

## Brooks takes the lead

**By Beverly Schlotterbeck**  
executive editor

Tarrant County, Texas Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks took over the reins as NACo's new president at the 2017 Annual Business Meeting in Franklin County, Ohio July 24. Douglas County, Neb. Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson won the slot as the association's new second vice president, rounding out the 2017-2018 executive team of Brooks, Second Vice President Greg Cox, San Diego County, Calif. supervisor, and Immediate Past President Bryan Desloge, Leon County, Fla. commissioner.

In his acceptance speech, Brooks spotlighted poverty and economic opportunity as the twin pillars of his presidential initiative with a special focus

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# New NACo Executive Team



NACo Immediate Past President Bryan Desloge of Leon County, Fla. (left), Second Vice President Mary Ann Borgeson, of Douglas County, Neb., President Roy Charles Brooks of Tarrant County, Texas and First Vice President Greg Cox of San Diego County, Calif. pause for a photo July 24 at the association's Annual Conference in Franklin County, Ohio. Photo by David Hathcox

### ANALYSIS

## After the Senate blinked, what's next for health care?

**By Brian Bowden**  
associate legislative director

As the wait continues to determine what Congress may do next in relation to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a series of health programs must be reauthorized by Congress through regular congressional process before the end of this fiscal year (Sept. 30).

All of the programs will like-

ly be rolled into one piece of legislation, providing Congress with another opportunity to advance its health priorities.

The stakes will be high as Congress will only have 12 legislative days to craft and pass bills before these series of health programs expire. These programs represent another legislative vehicle in which Congress could attach other health-related policies. How-

ever, unlike the recent effort to pass major health reforms under budget reconciliation, 60 votes in the Senate will be necessary and would require the support of at least eight Democrats.

Programs of most relevance to counties that need reauthorization include the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting

(MIECHV) Program, Community Health Center funding and Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) reductions.

### The Children's Health Insurance Program

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a federal-state program that provides health insurance to chil-

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# Stakes high as Congress turns to reauthorizing health care programs

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dren in families with incomes that are modest but too high to qualify for Medicaid.

First enacted in 1997, CHIP was last reauthorized through the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) of 2015 which provided federal funding to the program for FY2016 and FY2017 at \$19.3 billion and \$20.4 billion, respectively.

The program now covers over 8 million children and along with Medicaid — which covers over 30 million children — has led to a 95 percent insured rate for U.S. children.

State budget cycles and regulations make it difficult for

states to maintain their CHIP programs in the absence of federal funding certainty.

Without a guarantee that CHIP funding will be extended, states may take action to limit enrollment, impose lock-outs and waiting periods, or wind down their programs altogether.

A recent report by the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) indicates that at least four states (Arizona, California, Minnesota, North Carolina) and the District of Columbia will completely exhaust funds for CHIP by the end of the year if Congress does not act. More than half of all states will exhaust their funds by March 2018.

## The Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood, Home Visiting Program

The Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood, Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program provides resources and support for pregnant women, families and at-risk parents of children under the age of five. Families participate voluntarily in home visits

serve medically underserved areas, or MUAs, which include areas where people have little access to primary health care and individuals who are uninsured, underinsured or low-income.

The Health Center Program is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration within the Department of Health and Hu-

Hospital (DSH) payments. The Affordable Care Act reduced federal DSH allotments to account for decreases in uncompensated care anticipated as a result of Medicaid expansion. However, not all states expanded Medicaid and there are still 28 million uninsured.

Since the implementation of the ACA, several laws have amended the ACA to delay the

## For now, repeal and replace efforts in Congress appear unlikely as lawmakers turn their attention to other urgent budgetary and policy priorities.

conducted by nurses, mental health clinicians, social workers and others with specialized training. In FY2015, the program supported more than 145,000 individual parents and children, and conducted over 900,000 home visits.

Although states are the primary recipient of home visitation program funding — which currently totals about \$400 million annually — resources are typically passed on from states to counties to operate local programs. Counties often employ public health nurses to conduct visits or contract with local social service nonprofits to provide these services.

MIECHV is critical to helping counties improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting and promote child development and school readiness.

## Community Health Centers

Community Health Centers provide primary health services for over 25 million people in counties across the country. The 1,200 neighborhood health centers generally

man Services, which award grants to outpatient health care facilities.

The Community Health Centers Fund, which was first established under the Affordable Care Act and later extended through the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015, now provides \$3.6 billion annually, or more than 70 percent of federal funding, for the health centers. These funds have been used for a range of health center activities including funding new health centers, increasing services provided at existing health centers, and implementing care coordination initiatives.

In addition, the fund supports the National Health Service Corps, a scholarship and loan repayment program that places providers in underserved areas including at health centers.

## Disproportionate Share Hospital Payments


Many of the approximately 900 county-supported hospitals across the country receive partial compensation from the U.S. government for treating indigent patients in the form of Disproportionate Share

Medicaid DSH reductions to prevent funding cuts to these hospitals that serve a large proportion of uninsured and Medicaid beneficiaries. Most recently, MACRA delayed DSH reductions by one year, by eliminating the FY2017 DSH reductions.

However, without additional delays DSH cuts will begin in FY2018 and extend through FY2025 — and would total \$43 billion.

For now, repeal and replace efforts in Congress appear unlikely as lawmakers turn their attention to other urgent budgetary and policy priorities before Sept. 30.

Although President Trump can still act without Congress to alter certain ACA provisions, such as enforcing the individual mandate, the White House is under pressure to deliver on major tax reform and infrastructure packages that they hope to advance quickly through Congress this year.

NACo will continue to monitor legislative and budgetary developments on these important health programs and ensure that county interests are represented in any upcoming legislation. 



## SNAP/STATS

### THE TOP 10 HAPPIEST U.S. COUNTIES (2016)

#### Rank

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Loudoun County, Va.     | 6. Morris County, N. J.   |
| 2. Fairfax County, Va.     | 7. Howard County, Md.     |
| 3. Carver County, Minn.    | 8. Douglas County, Colo.  |
| 4. Chester County, Pa.     | 9. Somerset County, N. J. |
| 5. Hunterdon County, N. J. | 10. Ozaukee County, Wis.  |

Source: SmartAsset.com, financial assets planning company

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# Changes coming to NACo County Explorer

**Tadas Pack**  
research assistant  
Counties Futures Lab

NACo's County Explorer is celebrating its third birthday this year. With this occasion, the interactive map is getting some fresh new features and upgrades.

Users will now find it easier to locate a specific map through a "search an indicator" query. County Explorer has heaps of data now — more than 1,000 indicators mapped on the interactive map.

Instead of sifting through a large list of indicators, the user can type a keyword in the search bar and it will bring up suggestions of the most popular maps.

If that selection does not include the desired map, the "Click here for more maps:" button (found at the top and bottom of the suggestion list) provides the

full list of relevant maps.

For example, a user interested in opioid maps needs only to start typing the word "opioid" in the "search an indicator" box and the system will auto-

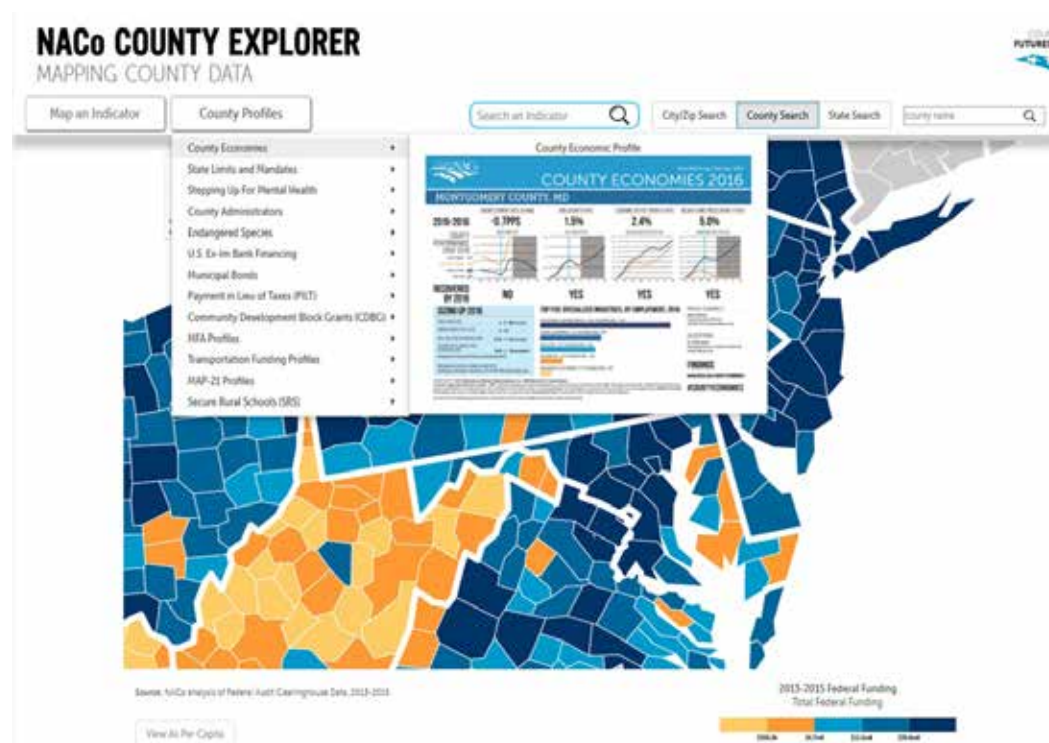
matically suggest maps based on opioid data. The suggestion functionality has also been added to the county name search, which makes it easier for users to find a county.

Beyond these major improvements, some smaller changes have been implemented, which make County Explorer more user-friendly. Profiles are now easier to access, as we

now provide a large thumbnail image of our profiles when someone browses through the list of county profiles. This functionality allows users to preview the profile, and may help them find the correct profile faster.

We have also added a "back to map" button underneath the zoom buttons in the top left corner of the map. Compared to its previous location, it is now more visible and easier to access. Lastly, the monthly update box, which appears when you first open County Explorer, now has helpful information on navigating the site.

The Counties Futures Lab has further plans to improve County Explorer. We are considering the excellent suggestions we have received from our members and are excited to work on implementing them. Please stay tuned for many more additions to come. **CN**



# Interior rescinds BLM's fracking rule

**By Jonathan Shuffield**  
associate legislative director

The Department of the Interior (Interior) announced its intention, July 25, to rescind the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) hydraulic fracturing rule for oil and natural gas wells on federal lands.

The BLM rule would have applied to all wells administered by the BLM (including those on split estate parcels), tribal and individual Indian trust lands.

In 2012, BLM proposed a hydraulic fracturing rule. After reviewing and incorporating comments on the proposed rule, the BLM finalized it in 2015.

In September 2015, U.S. District Judge Scott Skavdahl of Wyoming issued a preliminary injunction stopping implementation of the rule and struck it down completely in June 2016.

The Obama Administration appealed the ruling to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which asked the Department of the In-

terior in March 2017 if the agency's position changed with the swearing in of President Trump.

