COUNTIES MATTER

STRONGER COUNTIES.
STRONGER AMERICA.
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, parish and borough governments are on the front lines of delivering vital services to residents.
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

SERVICES INCLUDE

• ROADS & BRIDGES
• AIRPORTS
• PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
• CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES
• UTILITIES LIKE GAS & ELECTRICITY
• SOLID WASTE RECYCLING & MANAGEMENT
• WATER & SEWAGE
• TELECOMMUNICATIONS

COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN 46% OF AMERICA’S ROADS
COUNTIES OWN 38% OF BRIDGES
COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN 78% OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS
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.

**COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY**

- Almost $22 BILLION in sewage and solid waste management
- Almost $60 BILLION in construction of public facilities
- More than $122 BILLION total in building infrastructure and maintaining and operating public works
COMMUNITY HEALTH

SERVICES INCLUDE

• HOSPITALS & HEALTH CLINICS
• PUBLIC HEALTH
• BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL HEALTH
• SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT
• IMMUNIZATIONS & PREVENTION
• INDIGENT HEALTHCARE
• HEALTH CODE INSPECTIONS
• NURSING HOMES
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.

**IN A MAJORITY OF STATES (26)**, counties are required to provide healthcare for low-income, uninsured or underinsured residents.

Local governments, mostly counties, contribute **$28 BILLION** to the non-federal share of Medicaid.

**COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY**

Almost **$83 BILLION** in community health and hospitals

More than **$58 BILLION** in human services
JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

SERVICES INCLUDE

• SHERIFFS DEPARTMENTS
• COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENTS
• COUNTY COURTS
• JAILS & CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
• JUVENILE DETENTION & JUSTICE SERVICES
• EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL
• PAID & VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
• DISTRICT ATTORNEYS
• PUBLIC DEFENDERS
• CORONERS
Counties play a major role in two distinct areas of justice and public safety: emergency response and preparedness and the criminal justice system. Counties keep communities safe by providing law enforcement and preventing crime. From patrolling the streets, to operating and maintaining county detention facilities, to serving as the arm of the county courts, county sheriffs and other law enforcement departments are on the front lines of public safety and the criminal justice system. Other key county players are judges, district attorneys, public defenders, court clerks, jail directors, 911 operators and coroners.

### COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY

- **Over $35 BILLION** on 3,041 police and sheriff departments
- **Almost $26 BILLION** on correctional facilities
- **Almost $11 BILLION** in fire protection activities
- **Almost $93 BILLION** total in justice and public safety services
- **Almost $19 BILLION** on county courts and legal services

**COUNTIES OPERATE 91% OF ALL LOCAL JAILS**

10.6 MILLION people were admitted to county and other local jails in 2016
SERVICES INCLUDE

- Financial Assistance
- Violence Prevention
- Food and Nutrition Services
- Early Childhood Development
- Workforce Training and Development
- Veteran Services
- Senior Services and Elder Care
- Behavioral and Physical Health Services
- Medical Coverage
- Parent Education and Support
- Child Welfare, Foster Care and Adoption
- Homelessness and Housing Support
- Services for Individuals with Disabilities

75% OF FEDERAL FUNDING USED BY COUNTIES IN FY 2014–2016 WAS FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Counties play a critical role in building vibrant communities for all individuals, including veterans, children and families. We make significant investments in human services to help residents live well and thrive, achieving their fullest potential and creating pathways to economic opportunity and self-sufficiency.

There are over 257,000 county human services employees across the country delivering vital services to our nation’s most vulnerable populations.

**COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY**

Over $58 BILLION in federal, state and local funds in human services while serving as the front-line social safety net.

Counties in **35 STATES** have county veterans service officers (CVSOS)

$173 BILLION in U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs expenditures was within county jurisdictions

County Veteran Service Officers secured $80.4 BILLION in compensation benefits and $67 BILLION in health benefits for veterans in FY 2017

- **39%** of veteran expenditures went to veteran medical care
- **37%** of counties have veterans representing more than 10% of the adult population
- **47%** of veteran expenditures went to veteran compensation and pensions
COUNTY MANAGEMENT

SERVICES INCLUDE
- RECORD KEEPING
- TAX ASSESSMENTS & COLLECTION
- 911 CALL CENTERS
- ELECTIONS AND POLLING PLACES
- RECREATION AND PARKS
- ARTS PROGRAMS
- HOUSING
- COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Counties provide vital services to all Americans, from issuing birth certificates and marriage licenses to operating 911 call centers. Counties often build and maintain parks, community centers, libraries and cultural centers. Counties are responsible for managing elections, from presidential to local. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure healthy, safe and vibrant communities across the United States.

Service to more than 314 MILLION county residents

COUNTIES INVEST ANNUALLY

Almost $10 BILLION to build and maintain parks and recreational facilities

Close to $11 BILLION in housing and community development

POLLING PLACES

Every two years counties fund and oversee more than 100,000 polling places

...and coordinate more than 700,000 poll workers
ABOUT NACo

The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America’s counties, including nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

• **ADVOCATE FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES IN FEDERAL POLICYMAKING**
• **PROMOTE EXEMPLARY COUNTY POLICIES AND PRACTICES**
• **NUTURE LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND EXPAND KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS**
• **OPTIMIZE COUNTY AND TAXPAYER RESOURCES AND COST SAVINGS, AND**
• **ENRICH THE PUBLIC’S UNDERSTANDING OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT.**
SOURCES: