

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Valerie Brown assumes leadership of NACo; Eliason elected 2nd VP at Annual Conference



Photo by David Hathcox

NACo's new 2009-2010 Executive Committee takes front and center stage for its official photograph. Pictured are: (l-r) NACo Executive Director Larry Naake, and newly-elected officers: Athens County, Ohio Commissioner Lenny Eliason, second vice president; Tarrant County, Texas Judge Glen Whitley, first vice president; Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor Valerie Brown, president; Gloucester County, Va. Supervisor Teresa Altemus, president-elect; and Maricopa County, Ariz. Supervisor Don Stapley, immediate past president.

By **JIM PHILLIPS**
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER

NACo members elected new officers and — in hotly debated action — voted to expand the association's executive committee as the 2009 Annual Conference wrapped up July 28.

Members elected Lenny Eliason, Athens County, Ohio commissioner, as second vice president during the Annual Business Meeting of the association. As the newest member of the executive committee, he joins the new leadership team headed by NACo President Valerie Brown, Sonoma County, Calif. commissioner; NACo President-elect Teresa Altemus, Gloucester County, Va. supervisor; First Vice President Glen Whitley, Tarrant County, Texas judge; and Immediate Past President Don Stapley, Maricopa County, Ariz. supervisor.

"I am proud to lead this phenomenal organization," Brown said in her inaugural speech. "We are entering a new era

in government, and we must work together to be the voice for local government across the country."

She pledged to continue her efforts toward comprehensive health reform, which she had undertaken over the past year as chair NACo's Task Force on Health Care Reform.

"Counties play a unique role in the health care system, and county officials know what works and what doesn't when it comes to local health care access and delivery."

Brown also pledged to be a strong advocate for county green government initiatives. She believes that counties must do their best to save taxpayer dollars while following environmentally sound practices.

Also at the Annual Business Meeting, members voted to adopt more than 100 policy positions on issues ranging from the Clean Water Act to Transportation Trust

See **ANNUAL** page 5

Restore the Partnership bill introduced in Congress

By **STEVE TRAYLOR**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

NACo members approved more than 100 resolutions at the 2009 Annual Conference in Nashville—Davidson County. But for many, one last-minute resolution was the culmination of years of hard work and symbolized NACo's long-term commitment to restoring the federal-state-local government partnership.

The resolution simply states: "NACo supports the passage of H.R. 3332, a bill to create a National

Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs."

Introduced on July 24 by Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), H.R. 3332—the Restore the Partnership Act of 2009 — would establish a permanent, bipartisan National Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs to facilitate the fullest cooperation and coordination between all levels of government.

It is anticipated that the commission will bring together representatives of federal, state and local governments to discuss and

give critical attention to common problems.

The commission would have 30 members, four of which would be appointed by the president of the United States from a list of names submitted by NACo, at least two of which must be from counties with a population of less than 50,000. The first meeting of the commission would take place within 90 days after the enactment of the bill.

Connolly, former chair of the

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Executive Committee expansion draws heated debate

By BEVERLY A. SCHLOTTERBECK
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Bylaws changes usually invite yawns not controversy. But a proposal to expand NACo's executive committee by four members drew heated, often contentious debate during the Annual Business Meeting in Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn.

At issue with the executive committee expansion was the eligibility criteria for the four new members. As originally envisioned by the Task Force on Governance and Structure, the new members would represent four geographical regions and be drawn from the ranks of the current NACo Board members.

Regional caucuses of currently serving Board members would select their representatives to the executive committee.

As the Task Force explained in its final report, an expanded executive committee would provide closer contact with counties within each region, provide better communication, allow for enhanced membership recruitment, provide for regional policy input, and bridge the gap between the relatively small number of officers and the large number of Board members.

The first shot at the proposal was a "friendly" amendment to extend eligibility for membership to both current and past NACo Board members. Debate about this extension of eligibility was quickly upended by efforts to either postpone the bylaw's adoption until the 2010 Annual Meeting or expand membership eligibility to all elected county officials in a region's member counties.