The Trump Administration said it planned to rescind the rule in the *Federal Register*, but did not say when.

NACo opposed the rule since it could delay drilling permits on federal lands, thereby hindering economic growth and negatively affecting county revenues.

The resolution opposing the rule and calling for its withdrawal, adopted by NACo members at the 2017 Annual Business Meeting, was sponsored by the Wyoming County Commissioners Association.

"Wyoming's dedicated and professional environmental regulators have long been national leaders in developing strong, enforceable fracking regulations," said Peter Obermueller, Wyoming County Commissioners Association executive director.

"They have proven that the BLM's Johnny-come-lately

fracking regulations were duplicative, costly and unnecessary."

Obermueller added, "The decision to rescind the fracking rule is good policy for our public lands counties with strong resource potential."

"It removes at least one of the dark clouds that had been hanging over responsible energy development in recent years that had resulted in the flight from public lands counties toward private lands," he said.

The rule acknowledged that some states, including Colorado, Wyoming, Arkansas, and Texas, have issued their own regulations.

However, the rule also stated that operators with leases on federal lands would have to comply with both the BLM's and the states' rules and regulations for hydraulic fracturing.

Additionally, the BLM's rule did not include a provision to allow the BLM to approve a variance that would apply to state, tribal, or described as field-wide or basin-wide, that is

commensurate with the state or tribal regulatory scheme.

The BLM would have had to determine if the variance met or exceeded the effectiveness of the rule.

Also at issue: The decision whether to grant or deny a variance is entirely within the BLM's discretion, and the BLM may rescind a variance or modify any condition of approval.

The language in the BLM rule does not defer to comprehensive regulations already in place in several states, nor does it provide sufficient guidance as to how the BLM may defer in the future.

The Department of the Interior will accept public comments on the proposed rule rescission until Sept. 25. To file comments, go to: <http://bit.ly/2uRaLtz>. **CN**

## 75% OF U.S. COUNTIES NOW NACo MEMBERS

*Welcome New Member Counties*

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Carroll County, Ga.	Allen County, Ind.
Sumter County, Ga.	McCracken County, Ky.
Madison County, Iowa	Cedar County, Neb.
Champaign County, Ill.	



# WORKSHOPS

Workshops and panel discussions at the Annual Conference covered a range of topics, including how to engage citizens and mobilize their support for projects, workforce training and economic development and integration of smart transportation technology into infrastructure. All photos by David Hathcox, pp. 4-15, unless otherwise noted.



Hamilton County, Ohio Commissioner Denise Driehaus asks a question at the “Leadership Strategies for Women in Government: How to Thrive In Your Career” workshop.

## Leadership Strategies for Women in Government: How to Thrive in Your Career

### WHO SPOKE?

Ellie Nieves, JD, MBA, women’s leadership speaker and coach, Leadership Strategies for Women

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

When you think of the “powers” you have, related to your career, it might conjure up images of Wonder Woman or Superman. Do you know your power? You might have more than you realize. That’s what women county officials — and a few brave men — discovered listening to leadership expert Ellie Nieves Sunday, July 23.

Your powers come through relationships, education and

expertise, and start with your job description, Nieves said. “Your title comes with a subset of powers. Ask yourself, are you leveraging your power? Pull up your job description. What does it say? What does the law say?”

Another source of power, she noted, is power by association. “When I was chief of staff, I had power because of my boss,” she said. “It’s a delicate power. Hold this power lightly.” The same goes for [political] party power, Nieves said. “If you’re aligned with a particular party, use your judgement.”

Another kind of power is “expert” power — for example, if you’re a lawyer or grew up in politics. “Use that power,” she said.

Other kinds of power include

coercive power or the ability to persuade, and “reward power,” Nieves said. Coercive power is “not something you wield around. Keep this in your back pocket.”

Reward power can be as simple as saying “thank you” — rewarding and acknowledging people so they will do business with someone they know and trust.

### BE VISIBLE

Nieves told the standing-room-only crowd that it’s important to look for opportunities “where you can be visible, where you can be seen by important people.”

“Where does it count?” she asked. It’s important to be seen by employees and team members. “Get up and walk around,

get to know employees and colleagues on a more personal level.”

There’s even an art to attending meetings if you’re looking to get ahead, she said. “Try to show up early.” It could be an opportunity to learn more information than what’s being officially doled out at the meeting, she noted. Same goes for after a meeting. “Linger after the meeting and chat.”

Being seen is especially important if you’re an elected official, she said. Sometimes that’s difficult, Nieves said, relating a story about a friend who is an elected official and is also a single mom. “Going to every event was not real for her,” she said. “Empower someone on your behalf, prioritize events.”

### PARTNERSHIPS COUNT

“Likeability is not being liked just to be liked,” said Nieves. “It’s because you can’t do your work alone. You need partnerships.”

How do you make those important contacts? First, you’ve got to put your gadgets away, she said. “Smile more, it’s an invitation to connect. Make eye contact. Develop emotional intelligence.”

Nieves also asked participants to ask each other: “What are you known for?” to help them discover their personal “brand,” a la McDonald’s or Starbucks.

Audience member Becky Belt, finance officer with the Pottawattamie County, Iowa Auditor’s Office, said she’s known

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# Workshops look at gig economy, marijuana, transportation

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as a “people pleaser.” She’s the person her office turns to when sticky problem calls for one-on-one negotiating skills, she noted.

“Think about what you want to stand for,” Nieves said. “Starbucks wanted to be known as ‘the third place’ in addition to home and work. Think about your story. It’s part of your brand. What is your unique voice? What do you want to be known for?”

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## The Gig Economy: The Rise of the Freelance Workforce

### WHO SPOKE?

- Trevor Brown, dean of the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at Ohio State University
- Molly Turner, a University of California lecturer who worked for Airbnb

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

The gig economy is not new — ask any freelance writer, babysitter or bass player — but the proliferation of technology platforms that replace the middleman between the service provider and the customer has made it an increasing part of the American, and global, labor market.

At the same time, the federal government has not yet agreed on a definition, and the most recent research by the Bureau of Labor Statistics was published in 2005, long before the gig economy transformed into its current state.

“It’s a global trend, but there isn’t good data,” Turner said. “It’s not going away, it’s going to continue to grow.”

The gig economy breaks down into the service sector — ridesharing, labor — that draws lower income people who have few other job options, and the goods sector — Airbnb, Etsy — for whom gig income is nice to have but not their primary source of earnings.

A study by the Pew Research Center found that 26 percent of Americans reported earning money from the digital plat-

form economy.

“Now is a good time for counties to take stock of their gig economy workforce and pilot creative solutions,” Turner said. “If you formally recognize this kind of work and help people understand that this is real work, they are more likely to pay their taxes. A lot of this [payments] can be done under the table.”

Brown drew on his reflections of his students, many of whom are beginning to use their education to begin careers as entrepreneurs, rather than public servants.

“To contextualize it for the public sector, it’s a reflection of declining faith and trust in institutions,” he said. “You see rise of tech platforms, you also see disenchantment with a single employer. As a young person entering into the workforce, they see it as a way to craft their own story.”

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## Smarter Cities, Smarter Counties: How Intelligent Transportation Solutions are Driving Regional Connectivity

### WHO SPOKE?

- Eric Janas, deputy county administrator, Franklin Coun-

ty, Ohio

- Joanna Pinkerton, co-director, Honda-Ohio State Partnership
- Michael Stevens, chief innovation officer, Columbus, Ohio

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

Columbus beat nearly 80 other competitors for the Department of Transportation’s Smart Cities Challenge, a \$40 million grant with an extra \$10 million from the Vulcan foundation.

Janas said the application process and what to do with the grant was a decision point for the Columbus region.

“It’s an opportunity to align our community to answer fundamental questions about how are we going to continue to grow, how we will keep up with changing technology, how we will connect to the global market and how we will meet the needs of residents,” he said.

The city’s four goals include improving vehicle safety by reducing human error, fostering sustainability by decreasing vehicle emissions, driving economic growth through infrastructure innovation and improving the quality of life for residents.

“We were successful because the focus on quality of life, thinking about people, helped us stand out,” Janas said.

Stevens said the win at the challenge was an opportunity to become a national leader in transportation planning and execution, as the 15 projects planned could be seen as models.

Columbus plans to integrate a connected vehicle network, including installing digital short-range communications equipment in 3,000 public vehicles and complementing technology along the rights-of-way.

While these plans are easy for a city that just won \$50 million in grants to make, counties that don’t have that kind of money are left wondering where they fit in with high-tech transportation planning.

Pinkerton, from the Honda-Ohio State Partnership, addressed that skepticism head-on.

“A question I get a lot is, ‘I can’t afford to fill my potholes, why would I invest in this smart stuff,’” she said. “We’re pretty risk-averse in government, but making the decision to try something else to improve the level of service to citizens at a reduced cost. There are ways to generate revenue and lower your operating costs.”

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## County Cannabis Roundtable

### WHO SPOKE?

- Rob Bovett, legal counsel, Association of Oregon Counties
- Bill Hall, commissioner, Lincoln County, Ore.
- Obie O’Brien, commissioner, Kittitas County Wash.
- Rex Bohn, supervisor, Humboldt County, Calif.

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

Whatever their constituencies think, morally, about cannabis, county officials are finding themselves forced to set land use policy regarding its cultivation, lest they put themselves at a regulatory disadvantage.

The County Cannabis Roundtable assembled a cast of county officials who have dealt with the process of cannabis regulation in Washington state, Oregon and California to share their experiences and advice.

James Gore, a Sonoma County, Calif. supervisor, pointed out that many of the crop’s growing hotspots were once-thriving timber regions.

“We are dealing with a problem that has been ubiquitous in our communities for 30 years; we’re trying to bring it into the light,” he said.

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Obie O’Brien, Kittitas County, Wash., speaks about counties dealing with cannabis legalization, alongside (left to right) Bill Hall, Lincoln County, Ore.; Rob Bovett, Association of Oregon Counties and Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, Calif. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



# County officials discuss 'Gaining Citizen Buy-In'

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With 28 states and the District of Columbia having passed some form of cannabis legalization, "it's becoming de facto legal overall, so you'd better be ready to handle it," he said.

"In 30 years, this is the most chaotic mess I've ever seen," Hall said about Oregon's experience. When counties attempt to regulate land use for cannabis growing operations, they should "be prepared for chaos, be prepared for unintended consequences."

And counties have to come in with a clear plan for what they want.

"You're going to find yourself in zoning regulatory land use areas dealing with a lot of smart businesspeople," he said.

As legal counsel for the Association of Oregon Counties, Bovett advised counties to dig in their heels when state policy is set, because counties are facing a must-win scenario for maintaining local control over zoning.

"I guarantee there is nobody else who will promote local control," he said. "Don't let sheriffs or chiefs of police run away from the table, because the industry will run right over them."

O'Brien agreed "If you don't seize control from the beginning, you will never get it back," he said.

