



# Counties Matter

Counties are diverse in structure and how we deliver services to our residents, yet we all share the vision of achieving healthy, safe, and vibrant counties across America.



# ABOUT NACo



**The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to:**

- Advocate with a collective voice on national policy.
- Exchange ideas and build new leadership skills.
- Pursue transformational, cost-effective solutions.
- Enrich the public's understanding of county government.
- Exercise exemplary leadership in public service.

**STRONGER COUNTIES.  
STRONGER AMERICA.**

America's 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs represent the places where we live, work and play. Counties are so present in our everyday lives that we sometimes overlook the many ways they help our communities thrive. Often behind the scenes, **40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees** are responsible for maintaining roads and bridges, caring for our physical and mental health, administering our elections, ensuring public safety, strengthening environmental stewardship, and so much more.

County governments are also indispensable partners in our nation's intergovernmental system, which balances and shares roles and responsibilities among all levels of government. Counties collaborate with federal, state, local and tribal governments to deliver on-the-ground services and meet our residents' needs.



# TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

**Transportation and infrastructure are core public sector responsibilities that impact everything from our daily commutes to shipping goods around the globe.** From building and maintaining roads and bridges to providing efficient transit options, counties are a driving force connecting communities and strengthening our economy. Counties play a major role in other essential community infrastructure like schools, hospitals, jails, courthouses, parks and water purification and sewage systems.

## SERVICES INCLUDE



ROADS AND BRIDGES



AIRPORTS



PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION



CONSTRUCTION OF  
PUBLIC FACILITIES



UTILITIES LIKE GAS  
& ELECTRICITY



SOLID WASTE  
MANAGEMENT &  
RECYCLING

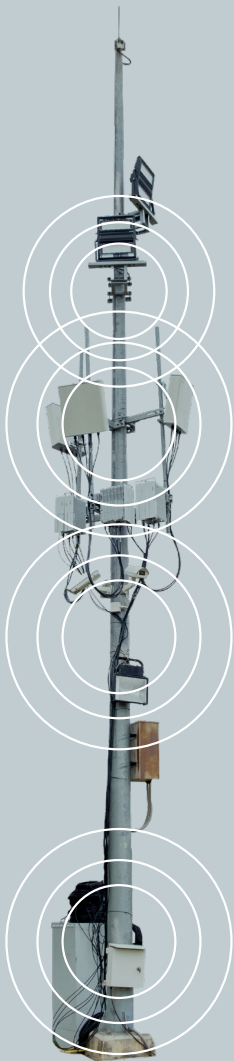


WATER & SEWAGE



TELECOMMUNICATIONS





## COUNTIES INVEST IN LOCAL BROADBAND NETWORKS

that support internet access for millions of residents.

## STATS



COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN **45%** OF AMERICA'S ROADS



COUNTIES OWN **38%** OF BRIDGES



COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION OF **34%** OF PUBLIC AIRPORTS



COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN **40%** OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY

**\$61**

billion in the construction of public facilities, such as hospitals, schools, jails and other local institutions.

**\$134**

billion total in building, maintaining and operating physical infrastructure and public works.

More than

**\$22**

billion in sewage and solid waste management.





**IN A MAJORITY OF STATES (26), COUNTIES ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE HEALTHCARE FOR LOW-INCOME, UNINSURED OR UNDERINSURED RESIDENTS.**



## COMMUNITY HEALTH

**Counties invest heavily in local residents' health and well-being, often serving as a safety net for low-income and indigent residents.** County health departments protect our residents and communities by offering a wide range of services like administering flu shots, providing health information and preventing and responding to public health emergencies.

From hospitals and emergency rooms to clinical care facilities, many counties operate the systems that keep us healthy from the time we are born to the time we grow old. Counties also often have significant responsibilities for behavioral and mental health services and care.



## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY

**\$62.8  
BILLION**

in human  
services

**\$100+  
BILLION**

in community  
health and  
hospitals

**\$163+  
BILLION**

in community  
health, hospitals  
and human  
services  
annually



## STATS

COUNTIES SUPPORT

**900+**

HOSPITALS, WITH  
MORE THAN



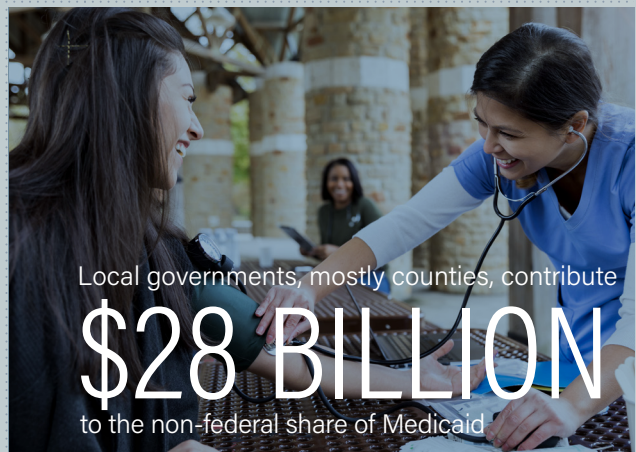
**62,000** BEDS



Counties are involved in  
promoting public health  
through

**1,592**

local health departments



Local governments, mostly counties, contribute

**\$28 BILLION**

to the non-federal share of Medicaid

## SERVICES INCLUDE



HOSPITALS &  
HEALTH CLINICS



PUBLIC  
HEALTH



BEHAVIORAL &  
MENTAL HEALTH



SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
TREATMENT



IMMUNIZATIONS &  
PREVENTION



INDIGENT  
HEALTHCARE



HEALTH CODE  
INSPECTIONS



NURSING HOMES





# JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Counties play a major role in two distinct areas of justice and public safety: emergency response and preparedness and the criminal justice system. From patrolling the streets, to operating and maintaining county detention facilities, to employing innovative approaches to safely reduce jail populations, county sheriffs and other law enforcement departments are on the front lines of justice and public safety. Other key county players are judges, district attorneys, public defenders, court clerks, jail directors, 911 operators and coroners.

## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY



Almost

**\$107 BILLION**

in justice and public  
safety services



Almost

**\$13.3 BILLION**

in fire protection  
activities

## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY



## SERVICES INCLUDE



COUNTY COURTS



PUBLIC DEFENDERS



SHERIFF'S  
DEPARTMENTS



COUNTY POLICE  
DEPARTMENTS



PAID & VOLUNTEER  
FIREFIGHTERS



DISTRICT  
ATTORNEYS



JAILS &  
CORRECTIONAL  
FACILITIES



JUVENILE  
DETENTION &  
JUSTICE SERVICES



CORONERS



EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT  
PERSONNEL



Over

**\$42 BILLION**

on 2,961 police and  
sheriff departments



Almost

**\$21 BILLION**

on county courts  
and legal services



**8 MILLION**

people were admitted to county  
and other local jails in 2020.





# VETERANS

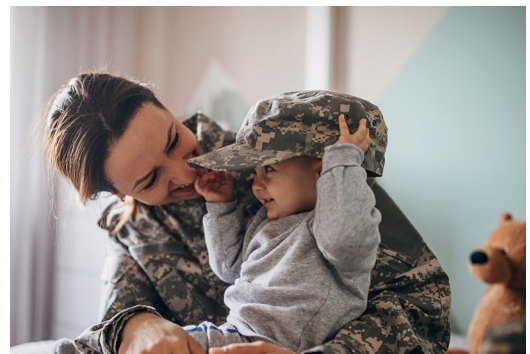
Counties are home to more than 17 million veterans, comprising seven percent of residents living in our counties. Counties fund and operate, almost exclusively through local tax revenues, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) in 29 states and the District of Columbia, which help veterans claim more than \$52 billion in federal VA benefits each year. CVSOs help our veterans access stable housing, employment and education opportunities and deliver critical mental health services that treat trauma and prevent suicide.

## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY

More than

**\$209 BILLION**

in VA funding distributed to support veterans and their families.







**COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS (CVSOs) OPERATE IN 29 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING VETERANS ACCESS FEDERAL BENEFITS.**

**48%**

of veteran expenditures went to veteran compensation and pensions.

**40%**

of veteran expenditures went to veteran medical care.

Over

**7%**

of county residents are veterans.







# PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

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Counties offer a local, detailed level of expertise on resource management issues to federal land agencies. Whether participating in forest health projects to reduce wildfire, providing emergency services on federal lands, maintaining roads and other access points or implementing wildlife conservation measures, counties are a key partner in ensuring federal lands and resources are enjoyed and used wisely.