More than 30 minutes of discussion followed with heated



Photos by David Hathcox

Greg Cox, NACo Governance and Structure Task Force chair, answers questions from the floor about the bylaws change to expand membership on the Executive Committee.

exchanges, several points of order and several calls to order. In the end, the proposal to postpone adoption of the bylaw amendment failed, while the effort to expand eligibility to all member counties was accepted as a friendly amendment by the Task Force Chair Greg Cox and passed overwhelmingly.

The regional caucuses met later in the day and elected the following representatives: Joe Giles, Erie County, Pa. commissioner and NACo Board member representing the Northeast Region; Burrell Ellis, DeKalb County, Ga. CEO representing the South Region; Pat Conway, Buchanan County, Mo. county clerk and NACo Board member representing the Midwest Region; and Bill Cope, Lemhi County, Idaho commissioner representing the West Region.

The executive committee expansion item was one in a series of

governance and election bylaws changes proposed over the course of the last year by the presidentially appointed Task Force on Governance and Structure.

At its spring meeting, the Board of Directors adopted eight of a proposed 11 recommendations, including a voluntary limit on the amount of campaign funds that candidates for NACo office can spend. The three remaining proposals needed bylaws amendments to implement, which require full membership approval.

At the Annual Meeting, two bylaws amendments passed with ease, including one that reduced the



Cumberland County, N.C. Commissioner Breden Blackwell takes issue with a proposed bylaw change during floor discussion.

number of officers in the association by eliminating the president-elect position, leaving in place, the president, first vice president, second vice president and immediate past

president slots. This means there will be no election in 2010 for NACo second vice president since there will be already be four incumbent officers.

Digital survey shows counties embracing new technologies

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

In the face of challenging economic circumstances, America's counties continue to use new tools such as social media to engage and encourage citizen participation and feedback, said Cathilea Robinett, executive director of the Center for Digital Government.

In its annual Digital Counties survey, the Center and NACo found that America's counties are embracing new technologies to involve citizens, are moving towards transparent government and increasing green and sustainable measures while continuing to improve online services. The survey identifies best practices and recognizes those counties with exemplary digital service to their citizens.

The survey's top digital counties were honored at a national

awards ceremony which coincided with NACo's annual conference in Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn.

"Counties are moving forward in very responsible ways by green and sustainability efforts, energy efficiency monitoring, e-waste recycling and government transparency," Robinett said.

The top counties, by population, were:

- Oakland County, Calif. (500,000 +)
- Loudoun County, Va. (250,000 - 499,999)
- Roanoke County, Va. (150,000 - 249,999)
- Charles County, Md. (Less than 150,000)

A complete list of winners is available at www.centerdigitalgov.com.

"As counties face the budgetary challenges of 2009 and beyond, they are finding Information Technology

essential for effective and efficient government," said Larry Naake, NACo executive director. "Not only are county governments using technology to continue delivering services with fewer resources, they are using innovative technology to communicate more effectively with their citizens and businesses. The Digital Counties Survey illustrates the innovation and tenacity of counties across the country."

The Center for Digital Government is a national research and advisory institute on information technology policies and best practices in state and local government. The Center is a division of eRepublic, Inc., a national publishing, event and research company, focused on information technology in the public sector.

This year's survey was underwritten by Hyland Software and Quest Software, Inc.

Expanded Executive Committee Regions

West Region:

Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota

(15 States; 2008 population: 72,300,623)

Central Region:

Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma, Ohio, Michigan

(11 States; 2008 population: 68,758,134)

South Region:

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Virginia, North Carolina

(12 States; 2008 population: 99,163,198)

Northeast Region:

Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, District of Columbia

(10 States, including D.C.; 2008 population: 58,664,459)

Deconstruction projects reduce waste, create jobs

By DAN MILLER
STAFF WRITER

The two blighted homes that Wayne County, Mich. recently razed may have seemed like a liability to most observers. But thanks to a pilot project devoted to salvaging reusable and recyclable materials from dilapidated structures, officials have generated revenue, diverted waste from landfills and trained members of their workforce.

A collaboration between Wayne County, Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit and Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit, the project clears the buildings through deconstruction—the method of systematically tearing down a structure and either recycling or reusing as much of its materials as possible.

Deputy County Executive Azam Elder devised the program in an effort to find a new way of getting rid of blighted properties while stimulating the local economy. With the help of his economic development team, Elder used specially trained workers to dismantle six targeted buildings — two of which have already been disassembled.