Bohn, a supervisor in Humboldt County, Calif., in one of the most productive regions in the world for cannabis growth, suggested that studying the history of prohibition was a good preview for some of the issues and struggles ahead in the legalization of cannabis.

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## How to Gain Citizen Buy-In

### WHO SPOKE?

- Verdenia Baker, county administrator, Palm Beach County, Fla.
- Karl Keith, auditor, Montgomery County, Ohio
- Michael Montplaisir, auditor, Cass County, N.D.



Michael Montplaisir, Cass County, N.D., Verdenia Baker, Palm Beach County, Fla. and Karl Keith, Montgomery, Ohio, discuss gaining citizen buy-in, at NACo's Annual Conference in Ohio.

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

NACo members learned how to engage citizens when it comes to important projects such as raising funds for infrastructure needs. Topics included successful messaging and using social media to mobilize a community.

When Palm Beach County, Fla., needed to raise its county sales tax from 6 cents to 7 cents to repair infrastructure, the county invited the media on a tour to see the area's crumbling roads and bridges. The county mayor talked to reporters while holding a chunk of concrete in her hand that had fallen off a bridge.

Palm Beach County Administrator Verdenia Baker told NACo members Sunday afternoon at a standing-room-only meeting at the session that inviting the media on the tour was just one piece of the pie that helped the sales tax pass.

The county also spent time educating voters at church, home owner associations and chambers of commerce meetings, identifying specific projects and infrastructure that would be fixed. An interactive website, [onecountyonepenny.org](http://onecountyonepenny.org), was created to show users where the planned renovations were located.

The county shared all of its financials with local newspapers and got an endorsement for the sales tax from the largest newspaper in town. "Transparency

was paramount," Baker said.

The tax proposal passed in November, getting just under 57 percent of the vote. The sales tax, which went into effect in January, is split between the county, 39 municipalities and the school board. The tax will sunset after 10 years or \$2.7 billion, whichever comes first.

Also at Sunday's packed meeting were Auditor Karl Keith of Montgomery County, Ohio and Auditor Michael Montplaisir of Cass County, N.D.

Keith discussed getting the word out about a serious problem: "Skimmers" being placed at gas stations, after four were found in August 2013.

Keith tackled the problem by holding "skimmer summits" for local police, gas station managers and police.

A "skimmers sweep" was held over Labor Day weekend, with 64 of the Ohio's 88 counties participating. In all, 1,400 gas stations participated and 12,000 pumps were checked. Five skimmers were found.

"The real advantage," Keith said, "was public awareness." In addition to posting information on Facebook about the skimmers, 70 news stories were generated in 10 media markets.

Auditor Michael Montplaisir of Cass County, N.D. discussed getting the public on board to raise the sales tax for flood protection measures. "1997 was a big year in Grand Forks," he said.

"The levees were breached

and the city was evacuated." Grand Forks is located about 75 miles north of Cass County. "We were saved by lousy weather," Montplaisir said. "We survived that flood."

But 2009 was the county's "wake-up" call, when flooding was predicted.

"We thought we had two weeks [to prepare]. Then we were told we had six days and it would be two feet higher." The county evacuated hospitals, nursing homes and jails.

"We needed the jailers to work during the flooding," he said. The county bussed in volunteers and dug clay from wherever they could find it to build dikes.

They ended up saving the county. Shortly after the flood ended, a half-cent sales tax was passed with 91 percent saying "yes" to the tax. "It was kind of a desperate time," Montplaisir said.

In later years, when the county needed to raise the sales tax again for yet more flood protection, they engaged the Chamber of Commerce and started an ad campaign, especially to reach new people who had moved to the area and weren't there for past-years' flooding.

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## Cost-Saving Strategies to Improve County Economic and Energy Resilience: A Resilient Counties Forum,

## Managing Disasters Panel

### WHO SPOKE?

- Darry Stacy, commissioner, Cleveland County, Okla.
- Margaret Larson, Emergency Management Services, EY
- Steven G. Kral, director, senior manager, Emergency Management Services, EY
- Steve Traina, program director, economic development and disaster recovery, IBTS

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

When a disaster strikes, sometimes the aftermath is overwhelming and too much for a county to handle on its own. That's when you call in the experts.

When Cleveland County, Okla. Commissioner Darry Stacy was elected in 2013, he had no idea he and his fellow commissioners would be dealing with the devastation of an E-5 tornado clocking 210-MPH winds in a few short months.

"It killed 24 people and did \$2 billion damage — it was absolutely devastating," he told an audience at a forum on resilient counties, July 23.

Stacy had worked disasters before as a longtime member of the Norman, Okla. Police Department, but as an elected official, this was different, he said.

"This was going to be an ongoing process, not just a few days."

As the county began working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal agencies, "I soon learned we were in over our heads," he said.

After first turning to a local engineering company but finding they were "making promises they couldn't cash," Stacy said, the county turned to a non-profit, IBTS, that helps when disaster strikes.

"It was one of the best decisions we made as a county," Stacy said. The non-profit helped them maneuver through the labyrinth of red tape necessary to get the county and its residents back on their feet.

Stacy reminded the county

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# Preparing for disasters

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officials in the room: “Your next election is based on your last disaster. How people recover... that’s the impression that will be left on your community.”

## What you can do before disaster strikes

“When you talk about preparedness, you look at hospitals — are they prepared in terms of a crisis?” asked Steven Kral, director, senior manager, emergency management services, EY. “Are your transit systems prepared? What about your universities and school systems? Are they prepared for an active shooter situation?”

Utility systems are another area that needs to be explored. “How would you handle intrusions whether they were physical or via computer systems,” he said.

“Take a look at your pre-mitigation plans,” he advised. “Your 911 call centers — how do you keep them from being interrupted? You’ll need a generator. Be as detailed as possible.”

Margaret Larson, emergency management services, EY, said unexpected consequences from disasters, such as floating debris and trash during and after a flood, needs to be planned for in advance.

“Have standby contracts,” she said.

Kral said: “We’ve come a long way from ‘As long as the Waffle House is up and running, we’re up and running.’”

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## Workforce and Labor Trends Breakfast

### WHO SPOKE?

- John Courson, president and CEO, Home Builders Institute
- Terry Green, CEO, Think Make Live
- Brian Schaitkin, senior economist, The Conference Board

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED:

An economist, a construction executive and a social engineer walk into a workshop and up-

date county officials on trends in labor and workforce.

Schaitkin explained the components of the Labor Shortage Index, which measures risk that a given occupation over 10 years will experience labor shortages compared to other occupations.

“The most likely fields to experience labor shortages are the skilled trades,” he said. “Not many young people are going into the field. He said immigration could be one of the key ways to address labor shortages, particularly in healthcare and science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Courson described his organization’s Job Corps training.

“Our mantra is to take tax users and turn them into taxpayers,” he said. “Training is hands-on, and last day of training with us is just like the first day on the job with their new employer.”

At the same time, although it is vocational training, Courson

saw more than that.

“I look at us as the liberal arts,” he said. “Yes, we train students and place them in jobs, but we want them to explore the career paths beyond being in the trades themselves.”

Green outlined his organization’s approach to leadership development for at-risk youth 16–24, which has participants alternate between a week of classroom instruction to finish high school or earn a GED with a week of learning skilled trades.

Green spent roughly four years in prison, and he doesn’t want trouble to permanently derail someone’s professional life.

“Just because I was incarcerated doesn’t define my life, my future, who I’m going to be tomorrow,” he said.

**Staff Contact:** Sanah Baig, [sbaig@naco.org](mailto:sbaig@naco.org) **CN**

Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, County News senior writers, contributed to this report.



## Sumter County, Ga.

Welcome, Sumter County, Ga.

**Sumter County was named for former general and United States senator, Thomas Sumter,** the last surviving general of the American Revolution. Home to the headquarters of Habitat for Humanity, **Sumter County is also the birthplace of former President Jimmy Carter, who still lives there with his family today.** The Jimmy Carter National Historic Site in Plains, Ga. preserves Carter’s residence, boyhood farm, school and the town railroad depot that served as his campaign headquarters in the 1976 election.



## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### ROY CHARLES BROOKS

NACo President  
Commissioner  
Tarrant County, Texas



**Number of years involved in NACo:** 26 years

**Years in public service:** 26

**Occupation:** Tarrant County commissioner, Precinct 1

**Education:** Doctorate of Humane Letters (Honorary), Texas Wesleyan University

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** Run for NACo second VP.

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

**A dream I have is to:** Make a difference by helping to reduce childhood poverty in America.

**You’d be surprised to learn that I:** Am a pretty decent singer.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** Move to Jamaica for two years.

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Read murder mysteries.

**I’m most proud of:** The accomplishments of my wife and children.

**Every morning I read:** Three newspapers online.

**My favorite meal is:** BBQ.

**My pet peeve is:** Sanctimonious people.

**My motto is:** And this too shall pass.

**The last book I read was:** *House of Spies* by Daniel Silva.

**My favorite movie is:** *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*.

**My favorite U.S. president is:** Barack Obama.

**My county is a NACo member because:** Replacing all of the benefits that we get from NACo would cost far more than the price of our dues.

**My favorite music is:** Jazz.





# SPEAKERS

Officials from the Department of Agriculture, Fox Business commentator Lou Dobbs, author and justice reform advocate Piper Kerman and mountaineer Ed Viesturs, a Bryan Desloge hero, spoke to conference attendees during general sessions and committee meetings.



**Anne Hazlett, USDA assistant to the secretary for rural development** | Photo by David Hathcox

## USDA official talks broadband, opioids

It was a baptism by fire July 22 for Anne Hazlett, six weeks into her new position as assistant to the secretary for rural development at the Department of Agriculture. After she finished her speech to members of NACo's Rural Action Caucus (RAC), she asked for input and she got it.

Pender County, N.C. Commissioner Jackie Newton and several other county commissioners couldn't help but bring up the topic of broadband. "I think it is patently absurd that federal government licenses the entities that provide internet service but cannot somehow partner one way or the other with the agencies that impact the rural areas," Newton said.

Newton said she watches families drive miles to pull up to her office and use her Wi-Fi so kids can do their homework. "Is this who we are? Is this what we've come to?" Newton asked. "Something's got to be

done. We're at crisis mode. It's no more 'please' and 'thank you.'"

Lynn Padgett, director, government affairs/natural resources for San Miguel County, Colo., was applauded by the RAC audience when she suggested that companies that provide broadband ought to be defined as utilities.

Hazlett acknowledged the importance of broadband in her speech, noting that it is "no longer an amenity," noting its importance to jobs, education and healthcare. She said the administration is hoping Congress funds a new Rural Economic Infrastructure Fund that could partly be used to fund broadband.

For counties struggling with opioid abuse problems, a presidential commission formed in March to combat drugs will be out with its report in October, Hazlett noted.

"This group has been meeting regularly and will be releasing a report this fall with specific recommendations as

to how the federal government can help best address this issue with our state and local partners," she said.

Until then, she told RAC members, USDA "has several existing tools for your community to use including programs for the construction of treatment facilities, telemedicine and transition housing."