**62%**  
of America's counties  
have federal public lands.





Counties received more than

**\$514 MILLION**

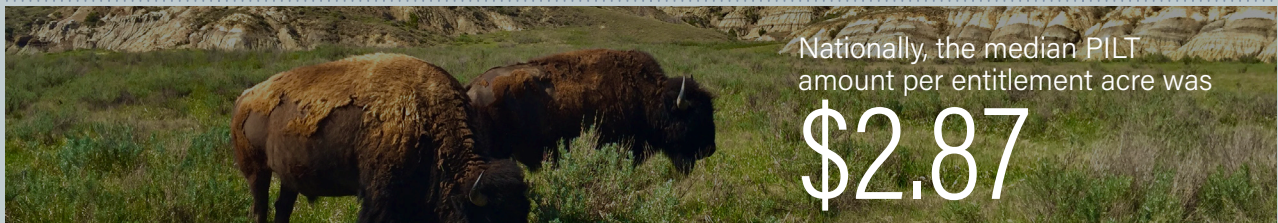
in Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding in FY2021



More than

**1700 COUNTIES**

received a funding in 2021



Nationally, the median PILT  
amount per entitlement acre was

**\$2.87**



Average payment to counties receiving PILT was

**\$272,526**



Counties  
received more  
than **\$249  
MILLION** in  
SRS funding in  
FY2019.



**655**

counties and schools received  
Secure Rural Schools payments





# COUNTY MANAGEMENT

**Counties provide vital services to all Americans, from issuing birth certificates and marriage licenses to administering elections.** Counties often build and maintain parks, libraries and cultural centers. Counties are sources of innovation, exploring new opportunities to address challenges and piloting programs and initiatives that make residents' lives better. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure healthy, vibrant and safe communities across the United States.

## COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY



Almost

**\$12 BILLION**

to build and maintain parks and recreational facilities



Close to

**\$12.8 BILLION**

in housing and community development

## SERVICES INCLUDE



COMMUNITY AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



TAX ASSESSMENTS  
& COLLECTION



RECORD  
KEEPING



911 CALL  
CENTERS



ELECTIONS AND  
POLLING PLACES



RECREATION  
AND PARKS



ARTS  
PROGRAMS



HOUSING



**EVERY TWO YEARS COUNTIES  
FUND AND OVERSEE NEARLY  
100,000 POLLING PLACES** and  
coordinate more than **630,000** poll  
workers.

## STATS

**THERE ARE 38,873 TOTAL COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS  
(INCLUDING COUNTY BOARD, EXECUTIVES AND ROW OFFICERS)**

