can then be moved to something that's self-supportive and permanent … is a huge focus for the county."

The housing project cost $51.5 million. San Bernardino County contributed over $5 million through U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding and county housing asset funds and was able to leverage nearly $32 million in additional federal and state resources.

Armstrong himself served five years in the Marine Corps and said it's been rewarding to be a part of the county's efforts to better support veterans.

"Many veterans struggle with a variety of issues, whether it's PTSD or they have traumatic brain injury or they've had other serious issues," Armstrong said. "And it's always good to get back to that community and ensure that those that are sacrificing for us are taken care of as well."

For counties looking to adopt a similar model, patience and partnership are key, according to Armstrong. Coordination in funding, services and policy was essential in making Liberty Lane possible, he noted.

The site of the development is owned by the oldest African American Baptist church in Redlands, Calif., which led efforts to transform the land into housing. San Bernardino County Community Development and Housing worked with the Department of Behavioral Health, the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino and veteran service providers to bring the concept to life.

"This type of housing is making a difference by getting people back on their feet and providing them certainty, and also a place of home," Armstrong said. "And that's been a big thing for a lot of people is that people are struggling; they don't feel like they have a place where they can call home, so this really helps create some pride for them and helps them get on their feet a little bit more." CN

San Bernardino County's Liberty Lane Development Partnership won a 2026 NACo Achievement Award as Best in Category for Community and Economic Development.

WORD SEARCH

CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VA.

Created by Mary Ann Barton

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

BERKELEY: Settlers held the first official Thanksgiving in America at Berkeley in 1619, and the estate later became a Harrison family plantation worked by enslaved people.

CARY: Lott Cary was born enslaved in the county around 1780 and became the first Black American missionary to Africa, and in August 1828 he became the acting governor of Liberia.

CHICKAHOMINY: The county lies between the Chickahominy and James rivers, which unite at its southeastern border, and the Chickahominy tribe received state recognition in 1983 and federal recognition in 2018.

COCONUT: Cul's Courthouse Grille, set in a renovated country store built in 1872, is known for its most beloved dessert: the homemade coconut cake.

COURTHOUSE: The circa-1750 Charles City Courthouse is promoted as the oldest courthouse still in continuous use in the United States.

HARRISON: William Henry Harrison, the ninth U.S. president, was born in the county, and Berkeley was also the birthplace of Benjamin Harrison V, signer of the Declaration of Independence and governor of Virginia.

HATCHERY: Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, located in Charles City County, produces American shad, alewife, blueback herring, hickory shad and striped bass.

NEWSPAPERS: The county is served by the *New Kent Charles City Chronicle.*

SHIRE: Charles City County, named for King Charles I, was one of Virginia's eight original shires formed by 1634.

SHIRLEY: Shirley is North America's oldest family-owned business, dating to 1638, and in the 19th century between 70 and 90 enslaved Africans were forced to labor on the plantation each year.

TAPS: The bugle call was composed at Berkeley in 1862 by Gen. Daniel Butterfield, who was stationed there with McClellan during the Peninsular Campaign.

TAVERN: Indian Fields Tavern serves American bistro fare and craft beer in a rustic farmhouse setting along Route 5, and it first opened in 1987.

TRAIL: The Virginia Capital Trail is a 52-mile bike and pedestrian trail connecting Richmond and Williamsburg, and it runs right through the county.

TYLER: John Tyler, the 10th U.S. president, is one of the two Charles City-born presidents honored with laurel wreaths on the county seal.

WESTOVER: Westover is one of the county's oldest James River plantations, and like its neighbors, its wealth was built on the labor of enslaved people.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

STEPHANIE SIELATY

NACo Board Member

Director, National Association of Volunteer Program Leaders in Government

Number of years active in NACo: One

Years in public service: Three

My first NACo event was: 2026 Annual Conference

NACo committee(s): Plan to join the Community, Economic & Workforce Development Policy Steering Committee.

Occupation: Volunteer Administration for Sarasota County, Fla.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Sports and Entertainment Management / Certified in Volunteer Administration

The hardest thing I've ever done: Deal with the death of my dad in 2017.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Jesus, my boyfriend David, and my mom Ann.

A dream I have is to: Travel to as many countries as possible.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have travelled to eight countries, three independent



SIELATY

Caribbean countries, and five Caribbean island territories.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Traveled to Barcelona and Santorini by myself when I was in college.

My favorite way to relax is: watch TV, listen to an audiobook, go to the movies or go kayaking.

I'm most proud of: Getting my certification in Volunteer Administration.

Every morning I read: I do love a good audiobook when I have a long drive.

My favorite meal is: Spaghetti

My pet peeve is: hearing people chew gum!

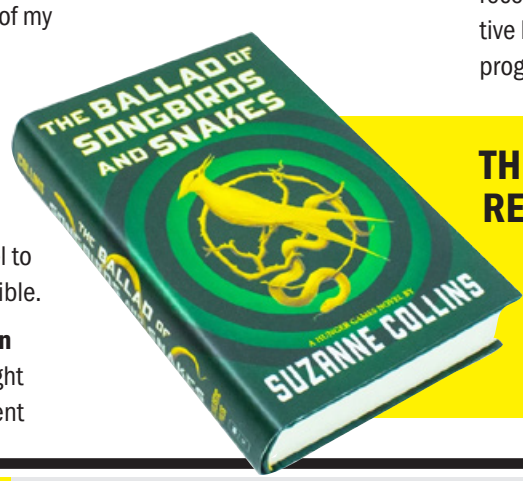
My motto is: Comparison is the thief of joy.

My favorite movie is: "Selena" and "Grease"

My favorite music is: Christian, pop, country or Latin music

My favorite U.S. president is: Lincoln

My organization is a NACo member because: it provides access to the knowledge, resources, practical tools, professional development and nationwide peer network that help counties deliver exceptional public service. Through NAVPLG, county professionals can strengthen volunteer, service, partnership and civic engagement efforts, learn from peers across the country and receive recognition for innovative leadership and successful programs.



THE LAST BOOK I READ WAS:

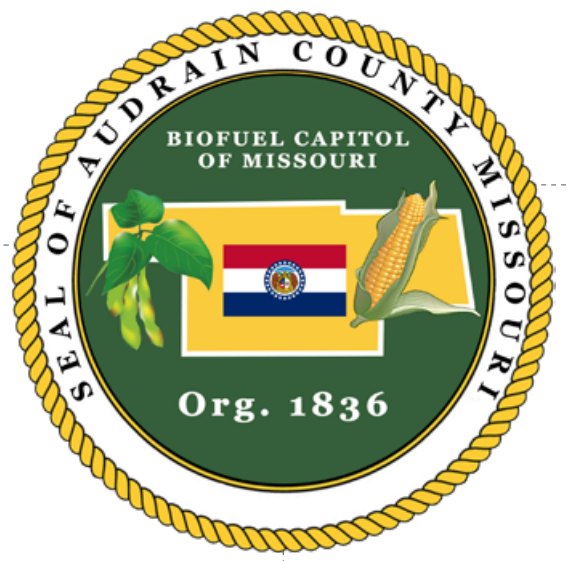
The Hunger Games – The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes

BEHIND THE SEAL

AUDRAIN COUNTY, MO.

Audrain County, Mo. isn't shy about where it falls in the state's agricultural hierarchy. Its seal bears images of both soybeans and corn, flanking the state flag within boundaries of the county lines.

Audrain was one of the first two counties to receive Agri-Ready designation from Missouri Farmers Care, a designation showcasing a countywide commitment to expanding current farming operations and industry entities to encourage long-term growth for local economies.

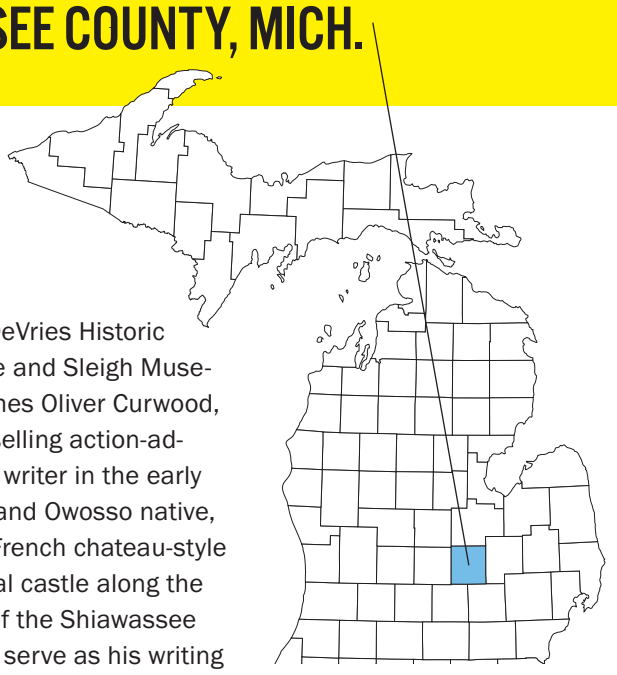


But just in case that subtlety is lost on some, it includes the distinction as the number one biofuel producer.

The seal also features the year 1836, the year the county was established. The county was organized Dec. 17, 1836 as the 52nd county in Missouri.

GET TO KNOW...

SHIAWASSEE COUNTY, MICH.



by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Shiawassee County, Mich., established in 1822, is named for the Shiawassee River, which flows through the county. The name comes from a Native American term meaning "rolling" or "sparkling waters."

The county is home to the real "Polar Express." The Pere Marquette 1225 steam locomotive, which is located at the Steam Railroading Institute in the county, served as the prototype and sound model for the train in the animated Christmas classic "The Polar Express." Every holiday season, the train transforms into the "North Pole Express," taking riders on a nearly five-hour trip from Owosso to the Village of Ashley Country Christmas, where kids can write letters to Santa, build a wooden toy at Santa's Workshop and play festive games.

Owosso, which is the county's largest city, also has the largest collection of historic sleighs and horse-drawn carriages in the Midwest, which is located at the DeVries Historic Carriage and Sleigh Museum. James Oliver Curwood, a best-selling action-adventure writer in the early 1900s and Owosso native, built a French chateau-style medieval castle along the banks of the Shiawassee River to serve as his writing studio. It now operates as a museum dedicated to his life, books and conservation work. When he died in 1927, he was one of the highest-paid authors in the world.

Durand Union Station, which is known for its Chateau-Romanesque architecture, is located in Shiawassee County and is one of the most photographed train stations in the country. The major historic railroad hub houses the Michigan Railroad History Museum, which highlights the state's industrial history. Its displays change throughout the year, featuring topics such as African Americans in railroading, presidential whistle-stop tours, Great Lakes railroad car ferries and hobo culture.

The county seat, Corunna, was developed by a group of businessmen called the Shiawassee County-Seat Company, one of whom named the town for A Coruña, Spain, where he had previously traveled to purchase sheep. The Spanish city is home to the oldest functioning lighthouse in the world and is where the Santiago, the smallest ship in Ferdinand Magellan's 1519 voyage around the globe that proved it could be crossed by sea, was built.

The businessman was so taken by the port city that he named the new Michigan settlement in its honor.

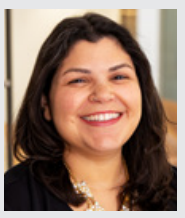


The county is home to the real "Polar Express," the Pere Marquette 1225.

Get to Know features new NACo member counties.

ON THE MOVE

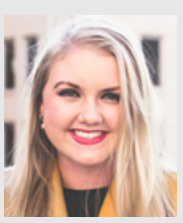
NACo OFFICERS



Benatar

- Second Vice President **Sarah Benatar,** Membership Engagement Director **Tammy Tincher** and Program Manager **Bryce Wilkom** attended the County Officials Association of Tennessee Annual Conference in Johnson County. Tincher also attended the Tennessee County Services Association Fall Conference in Rutherford County.

NACo STAFF

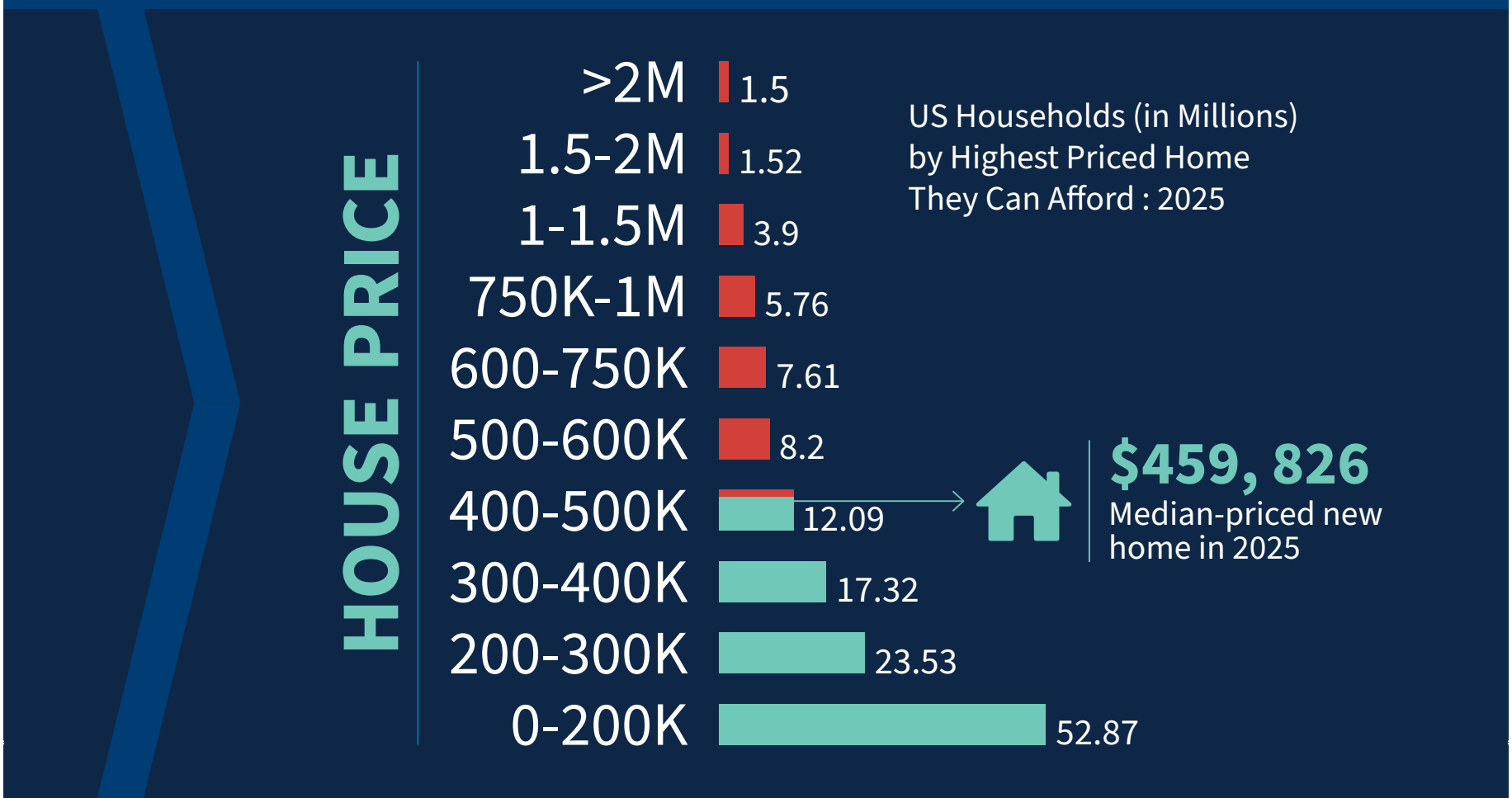


Duyshart

- Associate Legislative Director **Charlotte Mitchell Duyshart** attended the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma Fall Conference in Cleveland County.



Roughly 75% of all U.S. households are unable to afford a median-priced new home.