For example, in the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program, she said, USDA has invested resources in more than 150 mental health facilities in rural areas during the past three years. Of those 152 clinics, 51 are specifically designed to treat rural patients struggling with substance abuse, including opioid addiction.

Also at the RAC meeting at NACo's Annual Conference, faith-based organizations got a shout-out. RAC members, whose counties represent a population of 60 million, said that faith-based and non-profits are what they turn to outside of county government, when



**Swedish investment advisor and author Dag Detter** Photo by Leon Lawrence III

they are looking to combat poverty in their communities.

Blue Earth County, Minn. Commissioner Drew Campbell touted a group called Faith in Action for its role in helping everyone from the elderly to the disabled. "They help with childcare, doing taxes for the community, getting people to work," he said, noting the group has 100 volunteer drivers. The group gets some of its funding from the county, he said. "The faith-based initiatives need our support."

In all, 63 percent of those who took part in an instant poll at the RAC meeting, said they turn to faith-based groups or non-profits for help when looking to solve poverty problems.

## Swedish banker decries public asset sales

Inefficient management of publicly-owned assets is leaving untold amounts of wealth on the table that could otherwise be used to invest in counties' futures.

That's the thesis that Swedish banker Dag Detter delivered to the Large Urban County Caucus.

"(U.S. local governments) generally sell off properties to

the private sector, or they manage assets through slew of public authorities," he said.

But rarely does a county have a comprehensive accounting of its real (real estate) and operational assets (revenue generating services). Those assets generally account for two-thirds and one-third of local government total assets, respectively.

"You find that generally speaking, we know what the government owes, but we don't know what the government owns, and we don't know the value of the assets that they own. We don't manage the assets in a systematic way."

On top of the lack of a comprehensive public asset inventory, Brookings Institution Fellow Bruce Katz pointed out that the recent demographic trends have completely revalued urban cores.

Detter suggested counties form publicly-owned holding companies to manage their assets, aiming to use that new-found wealth would finance, public transparency and a long-term focus that would be insulated from short-term political pressures.

But, Detter said, county

*See SPEAKERS page 9*



# NACo members hear from NASA, Agriculture secretary

## From SPEAKERS page 8

elected officials had to be the ones to sell it to the people.

"You have to be the judge of this, not the professionals," he said. "You have to stand up and defend it, and it must be done with the sensitivities of the political realities."

## Pa. county goes it alone to speed up bridge work

Facing an inventory of 115 bridges, Northampton County, Pa. Executive John Brown didn't like the options for repairing them.

"Traditionally, we'd follow the transportation improvement program, we'd have to apply to the state department of transportation for federal and state money," he told the Transportation Steering Committee at its meeting July 22. "But we'd be competing with PennDOT and other 66 counties for projects."

There were limitations for federal funding that would limit us, and that timeline was roughly 46 years from start to finish with a bridge."

Over that time, material and labor costs increase, and he saw, at best, a chance to do one or two bridge projects each year.

"It's not a very cost-effective process for keeping bridges current," he said.

Consequently, the county struck out on its own, forming a public-private partnership through its general purpose authority (necessary under a state law to contract with private companies) to which contractors submit bids directly, as a group, rather than the county individually hiring architects, engineers and other professionals, and those contractor groups assume risk for project delays, once the burden of the county.

"By not going for state funding through the TIF program, it un-handcuffed us," Brown said. "We saved about 30 percent on 28 bridge rehabilita-



Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood (left) moderates discussion with NASA's Todd May and Maria E. Perez-Davis.

tions and five replacements, and we didn't have to jump through hoops with the federal and state regulations."

## Opening General Session

Space may be the final frontier, but right now, NASA is busy in counties across the country building its biggest rocket ever.

Dubbed Space Launch System or "SLS," the rocket now under development is the most powerful rocket ever built, able to carry astronauts in NASA's Orion spacecraft on deep space missions, including to an asteroid and ultimately on a journey to Mars.

NACo members heard more about NASA's rocket from Todd May, director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala., at the association's annual conference in Franklin County, Ohio. May spoke to NACo members Saturday afternoon at the Opening General Session.

Before the discussion on stage, the lights were dimmed and NACo members watched a short video about the rocket; the rumbling sound from the video made the room feel like it might lift off at any moment. "Counties do great with sound, I can almost drop the mike and walk away," May said.

May and Marla E. Pérez-Da-



Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue speaks to NACo members.

vis, who serves as the deputy director of NASA's John H. Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, talked about the rocket and how parts of it are being built all over the country, in a discussion moderated by Mobile County, Ala. Commissioner Merceria Ludgood. May said he's enjoyed meeting county officials from all over the country and said there are about 800 contracts with "Mom 'n Pop" businesses around the country that are helping build parts of the rocket.

"I met a gentleman, Larry

Phillips from North Carolina," May said. "He pointed at the rocket and said 'I built a phone for that.' He said it was really good for North Carolina and that they are good paying jobs. When we solve these really hard problems we push the innovation economy forward."

"Those things push our economy forward," he said. "I want you to be jazzed about NASA and learn how it impacts you and your county."

"We can't accomplish this without your support," Ludgood said.

SLS is expected to see its first unmanned launch in 2019 and its first manned launched sometime between 2021 and 2023. NASA will have spent \$23 billion on the rocket by Sept. 30.

## Sonny Perdue

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue touted Trump's formation of the Interagency Task Force for Rural Prosperity, a collection of 22 different agencies, that USDA will lead.

"He gave us 180 days to bring back concrete suggestions for action plans, not studies for a binder that will sit on a bookshelf somewhere," he said.

He said his administration of the Agriculture Department would focus, like much of Trump's, on eliminating regulations, but also on quality of life issues in rural America, involving housing, water quality, health care — both in terms of access to care and treatment of opioid addiction, and broadband internet access.

"Folks, we're not going to keep kids out here in these rural areas if they don't have connectivity," he said. "They're not going to go visit cousin Susie in the city and get (good service) playing those games and be satisfied at home. Nor can our farmers do the precision agriculture they want to do if we don't have the connectivity out so they can use data with less resources, less cost and better productivity as they really learn how to inculcate, incorporate and assimilate precision agriculture into their production."

Maintaining a reliable workforce through a legal guest worker program is also a priority for him, he said.

So, too, is success that can reinvigorate passion for rural America.

"Momentum is important in a community," he said. "There's enthusiasm, passion goes viral across the U.S. to know we have a succeeding generation," in rural areas.

Perdue recounted his time

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# ‘Counties are most important players in criminal justice’

## From SPEAKERS page 9

as a member of the Houston County, Ga. Planning and Zoning Commission.

“It was probably the best training ground I had from any kind of public service,” he said. “You could have black and white operating rules, you could have land use plans, people still want to talk to people about that. You cannot write enough laws and ordinances to make the situation fit.”

He also solicited input from county leaders on what regulations USDA should eliminate.

“We want to hear from you [about] the fly in the ointment that keeps you from doing things more efficiently, more effectively, better, more timely and getting a better deal at the end of the day.”

## Piper Kerman

As Piper Kerman’s prison sentence was nearing an end, even on the last day, she could not get a confirmation that she was indeed going to be released that day.

“Nobody had said anything to me or helped me prepare for it,” she told the Opening General Session audience.

It made Kerman, who went on to write the memoir *Orange Is the New Black* about her experience in the federal prison system, appreciate the detailed resources available to inmates at the jail in Franklin County, Ohio, where she now lives. That information could go a long way to easing re-entry for inmates.

“All the questions someone has about having a safe and successful return home are answered to the best of the county’s ability. I thought this is exactly what every county can do, or should do.”

Though she spent her entire sentence in federal prison, her subsequent work as a writing instructor in Ohio state prisons and a justice reform advocate has given her plenty of experience from which to suggest policy suggestions for counties.



*Orange Is the New Black* author Piper Kerman speaks to NACo audience at the Annual Conference.

“Counties are the most important players when it comes to the criminal justice system,” she said. “Even though sentencing laws are set on the state level,” the state takes many of its cues from local government.

She decried the rapid increase in the incarceration of women over the last four decades and the racial disparities in policing and sentencing, particularly the disproportionate prosecution of drug crimes against women of color.

“We should expect that everyone should be treated equally in a court of law,” she said. “A system that privileges

some people’s safety and freedom over other people’s safety and freedom simply is not a justice system.”

## Ed Viesturs, mountaineer

Ed Viesturs, the only American to climb all 14 of the world’s 8,000-foot mountains, said even with all of the support from his teams, Sherpas and sponsors, he could not have done it without something internal — passion.

“If you love what you do, it doesn’t matter how long it takes or how hard it is,” he told the General Session audience.

He drew several other universal truths from his life as a mountaineer. For instance, properly framing every goal.

“People think you get to the summit and you’ve achieved your goal, you celebrate,” he said. “I got to the summit and I had to get down. Lots of people don’t budget (their supplies) for the round trip and that’s a huge mistake in mountaineering.”

In any pursuit, you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. During his first of six successful Everest ascents, he was taking 15 breaths for every step. “Imagine that’s all you do for 12 hours,” he said. “That’s the price you pay, if you’re willing to push through those barriers.”

He stressed recognizing the value of hard work and avoiding taking shortcuts — because in his experience the consequences could be deadly on a climb.

“I saw a lot of my peers who step over the edge, break the rules,” he said. “We call this complacency; just when you think you’ve got it figured out, you don’t. I don’t want to break those rules I’ve been living by, because those rules kept me alive.”

At the same time, you have to properly give credit where it is deserved.

“The sherpas do most of the work,” he admitted.



Ed Viesturs recounts climbing all 14 of the world’s 8,000-foot mountains.

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Dobbs: ‘I’ve never seen greater prospects for prosperity’

From SPEAKERS page 10

And ultimately, along with passion and internal motivation, goal setting is the purest driver. “When I got to the top of Annapurna (the last eight-thousander), it was my dream come true,” he said. “ESPN isn’t up there to interview you, there’s no medal, no trophy, no bonus check. It’s all very personal.”

Lou Dobbs

Donald Trump is a “billionaire populist” who is “reaching out with his heart to his fellow Americans,” conservative commentator Lou Dobbs told NACo members in remarks July 24. “Is he doing it roughly sometimes? Is he doing it



Fox Business Network host Lou Dobbs addresses NACo members.

rudely sometimes? Yes...but... whether you’re left wing, right wing, whatever you are, this is incontrovertible,” Dobbs said. “This country right now is a different country than it was when he was elected. The reason in large measure is because he is shining a bright hot light on similarities, not the differences, between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party.”

And that gives Dobbs hope.

“I’ve never seen a time...I’ve I’ve never seen greater prospects for prosperity, for peace than we have right now. This country right now has a bright incredible future in front of it. It’s what we do with it, what our elected officials do with it, whether at the county level, the local level, state or federal.”

Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, County News senior writers, contributed to this report.


WORD SEARCH

KITSAP COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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


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- BAINBRIDGE ISLAND** Thousands of riders take a 35-minute ferry ride from here into work in Seattle. Housing costs are the highest in the county here.

**BREMERTON** The largest city in Kitsap County.

**FERRY** The Washington State Ferry System carries more than half its 25 million passengers back and forth from the east side of Puget Sound to Kitsap County.

**HOOD** The county is located between Hood Canal and Admiralty Inlet.

**KITSAP** The county name was changed by voters to honor the Suquamish war chief.

**NAVY** Puget Sound Naval Shipyard is the county’s largest single employer.

**PACIFIC** Kitsap County is two hours from the Pacific Ocean.

**PORT ORCHARD** The county seat of Kitsap County.
- POULSBORO** Founded by Norwegians in the 1880s, the town has a population of about 7,000 and holds Norwegian heritage events.

**SEATTLE** Many Kitsap County residents take a ferry to work in Seattle.

**SLAUGHTER** Kitsap County was originally called Slaughter County, named for a U.S. Army officer killed. It was formed out of King County and Jefferson County.

**SUQUAMISH** Members of this tribe were the first residents of the land.

**TIMBER** The lumber industry has played a large role in the region’s economy over the years.

**THE PROFESSOR** Actor Russell Johnson, known as “The Professor” on “Gilligan’s Island” lived on Bainbridge Island before his death in 2014.

**WATER** Water transportation dominates the county’s culture and economy.



# RESOLUTIONS



NACo Board members vote on fate of Environment, Energy and Land Use policy resolution. Photo by David Hathcox

NACo members adopted more than 100 platform and policy changes at their Annual Business Meeting, July 24. The following details policy resolutions first submitted for consideration at the 2017 Annual Conference.

## COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Maintain Current Funding for HUD-VASH Vouchers for Homeless Veterans in FY 2018 Budget

**ISSUE:** Support for federal funding for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to maintain current funding for the HUD-VASH voucher program for homeless veterans at a level of not less than \$40 million for FY 2018.

### Support the Housing First Approach

**ISSUE:** Housing First Approach

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) strongly supports retaining Housing First as a best practice approach to homeless assistance that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness.

### FY 2018 Appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

**ISSUE:** Support FY 2018 Appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Funding

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide adequate resources for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and fund the Title I and Title II accounts at the level authorized by the Act:

Title I – Department of Labor  
 • \$861.1 million for Adult Employment and Training Services, \$922.2 million for the Youth Activities, and \$1.37 billion for Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Services

Title II – Department of Education  
 • \$649.287 million for Adult Education

In addition, NACo supports

only a WIOA formula allocation funding approach. NACo supports local control and investment at the county and municipality level, and rejects any mechanism that gives States more authority than WIOA intends.

### Registered Apprenticeships Program Flexibility

**ISSUE:** Support flexibility for registered apprenticeships, academic and hands-on training.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide more flexibility for the Registered Apprenticeships Program to allow for more hours to be achieved through relevant college and workshop

classroom instruction, rather than all hours having to be recorded working with a journeyman.

## ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 Permits

**ISSUE:** It is difficult to get U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Section 404 permits approved in a timely manner.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports legislative and regulatory efforts to im-

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 13



# NACo members adopt more than 100 platform, policy changes

## From RESOLUTIONS page 12

prove and shorten the Corps timeline to review and issue Section 404 permits.

## Oppose Material Preference Legislation

**ISSUE:** There is a national effort to eliminate local control of water, wastewater and storm-water (water) infrastructure systems, and it would deny engineers, utility managers, and local government officials the ability to design water systems in the manner that best serves the needs of their communities.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports local control of water infrastructure procurement decisions. NACo opposes federal legislation that sets mandatory requirements on local water infrastructure procurement decisions.

## The Administration's FY 2018 Budget Request to Eliminate GOMESA Revenue Sharing Funds

**ISSUE:** Amending or modify-

ing the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) to redirect Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing activities and revenue sharing to the U.S. Treasury and away from eligible coastal states and their counties, parishes and boroughs.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges that Congress oppose the Administration's FY 2018 budget request to eliminate GOMESA's revenue sharing with eligible states, counties, parishes and boroughs and redirect the funds to the U.S. Treasury.

## FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### Designation of Election Systems as Critical Infrastructure

**ISSUE:** On January 6, 2017, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security designated election systems as critical infrastructure, a designation that prioritizes systems used to manage elections for ongoing assistance with cyber-

security from the federal government.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) reiterates that counties administer the nation's elections. While states have a federally mandated role in administering statewide voter registration lists, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should work directly with county officials in all efforts to support the security of polling places, storage facilities, voting equipment, vote tabulation, voter registration and poll worker databases and other systems that are administered at the county level. County officials have experience working with DHS to protect other subsectors of the nation's critical infrastructure and should be included in the establishment of an Election Infrastructure Subsector Coordinating Council. NACo also requests DHS work with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to improve information sharing with local officials about alleged hacking attempts and to inform election officials of any federal grant opportuni-

ties or other resources available to strengthen the security of county-managed election systems.

## Stop Settlement Slush Funds Act

**ISSUE:** A bill that may restrict or disallow Department of Justice from giving settlements funds from federal cases to states, counties, parishes and boroughs that are impacted from the lawsuits.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) opposes regulatory actions or bills, such as the Stop Settlement Slush Funds Act (H.R. 732), that would disallow funds derived from court settlements from being distributed to states, counties, parishes and boroughs, including those for injuries related to the environment.

## HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

### Full Funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

**ISSUE:** The Administration's FY 2018 budget proposal calls for the elimination of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports full funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

## Support Current Funding Structure of the Head Start Program

**ISSUE:** Efforts to alter the current funding delivery structure of the Head Start Program.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the existing Head Start funding delivery structure under which federal government directly delivers funding to local levels of government and opposes any efforts to alter that current funding structure.

## JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY RESOLUTIONS

### Continued Federal Support for Local and State Efforts to Reduce Rates of Opioid Dependence, Overdose and Fatalities

**ISSUE:** County agencies throughout the country are struggling to find sufficient resources to provide the treatment, recovery and prevention services needed to stem the tide of the opioid epidemic and the disease of substance dependence.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to continue its support for local and state efforts to reduce dependence on opioids and all other addictive substances, overdose and fatalities in local communities by providing additional emergency supplemental funding through existing federal grant programs.

### National Standards for Emergency Management Programs and the Emergency Management Accreditation Program

**ISSUE:** Since 2001 Congress has sought metrics for understanding the capabilities and capacities of local government to respond to, and be resilient in the face of, terrorism and other emergencies and disasters. NACo recognizes that the capacities and resources of county programs for emergency management will always vary. However, NACo has long invested time and effort into the development and maintenance of national standards for emergency management programs through involvement with the Emergency Management Accreditation Program Commission and the *Emergency Management Standard*. Use of the *Emergency Management Stan-*

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Human Services and Education Steering Committee Chair Nancy Sharpe presents her committee's report to NACo's Board of Directors.



# Resolutions include public lands, telecom, transportation issues

## From RESOLUTIONS page 13

*dard* as a measure of capability that provides a significant set of metrics for Congress and others to assess the capacity of county government to handle emergencies of all types. In addition, the EMAP *Emergency Management Standard* provides measures of capability that are independent of the size or finances of a county.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the use of the national EMAP *Emergency Management Standard* administered through the Emergency Management Accreditation Program as a means of measuring the capability of emergency management programs. Additionally, NACo supports the current processes and procedures the EMAP Commission uses to update and evaluate the Standard. The Standard should be free from requirements not supported in the ANSI standard setting guidelines or the EMAP Commission management process. The Standard is a stand-alone document that is developed through the due process and consensus body of EMAP and should have no undue influence from any outside entity imposing rules, guidelines, auditing principles within the process.

## PUBLIC LANDS

### Amendments to PILT Population Caps

**ISSUE:** Counties, boroughs, townships, and parishes with populations under 5,000 have monetary caps within the PILT formula that place them in an unfavorable position in relation to counties with populations greater than 5,000.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports amending the PILT formula to extend the population multipliers to include additional multipliers for local governments with populations in the range of 4,000, 3,000, 2,000, and 1,000. The increase in the 4,000 multiplier when compared to 5,000 popu-

lation would have the same ratios as the difference in 50,000 and 40,000 population. The increase in the 3,000 multiplier when compared to 4,000 population would have the same ratios as the difference in 40,000 and 30,000 population. This will continue for counties with populations of 1,000 or less. All local governments with enough qualified federal land acres would have a minimum payment no less than the population cap of local governments of 1,000 population.

## Salt Cedar Removal

**ISSUE:** An overabundance of salt cedar in river bottoms in the southwest has negatively impacted water tables and recharge abilities. Removal or efforts to confine this invasive species are often delayed or resisted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports legislation that would allow the federal government to ease the process to allow county governments to comprehensively remove salt cedar from rivers within their jurisdiction and revegetate with native riparian plants.

## Cease Wilderness Characteristic Inventory in Alaska

**ISSUE:** Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 still allows wilderness characteristic inventory in Alaska that is not allowed in the other 49 states.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports striking Section 603, 43 U.S.C. 1784. Lands in Alaska; Bureau of Land Management Land Reviews [P.L. 96-487, title XIII, §1320, 1980] of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

### Encourage Congress to Pass Legislation



Renee Price, chair, Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee takes her turn presenting policy recommendations.

## that Would Ensure Local 911 Service Fees Are Only Used for Emergency Communications

**ISSUE:** Funding for 911 comes for a variety of sources, including monthly fees that are set by the state and paid on consumers' telephone bills. Yet this rate may vary by phone type within a state. As consumers shift their telecommunications preferences from wired to wireless phones, some states have seen a dramatic decrease in dedicated 911 funding as existing statutes have not been updated to account for these shifts. Subsequently, it is not uncommon for the revenue from 911 fees to fall short of the cost of running a 911 call center, also known as a public safety answering point (PSAP). Additionally, many states collect 911 fees and remit the revenues to local governments. However, in 2015 over \$220 million in 911 fees were diverted by states throughout the country for purposes other than maintaining and upgrading PSAPs. As counties receive less in dedicated 911 revenue due to both states withholding funds and shifts in telecommunications preferences they must turn to general fund money.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) encourages Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to adopt legislation, or take regulatory action that ensures that

fees collected for local 911 services are only used to repair, replace or improve communications technology at our nation's public safety answering points or 911 call centers.

## TRANSPORTATION RESOLUTIONS

### Eliminating Regulatory Impediments for Effective Delivery of Federal Aid Projects

**ISSUE:** Elimination of Regulatory Impediments to the Effective Delivery of Federal Aid Projects

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the President and Congress to implement measures that would eliminate regulatory impediments on local and state sponsored federal aid projects to achieve our shared goals of strengthening transportation networks, improving public safety and advancing our economic competitiveness.

### Establish NACo's Legislative Position for United States Department of Transportation's Budget Appropriation for Full Year 2018

**ISSUE:** The nation's counties rely on a strong federal-state-local partnership to successfully meet the transportation and infrastructure

needs of their constituents. This partnership has included the federal government providing, through the annual appropriations process, funding to assist the needs of local government.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** U.S. Department of Transportation annual appropriations for fiscal year 2018 shall be maintained, at minimum, at the authorized FY 2017 level, and whenever possible, be increased to assist projects that support the economic output, mobility, and safety of the American people.