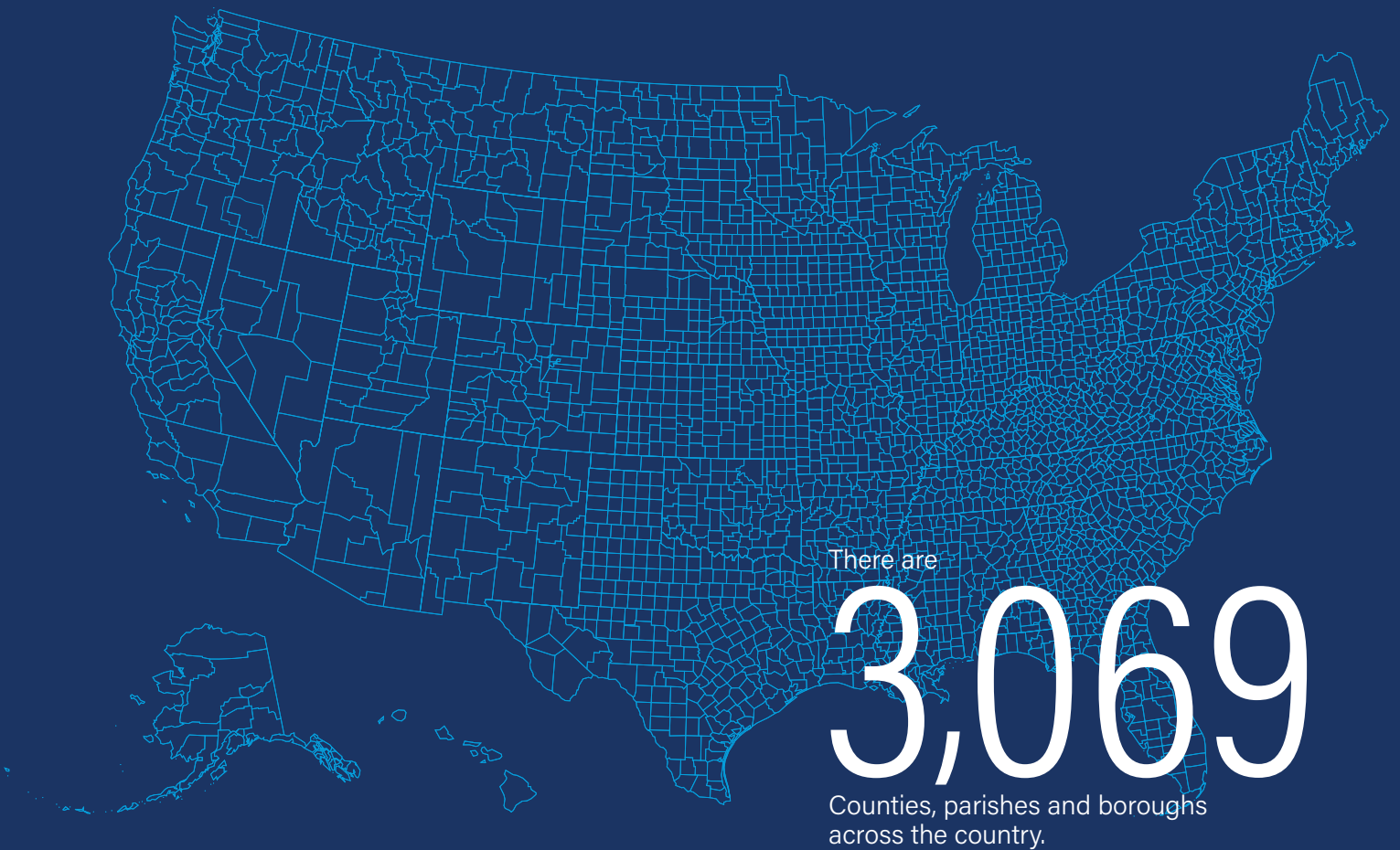


**19,579**  
ELECTED COUNTY  
BOARD MEMBERS  
AND ELECTED  
EXECUTIVES



**18,629**  
ARE INDEPENDENTLY ELECTED  
CONSTITUTIONAL OR ROW  
OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR  
SPECIFIC COUNTY FUNCTIONS





## AMERICA'S DIVERSE COUNTIES

Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments (shires) were established in Virginia. **The organization and structure of today's 3,069 county governments are chartered under state constitutions or laws and are tailored to fit the needs and characteristics of states and local areas.**

No two counties are exactly the same. Counties are diverse in structure

and how we deliver services to our communities. In general, states decide the roles and responsibilities of county governments. Counties are governed by locally elected officials and, in some instances, operate under home rule authority, which allows for more local flexibility and control with structural, functional and fiscal powers. Though organizational structures vary, all county governments are on the front lines of delivering vital services to residents and building stronger communities.

There are  
**3.6**  
million  
county  
employees

...and

**319**  
million  
county  
residents



## WHY IS LOCAL FLEXIBILITY IMPORTANT?

**COUNTIES ARE INCREASINGLY DIVERSE.** In 2020, in one out of four counties, there was at least a 50 percent chance that two people chosen at random would be from different racial or ethnic backgrounds – up from one in five counties in 2010. Because all counties are organized to meet local needs, county leaders are well positioned to embrace the diversity of our communities, ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities and practice inclusive decision-making.



ONE IN FIVE  
COUNTIES



ONE IN FOUR  
COUNTIES

\*The Diversity Index (DI) measures the probability that two people chosen at random will be from different racial and ethnic groups

## COUNTIES INVEST RESOURCES DIFFERENTLY.

For example, the American Rescue Plan's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund allocated **\$65.1 billion** in direct, flexible aid to every county, parish and borough. In accordance with the legislation and guidance from the U.S. Treasury, counties are investing these critical resources in a broad array of areas based on unique county needs, opportunities and circumstances. To learn more, visit <https://www.naco.org/covid-19-recovery-clearinghouse>









# NACo's MISSION

Strengthen America's counties.

# NACo's VISION

Healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America.

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The annual investments are 2017 figures. NACo analysis of Census of Governments Data, 2017; NACo Analysis of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) data, 2015-2019; NACo Analysis of Federal Aviation Administration and Office of Aviation Analysis, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2017; NACo Analysis of Federal Highway Administration - National Bridge Inventory, 2020; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration, Highway Performance Monitoring System, 2019; NACo Analysis of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services 2015, 2016 cost reports; NACo Analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Jail Facilities Data, 2013; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Data, 2020; NACo Analysis of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), 2020; NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year estimates, 2019; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of the Interior Data, 2021; NACo Analysis of data from the U.S. Forest Service data and Bureau of Land Management; NACo Data on county elected officials, June 2017; NACo Analysis of U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2020; NACo analysis of Census of Governments Data, 2019; UNACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - 2020 Decennial Census.

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