Source: Calculations by the National Association of Home Builders Housing Policy Department, based on income data from the 2023 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample File, U.S. Census Bureau

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NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO COUNTY opened its new $37 million Santee **Animal Shelter** Oct. 15, replacing the county's Bonita shelter. The facility can house more than 90 dogs and 50 cats and includes eight activity yards, outdoor livestock areas and a full veterinary clinic offering affordable spay and neuter services, according to the county.

The shelter also serves as an emergency response hub, with staging space for more than a dozen animal control officers and equipment for rescuing and sheltering animals during wildfires, storms and other disasters.

ALABAMA

• **CALHOUN COUNTY** school resource officers will **mentor young men** across the county's schools through Bigs With Badges, a partnership among the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, Calhoun County Schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Alabama. Officers will build weekly school visits into their routines, working with students on communication, life skills and academic planning tailored to each student's needs, WEIS Radio reported.

Mentors also plan quarterly outings such as museum visits, movies and recreational events, which community donations can help support. Nationally, Bigs With Badges pairs young people with mentors who work or previously worked in law enforcement.

• **MADISON COUNTY** commissioners voted to buy the former AT&T Building in downtown Huntsville for $5 million to serve as a **temporary courthouse** while the current courthouse is demolished and rebuilt. County staff found that buying the building would cost about the same as renting, and the county will own an asset it can later rent out or sell, AL.com reported. The county will also rent the former federal courthouse to house court operations during construction.

To help cover costs, the commission plans to sell the vacant county-owned Grant Building. The purchase and sale are expected to be finalized by January 2027, with renovations to the temporary buildings expected to wrap up in early 2028.

ARKANSAS

Three generations of one family **worked the polls together** in **GREENE COUNTY**. Ellen Johnson, the county's former circuit clerk, served as a poll worker alongside her daughter, Diane Culver and granddaughter Claire Richardson.

County Clerk Phyllis Rhynes, who shared the family's photo, said it shows how a commitment to public service can be passed down through generations.



CALIFORNIA

• **MARIPOSA COUNTY** supervisors voted 5–0 to adopt a 45-day urgency ordinance **pausing data center development** in unincorporated areas while the county drafts land-use rules. The ordinance cites concerns about electricity demand, water used for cooling, backup power, fire protection, noise and air emissions, Sierra News Online reported.

The moratorium excludes server rooms that support an existing business, as well as technology serving hospitals, schools and emergency communications. County Counsel will prepare proposed regulations for the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, and staff may seek an extension.

COLORADO

GILPIN COUNTY commissioners are holding informal evening **"Cookies with Commissioners"** sessions at the Community Center to hear directly from residents. At a September session, commissioners walked attendees through the county's priority-based budgeting process, The Mountain-Ear reported.

Residents also asked about access to county documents. The county manager explained that because of the cost of complying with Colorado's new digital accessibility law, the county has withheld most meeting documents from its website; printed copies are available at the courthouse by request.



IOWA

LINN COUNTY supervisors unanimously denied a rezoning request that would have allowed a 720-megawatt **natural gas plant** on agricultural land, citing concerns about ratepayers, air quality and the county's comprehensive plan. Alliant Energy says the plant is needed to meet growing demand, especially from data centers, Iowa Public Radio reported.

The fight may not be over: the Iowa Utilities Commission will take up the proposal Dec. 7 and can override local regulations if it deems the plant necessary. One supervisor warned the county could lose the ability to enforce its natural gas ordinance, the strictest in the state.

FLORIDA

• **MANATEE COUNTY** broke ground on a $50 million project to turn **landfill methane into renewable natural gas** at its Lena Road Landfill, the first such project on Florida's west coast. Working with Noppetro Energy, Johnson Controls and Mead & Hunt, the county will capture and clean the gas and send it through existing pipelines to fuel bus and truck fleets, WWSB-TV reported.

Project partners estimate the annual emissions reduction will equal 5.3 million gallons of gasoline and that the plant

See NEWS FROM page 19

From NEWS FROM page 18

will produce enough energy to supply more than 4,500 homes.