## Support Innovative and Automated Technology for Transportation Solutions

**ISSUE:** Automated vehicles and systems can substantially improve safety, mobility, and connectivity of public and private transportation. However, the cost to counties to prepare for the implementation of these technologies can be high.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Highway Administration to ensure that monetary federal assistance accompany any federal mandate issued to prepare county-owned roadways for automated vehicle implementation. **CN**



## Tech Town Hall: Retired general says 'counties on front lines'

By Beverly Schlatterbeck  
executive editor

Retired U.S. Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen presented a sobering picture July 22 at the Tech Town Hall. America, he said, is threatened by state and non-state actors intent on penetrating the nation's institutions in order to sow suspicion and discredit institutions at the heart of democracy such as America's electoral system.

Allen, a four-star general, served 45 years in military service, including stints as deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, and commander of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

There is no doubt in his mind that Russia breached election



Retired Gen. John R. Allen reviews foreign state cyber threats to U.S. computer systems.

systems in 39 states before last November's election and hacked the email accounts of 120 election officials the night before the election began.

In a wide-ranging presentation, he showed how a group of nations and non-state actors, he labeled the "4 + 1 + 1" — Rus-

sia, China, Iran and North Korea plus ISIS plus transnational criminal organizations — have taken to cyber warfare for profit and power.

North Korea, for example, was behind the world's largest ransomware attack in May, the WannaCry virus. China, too, has

engaged in cybercrime, breaking into 115 U.S. corporate IT systems and stealing unsecured information. "Don't be surprised if China's new J-20 fighter jet looks a lot like our F-22," he said.

Iran is thought to have 150,000 individuals engaged in cyber warfare and espionage, while ISIS cunningly uses social media to recruit members and confuse opponents.

But the greater threat comes from Russia. "Russia has the know-how and experience to execute a future disruptive attack on U.S. elections," he said. Its "intent is to penetrate to the lowest level of the American voting systems."

Russia also probes the country's SCADA systems looking for weaknesses. SCADA systems are used to monitor and control

plants or equipment in critical industries such as telecommunications, water and waste control, energy, oil and gas refining and transportation.

"They'll go where we're weak and plant beacons in the system to report back on its continuing vulnerability." In military terms, "what we're seeing is preparation of the battlespace."

This all leaves America's counties on the front lines with little hope of help from the federal government, he said. "There's not yet a cyber cavalry system — no one's coming over the hill to help you when your systems have been compromised."

He left the Tech Town Hall audience with one last message:

"Our democracy is under attack and you are the people who will defend it." **CN**



## NACo zeroing in on zero-to-three

By Mary Ann Barton  
senior staff writer

NACo's new president, Roy Charles Brooks, Tarrant County, Texas commissioner, plans to make combating childhood poverty his initiative during his term, he told members of NACo's Human Services and Education Steering Committee July 21.

"It's time to address this devastating national problem," Brooks said. More than one in five children live in poverty in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"Poverty is not just a suburban, urban or rural problem," Brooks noted. "One in five lives in poverty in a majority of our counties. You'll find even in our most affluent areas there are pockets of poverty."

Growing up in poverty is "an adverse experience that can impact children for the rest of their lives," he said. "It's going to take all of us to solve this problem."

"The way to break general poverty is to start with children from ages zero to three," he said. "This presidential initiative won't be able to solve the problem, but it's a start. We'll move the needle

the farthest with our children." By focusing investments in early childhood development, he noted, counties can spend less funding "down the road."

In addition to raising awareness about the issue, NACo's efforts will include advocating for federal legislation, Brooks said. One way NACo members can help with the initiative is to "make the case," by showing members of Congress what poverty looks like in their communities, he said. "It's got to be personal. They've got to not only have the numbers. They have to hear the stories. You've got to be able to show adverse impacts."

One audience member pointed out that there also needs to be an analysis of TANF or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. "We need to look at how we help needy families," they said. "In Ohio, it's shifted toward Social Security Disability. They're still in poverty using SSD as income."

Members also heard about the Florida Children's Council. Florida is the only state in the country with laws that allow county leaders and residents to create a special government entity that's sole purpose is to



Ross Thompson, PhD, talks about brain development.

invest in the well-being of children and families. The entity is first established by a County Commission through a local ordinance. Voters can then approve taxing authority for a Children's Services Council through a countywide referendum. Find out more about the Council at their website: [flchildrenscouncil.org](http://flchildrenscouncil.org).

Members of the committee also learned that poor dental health can often lead to truancy, school attendance issues and financial troubles for families.

The Oregon Community Foundation launched a massive effort several years ago to offer dental programs to kids in lo-

cal schools, conference speaker Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of the InterMountain Education Service District in Oregon, told NACo members. The program includes everything from exams to sealants to tooth brush kits.

Dental health was featured in last month's issue of *American Journal of Public Health*. Oral disease remains the most chronic condition in children and adults, Dr. Louis Sullivan, former secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, wrote.

By helping children with dental health, "you can get the kids to school, healthy and ready to learn," Mulvihill said. "It's our job to get these kids to the finish line."

NACo members heard more about zero to three issues in the Healthy Counties Early Childhood Lunch Summit held July 22. The luncheon included a talk by Ross Thompson, PhD, professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, who discussed brain development and Rob Grunewald, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, who talked about the return on investment when funding programs for children

from prenatal on up.

Mecklenburg County N.C. Commissioner Trevor Fuller told the packed room how his county came to embrace zero to three initiatives. He said after a pair of Harvard economists ranked Charlotte, N.C. dead last out of 50 cities for economic mobility several years ago, that was incentive for the region to pull together to do something about it.

"The Harvard study mobilized everyone — why were we 50th on the list? And what are we going to do about it?" he said during the panel discussion.

A task force, made up of members from the county's non-profit sector, as well as from the region's business and education communities, studied the economic mobility problem and recommended a solution — universal pre-kindergarten as an answer, Fuller said.

The Charlotte Executive Leadership Council has decided to adopt the project and last fall announced \$500,000 in financing to help figure out how to make it a reality. Fuller noted that a Department of Education Pay for Success grant for \$300,000 has also been kicked in. **CN**

# Thousands attend 2017 Annual Conference in Franklin County, Ohio

From ANNUAL page 1

on multigenerational poverty. "Counties put people first, but poverty can push them to the end of the line. That's why I'm pleased to announce NACo's new presidential initiative, *Serving the Underserved*."

Brooks identified three main components for his initiative: raising awareness of the role counties play in breaking the cycle of poverty; advocating for federal policies that support efforts to expand economic opportunity; and providing new tools to help counties combat poverty.

He also spoke of his recent battle with cancer and how it has strengthened his resolve to lead NACo to the next level.

"Over the past two years, I have been through the fight of my life. And I've emerged stronger, ready to take on any challenge. I draw strength from all of you. I draw strength from my community. I draw strength from my faith. I draw strength from my family and loved ones. And I draw strength from NACo's mission to unite America's counties, parishes and boroughs behind a common mission: to achieve healthy, vibrant, safe counties across America."

Delegates approved changes to the *American County Platform*, NACo's official policy re-

cord, and adopted more than 100 new or recently-vetted policy positions ranging from support for federal designation of local election systems as critical infrastructure to opposing federal legislation that sets mandatory requirements on local water infrastructure procurement decisions.

In other business meeting news: Delegates adopted a change to the bylaws that redistributes the number of votes allotted to NACo member counties.

A Cabinet member, NASA officials, media personalities and a prominent mountaineer keynoted the conference's two general sessions, July 22 and July 24. Attendees heard from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue; Piper Kerman, whose memoir *Orange Is the New Black* was the basis for the Netflix hit of the same name; Emmy-award winner and Fox Business Network show host Lou Dobbs; NASA's director of the Marshall Space Flight Center, Todd May; and Marla E. Pérez-Davis, deputy director of NASA's John H. Glenn Research Center in Cleveland. Rounding out the keynoters was Ed Viesturs, the only American to climb all 14 of the world's 8,000-foot mountains.

Kicking off formal programming, July 22, was the semi-annual technology event — this

year dubbed the Tech Town Hall. The four-hour session, jointly sponsored by NACo and the Public Technology Institute, featured talks by Gen. John R. Allen (retired) on foreign cyber threats to America's computer systems, especially its elections systems, and Bill McInnis, president of Bandura Systems, a computer security service.

The Tech Town Hall was one of several extended sessions this conference. The conference hosted the third in a series of NACo Town Halls on the opioid crisis; a Healthy Counties Early Childhood Summit; and a Resilient Counties Forum.

The traditional NextGen Community Service Project, sponsored by Next Generation NACo Network, targeted the Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Volunteers filled 350 backpacks with age-appropriate toys, games and books destined for child patients and their caregivers at the hospital.

At least half a dozen mobile tours were offered at the conference, with most sold-out before the conference began. For example, conference attendees had their pick of tours featuring the Farber Factory, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Nationwide's cybersecurity center, Ohio State University agriculture tour, the National Veterans

Museum and the Rickenbacker Inland Port.

Award winners are feted at the annual Awards Luncheon, which spotlights the 21 Best of Category Achievement Award winners. The NACo Achievement Awards program, now in its 48th year, is a non-competitive awards program, which recognizes innovative concepts that improve county governments. Also honored was Commissioner Randy Maluchnik, Carver County, Minn. who received the County Leadership

in the Arts award from Americans for the Arts.

In other award presentations: Turiq Bruce and Quentin Bruce from Leon County, Fla., were Presidential Scholarship award winners. David Davenport and CH2M Hill sponsor the scholarships, which are awarded each year to college-bound students in the home county of the out-going NACo president.

NACo's 2018 Annual Conference will be hosted by Davidson County, Tenn. and held in Nashville, July 13-16. [CN](#)

## ON THE MOVE

### NACo OFFICERS, COUNTY OFFICIALS

• **Mark Rhodes**, clerk, Woods County, W. Va., and

**Alan King**, probate judge, Jefferson County, Ala., have been appointed to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity. The commission held its first meeting July 19.

• NACo President **Roy Charles Brooks** spoke at the South Caroli-

na Association of Counties Annual Conference held in Beaufort County (Hilton Head), July 30-Aug. 2.



Rhodes



King

### NACo STAFF

**Brian Bowden**, associate legislative director, represented NACo at Aspen Institute's three-day strategic conversation on health and early childhood development, July 31-Aug. 2. The Aspen Institute is located in Pitkin County, Colo.

## CAPITAL LOOP



### NACo releases Summer Advocacy Toolkit

NACo has released its *2017 Summer Advocacy Toolkit* to

provide county officials with tools and resources that will help them better advocate for their counties.

### Legislation aims to reduce childhood poverty

The Child Poverty Reduction Act of 2017 would coordinate evidence-based policies across the federal, state and local levels to improve the well-being of children in low-income families. It would also create a federal task force to identify a nation-

al plan to address the country's high child poverty rate.

### DOL requests information on overtime pay regulations for "white collar" employees

The U.S. Department of Labor is soliciting comments on the 2016 overtime pay changes for certain executive, administrative and professional employees as the agency works to potentially formulate a new proposal to revise overtime pay regulations.

### House passes emergency funding for Veterans Choice Program just before deadline

On July 28, the House passed legislation, S. 114, that would provide an additional \$2.1 billion for the Veterans Choice Program over the next six months.

### Congress shifts focus to tax reform

The administration and congressional Republicans are

turning their focus to tax reform, which they hope to hold up as a major legislative accomplishment.

### Senators set their sights on health care priorities beyond repeal and replace

Senate Republicans appear willing to move on from health care reform just days after a failed vote to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on July 28.

## BRIGHT IDEAS | WASHINGTON COUNTY, Minn.

# County Makes Visiting Jail ‘Kid Friendly’ for Children of Incarcerated Parents

### PROBLEM:

Visiting a parent in jail can be frightening to a child, adding stress to the whole family.

### SOLUTION:

Create a more welcoming environment for the child and visiting family members.

By Mary Ann Barton  
senior staff writer

Would a visit to see a parent in jail be easier for a child if Elmo from Sesame Street was there too? Jail authorities in Washington County, Minn., are counting on those kinds of friendly faces to help ease the jolt of seeing a parent behind bars.

When a person is incarcerated, they're not the only ones who suffer the consequences. More than 2.7 million children in the country — one in 28 — have an incarcerated parent. About half of those are under age 10, according to a study by Pew Charitable Trusts.

Visiting a parent in jail, with its steel, bars and bullet-proof glass, can be an intimidating experience for a young child. To create a less stressful environment for kids and their parents, officials with the Washington County, Minn. jail decided to take part in a study several years ago to find out what impact seeing parents behind bars had on children.

The program got its start when the county was approached by Rebecca Shlafer, an assistant professor in the division of general pediatrics and adolescent health at the University of Minnesota, and Laurel Davis, a post-doctoral fellow in family science at the university; they had received a grant to study how visiting

parents in jail affects young children.

After Shlafer and Davis gained permission from the county to visit its jail for their study, they found visiting family volunteers to participate.

"This was a no brainer," said Washington County Jail Commander Roger Heinen, who has worked for the county for more than 25 years.

"We kind of felt like in the end, there would be a benefit," he said. "It's kind of one of those win-win situations."

The researchers later reported their findings to the county; their study found that children with incarcerated parents can experience depression, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, substance abuse, delinquency, poor grades, truancy and school failure.

Since then, the jail has created the Washington County Jail Children of Incarcerated Inmates Project.

The jail program makes use of a Sesame Street resiliency initiative called "Little Children: Big Challenges: Incarceration." Resources from the program include a Sesame Street DVD, a guide for parents and caregivers, a children's storybook, an online toolkit and a Sesame Street incarceration app.

Sesame Street provided large stickers of familiar faces like Sesame Street characters Elmo, the Cookie Monster, and Bert and Ernie for the waiting room at the jail, where kids hang out with other parents and caregivers before seeing their incarcerated parents.

In addition to the characters, the jail also hung photos of smiling children on the walls. There are also plenty of children's books to read while they're waiting, along with colorful child-size benches to sit on.

The jail also encourages in-

mates to read to their children, even if it is on a phone looking through glass, Heinen said.

In all, the jail spent under \$2,000 to get its program up and running, Heinen said. Today, they get new books and toys from donation drives held throughout various county departments; they also receive books donated from the library.

Another innovation that has worked out especially well, Heinen said is special visiting times for kids, where children get first priority on Saturday mornings and Saturday nights, so fidgety kids don't get overly antsy in the waiting room.

Another tip from Heinen: The jail recommends that the parent or caregiver accompanying the child visit the incarcerated parent alone first before bringing the child. This gives the adult time to figure out how the visit works and makes it a smoother time for

everyone when they return with the child. To help further prepare visiting families, the jail created a special page on its website for anyone planning a visit to the jail with a child.

The jail also holds resource fairs for families, with information about everything from the WIC Nutrition Program to immunizations; the fairs are held quarterly during visiting hours. "Transportation [to visit county offices to find out more about the programs] can be difficult," Heinen said. "We felt like this was a good way to get this information to them."

Heinen said he continues to have more goals for the program, including adding volunteers to the visiting area, to help families who visit, for face-to-face contact, and adding a large TV monitor to have a "one-stop shop" for visiting information, instead of having a lot of different signs all over the lobby.

For those who say that the jail's softer approach is "coddling" inmates, Heinen points out that "97 percent of these folks will get back in the community. The kids didn't do anything wrong. Why should they suffer? We look at it as a win-win."

There's been little pushback to the program, he said. "I think what's helped is the support from Sheriff Dan Starry on down. And also from County Administrator Molly O'Rourke and Commissioner Carla Bingham."

"We've very open with our staff," he said.

"It might be a little extra work. But the smiles and warm letters are worth it. They're all in. Who doesn't want to do something for the kids?" **CN**

Find more information from Sesame Street here: <https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/incarceration>



A child visits her father at the Washington County, Minn. jail. Photo by Bre McGee/StarTribune.com via ZUMA Press; used with permission.

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



A U.S. Forest Service firefighter from Sierra National Forest keeps an eye on flames from the Whittier fire above Gato Canyon. Photo by Mike Eliason, Santa Barbara County, Calif. Fire Department

## CALIFORNIA

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency in **SANTA BARBARA COUNTY** July 17 due to **wildfires** there that had burned more than 18,000 acres. The county sheriff evacuated homes and opened a shelter at a local school. Fires have broken out in numerous counties across the state including: the Garza fire in **KINGS COUNTY** (more than 48,000 acres); the Detwiller fire in **MARIPOSA COUNTY** outside Yosemite National Park (more than 7,000 acres); the Alamo Fire in **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY** (more than 28,000 acres); the Bridge Fire in **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY** (at least 460 acres) and the Grade Fire in **MENDOCINO COUNTY** (at least 900 acres). Cal Fire reported that wildfires have burned more than twice as much land so far, this year, when compared to the same timeframe last year.



## FLORIDA

**ORANGE COUNTY** isn't dangling any carrots in front of Amazon for its 855,000-square foot fulfillment center under construction, which will employ 1,500 workers. "Amazon's biggest issue was speed to market and making sure that we were able to meet their deadline," Eric Ushkowitz, county economic administrator, told the *Orlando Sentinel*. The company has been given more than \$40 million in **tax incentives** elsewhere in the Sunshine State. All employees working more than 20 hours at the new Orange County facility will receive benefits.

- **PASCO COUNTY** emergency responders got a call one

morning last month about a resident's boat sinking into a depression. Less than an hour later, the depression had grown and was swallowing up a nearby home. The neighbors had already headed to work but firefighters went into the home to rescue two dogs. The county deemed 10 nearby homes unsafe and helped evacuate the residents after the depression widened into a **220-foot wide sinkhole**, the *Sun Sentinel* reported. Located in a neighborhood north of Tampa, the sinkhole swallowed two homes and a boat, while TV correspondents and hovering news helicopters captured the scene on video. Officials were worried the sinkhole might merge with a nearby lake.

Sinkholes are common where the rock below the land surface is limestone, carbonate rock, salt beds, or rocks that can naturally be dissolved by groundwater circulating through them, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. As the rock dissolves, spaces and caverns develop underground. In addition to Florida, sinkholes are most common in Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

## GEORGIA

• **FORSYTH COUNTY** fire officials were on the **hunt for an arsonist** last month who had set three fires within one week. A suspect was arrested after a county deputy noticed his expired tags; once pulled over, the deputy saw "suspicious items" in the car and notified fire

department investigators. "He was arrested while the last fire was in progress," Forsyth County Fire Chief told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Police say the man set the fires in his own neighborhood at a tennis court, a subdivision clubhouse and in a parked car.

• It's **ROCKDALE COUNTY** to the rescue: The county, located east of Atlanta, is stepping in to help save a once-thriving **youth baseball program**. Interest in the program had dwindled over the years and a few volunteers were trying to prop it up on their own with little help or funding, after sponsorships disappeared, a concession stand was broken into 11 times and lawn care equipment was stolen. "We have not made any long-term commitment as to what we'll be doing with

the program as far as moving it or keeping it there (at Legion Field)," Jason Redmond, Parks and Recreation Operations deputy director, told the *Rockdale Citizen*. "Right now, we just want to get the program up and running in a sustainable fashion where we can provide a quality service to the community."

## IDAHO

Hundreds of people gathered July 10 to protest plans to lease space in the **JEROME COUNTY** jail to hold **immigration suspects**. Protestors marched and chanted outside the county courthouse just before a hearing held by county commissioners. All but two of 20 speakers at the hearing were against the idea. A contract is reportedly being drafted between the Sheriff's Office and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement to lease 50 beds to ICE for \$75 each per day. The 136-bed jail, which opened last



year, was budgeted at about \$12 million. The county is about 35 percent Hispanic, with about half of that population born abroad, according to the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs. About 42 percent of the state's foreign-born population is undocumented, according to Pew Research.

## ILLINOIS

**LAKE COUNTY** Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor proclaimed a state of emergency July 12 due to **significant flooding** after the county, located in the north-eastern part of the state, saw as much as six inches of rainfall in 24 hours in some areas. "The past 24 hours have been very challenging for the residents of Lake County as we respond to the flood," Lawlor said in his statement. "Once the waters recede, recovery, clean-up, and damage assessment will continue for weeks. It's important to remember we are all in this together." Lawlor briefed Gov. Bruce Rauner who toured the area July 14. The county posted updates, photos, maps and videos and held numerous press conferences to keep the public apprised of flooding problems.

## NEBRASKA

**Out-of-whack property valuations** have prompted **SARPY COUNTY** to file a complaint with the state's Tax Equalization and Review Commission. It petitions the commission to force **DOUGLAS COUNTY** to raise its valuation to 96 percent of market value, which is the value of Sarpy County's residential property. That could add thousands of dollars to the valuations of homes across Douglas County, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported. County boards can petition the commission to ensure equalization of property across counties.

## TENNESSEE

Officials in **WHITE COUNTY** have given inmates the option of shortening their jail sentences if they **choose to have a vasectomy or birth control implant**.

Women are given a contra-

ceptive implant, which works for up to four years, in their arm and men are given vasectomies. Both options are free. That cuts 30 days off of their jail time. So far, 32 women have received the implant, while 38 men are waiting for a vasectomy, *The Daily Beast* reported.

The ACLU reportedly released a statement calling the program unconstitutional. General Sessions Court Judge Sam Benningfield, who signed a standing order in May, said he made the decision to ensure that inmates would not be "burdened with children," according to WTVF.

## TEXAS

**HIDALGO COUNTY** has seen its **first locally transmitted case of the Zika virus**, which is also the first local transmission in the United States this year.

County health officials couldn't say where the infected man was bitten by a mosquito because he travels through the Rio Grande Valley, but he

had not traveled outside of the country in recent months, *The Monitor* reported.

Eduardo Olivares, chief administrative officer for Hidalgo County Health and Human Services noted that the man showed no symptoms of the disease, and credited a doctor for proactively testing the man for the disease, despite a negative test of his pregnant partner.

- A new policy that goes into effect Sept. 1 requires local county and city law enforcement departments to now **pay to use the state crime lab** in Austin, which the state estimates local governments have used to the tune of \$11 million per year. To offset costs of up to \$100,000, **WISE COUNTY** Sheriff Lane Akin is proposing the county charge the Texas Department of Public Safety at least \$50 a day to house inmates arrested by state troopers. Akin still needs commissioners to approve his plan, WFAA News reported.



## UTAH

Airlines may be seeing a lighter tax burden in the state, but it's at the expense of homeowners and small business taxpayers, say five Utah counties that say it's unfair and have filed suit against the state for **giving the airlines a 39 percent discount**, according to *Deseret News*.

**SALT LAKE, WEBER, DUCHESNE, UTAH AND WASHINGTON** counties aim to overthrow a law passed this year by the state Legislature, which they say will result in a \$5 million shortfall in state tax revenues. The gap would most likely be filled by local taxpayers, the counties said. Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams told the *Deseret News* that taxpayers "expect principles such as tax fairness and transparency to be followed," but that "isn't the case here."

"That is why Salt Lake County is joining in this lawsuit on behalf of homeowners and small-business owners to ensure that their voices are represented as well as those of large

industries," the county mayor said.

## WASHINGTON

The **KING COUNTY** Board of Health is requiring that **limited service pregnancy centers**, known as crisis pregnancy centers, post a notice on-site and in their advertising stating "This facility is not a health care facility."

Roughly eight LSPCs operate in King County. These centers are unregulated and are often staffed by volunteers and employees who lack medical training or licensure. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists opposes the facilities because women are given health information and advice, they say, by a biased and ideologically motivated organization or person without any medical training.

## WISCONSIN

A federal judge said that **MILWAUKEE COUNTY**'s requirement for permits of its parks will be part of **augmented reality games** probably violates free-speech protection.

The county's permit requirement came after crowds of people playing Pokemon Go trashed one of its parks last summer. The ordinance forces developers to obtain permits similar to a what a group would need to hold an event in the park. The fees would fund park upkeep and help the county prepare for crowds.

Wisconsin U.S. District Judge J.P. Stadtmueller said the county couldn't enforce the ordinance while a lawsuit to overturn it moves forward. He criticized the ordinance "for its strangeness and lack of sophistication" because it treats game developers "as though they are trying to hold an 'event' in a Milwaukee County park," the Associated Press reported.



Photo courtesy of the Howard County, Md. Library System

## MARYLAND

Younger members of **HOWARD COUNTY** Library's in-house ukulele band, Diamonds in the Rough, tune up for their publicity shots: (From left) TC Goodman, Lauren Roselle and Jane Goodman. The library began **lending ukulele kits**, which include tuners and cases, July 1. Related classes will begin this fall. Ukulele borrowers can access books, recordings, videos and even master music teachers: All components of the system's first DIY Education Curriculum.

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## the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot & Winkler

# And Her Little Dog Too

In the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy embarks on a grand adventure to the Land of Oz and then to the Emerald City, along with her faithful companion, her dog Toto. Toto comforts Dorothy, gives her courage, and helps her to accomplish her goal. He is an important member of her team.

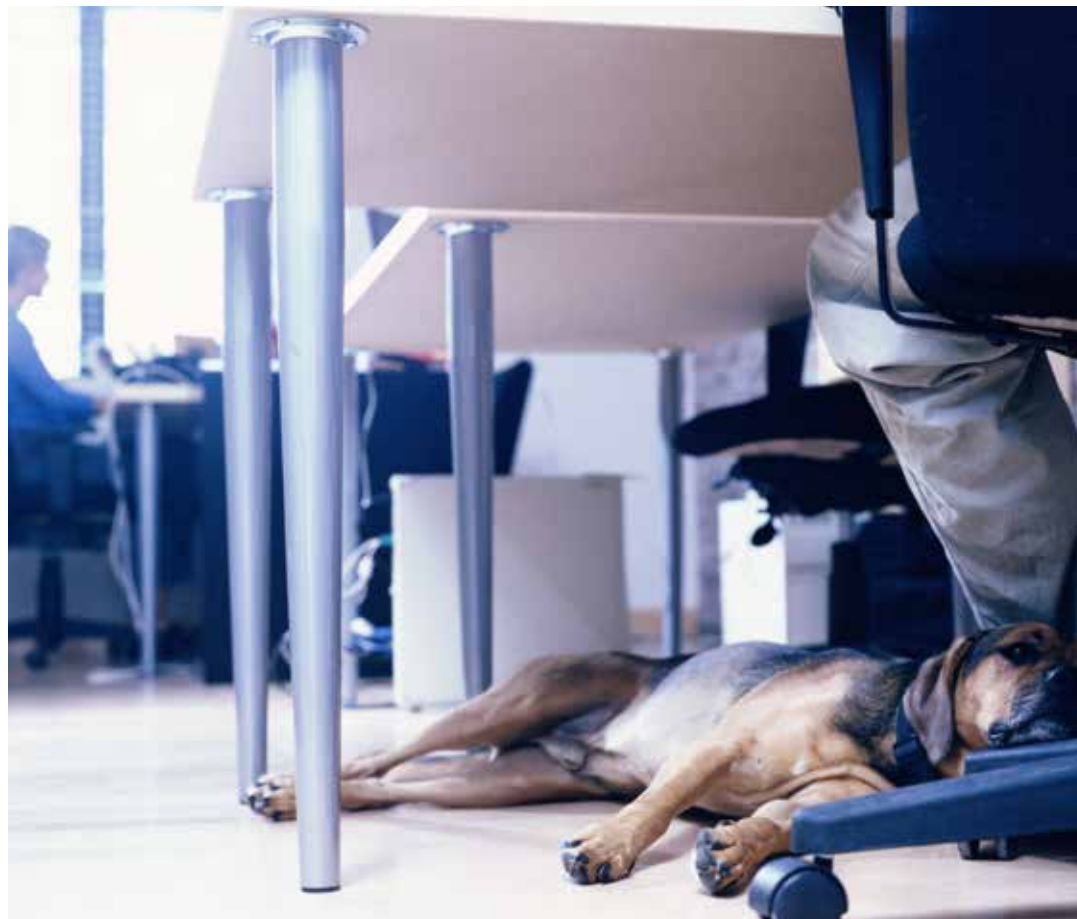
These days it seems as if many people want a pet on their team as well, including in the workplace. Is that a good idea?

A number of articles have recently promoted the benefits of pets in the workplace. In August 2016, National Public Radio discussed pet-friendly policies with their piece, “Who Let the Dogs In? More Companies Welcome Pets at Work.”

In the article, employers describe pets-at-work policies as effective recruitment and retention tools, and point out that such policies cost organizations nothing and are often a favorite perk of employees. Also in 2016, PetMD encouraged pets at work as a means to lower stress and absenteeism, while *Forbes* confirmed dog-friendly organizations attract millennials.

In February 2017, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) ran an article titled “How to be a Pet Friendly Employer,” advocating not just the recruitment and retention benefits of pets in the workplace, but also the positive impact to morale and wellness. The article listed a variety of pet-friendly benefits including take-your-dog-to-work days, pet insurance and animal-related volunteerism.

SHRM cited a 2016 study by Banfield Pet Hospital which found that 83 percent of employees feel a greater sense of loyalty to companies with



pet-friendly policies.

So should you introduce “Fido Friday” in your workplace? It depends. Be sure to consider the details and anticipate the concerns before you decide. Here are some things to think about:

First, is your work environment conducive to pets? Pets might not be a viable option in a detention facility, a court, or a department that has frequent interaction with youth or vulnerable adults. This would mean not all departments could participate, and the result is inequity in the organization where some employees cannot have pets in the workplace, but when they visit finance, they see co-workers permitted to have furry friends in the office.

Workers who are out in the field might not have an ideal pet environment if their work requires the pet to be left in a vehicle for periods of time. At a more micro level, do workspaces have carpeting or hard floors? Do cubicles have space that would allow for pet gates? Is there an outside area that would allow for pet potty

breaks?

Second, what is proper doggie etiquette in your organization? If you decide to allow pets in the workplace, you will want to have a policy outlining the details of your program. Would you allow pets every day or just on Fridays? Would you allow any pet or just dogs? Some employees are all for pets in the workplace until someone brings an animal other than a dog. A greater number of individuals are allergic to cats, and some employees might not feel quite as supportive of the policy if a co-worker brings in an iguana, snake or monkey. Will your policy require pets to be housebroken, well-tempered, able to get along with other animals or trained?

Are puppies permitted? Everyone loves a puppy, but puppies need additional attention, might chew and damage furnishings and are prone to accidents. Will employees be allowed to take the pets to meetings in other buildings or with outside agencies? Are pets permitted to roam the office unsupervised, or only

permitted on leash? How long may a pet be left alone in an office or cubicle? An employee may leave the pet to go to a lunchroom, restroom, retrieve something from the copier or attend a meeting. According to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals must be “harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the individual’s disability prevents using these devices” and employers may want to apply similar restrictions to pets in the workplace.

Speaking of the ADA, you might recall that in the movie, Toto performs some of the functions of an emotional support dog for Dorothy. But what if the Scarecrow has severe allergy to dog dander or if the Cowardly Lion has a fear of dogs? In reality, these situations might arise in the workplace if someone brings a dog, and each employee could request an accommodation under the ADA.

In the case of Dorothy in the movie, it is important to remember that “comfort ani-

mals” and “service animals” are not the same thing. According to the ADA, service animals are “working animals” trained to provide service directly related to the person’s disability. Emotional support animals or comfort animals do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. If an employer is unsure if a pet is a service animal, the supervisor may not ask about the employee’s disability, but may enquire if the pet is a service animal required because of a disability and what work or tasks the dog has been trained to perform. It is important to remember that allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals.

So, what’s the bottom line? Pets in the workplace might increase creativity, demonstrate flexibility, improve morale, create work-life balance, result in longer working hours, and improve work relationships. Each of these benefits support recruitment and retention efforts as well as create a desirable culture. But being fully informed of the pros and cons is necessary to set a program up for success.

Once you understand the pros and cons, the next step is to examine your organization’s culture, customers, departments and positions. Then, design your program. It might be easiest to start small, perhaps only permitting dogs, limit the days of the week, and set clear expectations so everyone can understand acceptable doggie etiquette. Perhaps consider including telecommuting in the pet-friendly workplace program, by allowing employees to either bring their pets to work on Fridays or work from home on Fridays to be with their pets. Because, of course, flexibility and the ability to spend more time with their beloved pets makes everybody happy – and helps our organizations find our way over the rainbow. **CN**