• **PALM BEACH COUNTY** has relaunched its **Youth Court** after a pandemic pause, training 65 high school students in September to serve as prosecutors, defense attorneys, deputies and jurors. Volunteer attorneys preside as judges at monthly sessions, The Florida Bar News reported.

Defendants are first-time juvenile offenders who have already admitted responsibility, so student juries decide only on sanctions. Those who complete their sanctions aren't referred to the State Attorney's Office and avoid an official delinquency record.

MARYLAND

• **HOWARD COUNTY**'s **Board of Elections hosted its first food drive** at all early voting sites, inviting voters to drop off nonperishable food and personal care items on their way to the polls. The board partnered with the Howard County Food Bank and the Community Action Council, whose 40-gallon bins needed midday pickups as they filled, WMAR-2 News reported.

Election officials hope to make the drive an annual tradition, with a new benchmark to beat each election year.





MARYLAND

• **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** Council gave final approval recently to a deal committing the county to **financing about $200 million to help bring Sphere to National Harbor**, like the entertainment venue in Las Vegas.

"Today, Prince George's County enters the global stage and redefines itself as a destination for investment, entertainment, technology and innovation," County Executive Aisha Braveboy said.

The council authorized up to $215 million in special obligation bonds to help build the 6,000-seat entertainment venue and the surrounding complex. The Sphere Entertainment Co. would gradually repay those bonds to the county. The project is projected to generate $63 million annually in property tax and sales and amusement tax.

MICHIGAN

OAKLAND COUNTY filed a brief with the Michigan Public Service Commission asking regulators to reject or substantially reduce DTE Electric's proposed 9.7% average residential rate increase and limit it to inflation. In May, the county became the first in Michigan to use its constitutional authority to intervene in a **utility rate case.** When it invited residents to share their bills, more than 1,250 did so in under a week; the county's analysis found the net effective increase from the last rate hike was at least 13%, well above the 4.6% approved.

The county is also asking the commission to require DTE to disclose net effective rate changes annually and review accounts to move customers to the most affordable rate — after a review of its own accounts saved the county $13,000 a year. **MACOMB** and **WAYNE** counties are also intervening; a decision is expected in February 2027.

NEW MEXICO

SANTA FE COUNTY will **add solar power and battery storage** to three senior centers in Chimayó, Eldorado and Edgewood with a $706,054 grant from the New Mexico Finance Authority's Local Solar Access Fund. The project supports the county's goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

During power outages, the batteries will keep heating, cooling, lighting, refrigerated medication storage and device charging running, allowing the centers to serve as resilience hubs for their communities.

TENNESSEE

NACo recognized retired **SEVIER COUNTY Mayor Larry Waters** at the 2026 Tennessee County Services Association Fall Conference & Trade Show in **RUTHERFORD COUNTY**. Waters retired Aug. 31. Pictured (l-r): Anthony Holt, executive director, Tennessee County Mayors Association; Waters; Tammy Tincher, NACo director of membership engagement and David Connor, TCSA executive director.



NORTH CAROLINA

ORANGE COUNTY's **Youth Deflection Program** offers first-time young offenders an alternative to the juvenile court system. Since launching in 2021, the program has served more than 150 young people with individualized plans that can include school-based therapy, peer mentoring and family counseling, WTVD-TV reported.

Program leaders say keeping youth out of the legal system lowers the risk of repeat offenses. Local police, including the Chapel Hill Police Department, can refer eligible young people to the program.

PENNSYLVANIA

ALLEGHENY COUNTY Council approved an ordinance **requiring landlords to cover the cost of temporarily rehousing tenants** when the county Health Department orders a property vacated because of an emergency threatening health or safety. The county can bill owners for rehousing costs plus an administrative fee of up to 10%.

Over the past two years, the county's Department of Human Services has helped relocate at least 50 residents during housing emergencies, spending more than $21,000 on hotel rooms.



NEVADA

WASHOE COUNTY commissioners are directing staff to develop a **flood risk management program** that would identify areas prone to flash flooding, develop mitigation strategies, begin design work to understand land acquisition costs and investigate funding sources. Staff will bring a recommended plan back to the board, KOLO-TV reported.

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

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