The projects enlisted the help of 13 workers who were part

of Goodwill Industries' reentry program, which trains individuals who were recently released from incarceration.

"One of the big goals I had for my economic development team was to identify partners who could truly bring unique value to that project," Eldersaid. "Goodwill Industries immediately jumped onto this unique opportunity. They saw this as a natural fit to retrain folks who may have had blemishes on their record in the past."

Elder hopes to grow momentum on the practice of deconstruction. Eventually, he said, the county's goal will be to transfer the process of deconstruction over to the private sector.

"There are huge indirect benefits, such as people being employed and getting an entire community that becomes more proactive when dealing with how to get rid of waste and blight—and doing this in a way that promotes green techniques," he said.

Wayne County budgeted \$10,000 for the demolition of each building in the deconstruction program. Eventually, Elder says he wants to reduce the net cost to \$8,000, on top of creating jobs through the program.

The lots left from the deconstruction projects will be used in an urban farming project the county plans to launch in the coming months.

SpeedRead » » »

- » In deconstruction, buildings are dismantled to salvage reusable or recyclable materials
- » Wayne County, Mich.'s program trains former inmates to deconstruct houses
- » Deconstruction benefits vary widely based on type of building and the condition of the materials

materials include doors, cabinets and flooring materials.

"You can salvage just about anything if it's a high enough quality," he said.

According to Deller, the benefits of deconstructing a building vary widely from structure to structure depending on the type of building and the condition of the materials salvaged from it.

"When I first started working on deconstruction, my goal was to create a little guidebook for people to open it up and see 'all right, this is what we do,'" he said. "But the more I worked with it the more I realized that each building is different."

As such, the revenue generated from deconstruction projects, as well as their durations, can vary widely. A meticulous hand deconstruction for a large house can take three weeks, while a "hybrid deconstruction" using both hands and heavy

machinery can take approximately five to six days.

As part of the county's long-term plans for deconstruction projects, Deller has spoken to local architects and interior designers about designing their buildings with deconstruction in mind. Furthermore, the county has begun researching a potential centralized deconstruction center to warehouse salvaged materials.

Deller says builders are to purchase items gleaned from deconstruction projects.

"I wouldn't say people are hesitant to buy it," he said. "It's hard for an architect to spec the material. It's hard for them to know that when the project is ready to be built that the material they have specced will be available."

Orange County, N.C. has written deconstruction into law. In 2008, the county passed a Regulated Recyclable Material Ordinance, requiring the recycling of certain construction and demolition materials including

corrugated cardboard, untreated and unpainted wood as well as scrap metal.

"Our main goal is to keep it out of the [construction and demolition] landfill. That's number one," said Rod Jones, environmental enforcement officer for Orange County. "Number two, if we can find a reuse for it and get to the market, then that's something we try to do as well."

Jones helps assess every structure slated for demolition in the county that is greater than 500 square feet. Before he or another member of the construction and demolition team signs the demolition permit, he must determine whether there are salvageable materials inside.

"We work with several private companies that specialize in deconstruction," he said. "We really can't recommend anyone, but [we can say] these are people who do deconstruction in the area and they're familiar with our regulated materials ordinance."

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Deconstruction practices across the nation

Deconstruction itself is not a new idea, and counties across the country have created programs to keep construction waste out of their landfills. The EPA's most recent data indicates that the United States generated more than 160 million tons of building-related construction and demolition materials in 2003.

King County, Wash. Program Manager Kinley Deller, who oversees a variety of deconstruction projects, says that buildings slated for demolition may contain a variety of salvageable items. The popular "quick wins" come in the form of large beams and timbers. Other

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QuickTakes

Five Cities with the Most Job Postings Per Capita

1. Washington, D.C.
2. Baltimore, Md.
3. San Jose, Calif. – Santa Clara County
4. Austin, Texas – Travis County
5. Hartford, Conn. – Hartford County

Source: Rankings Second Quarter 2009

Recovery Act forums continue county-federal dialogue

BY CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

A focus on energy resources and energy efficiency can help counties jumpstart their economies under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a U.S. Department of Energy official told participants at a forum on Energy Infrastructure and Economic Development.

Three concurrent Recovery Act forums replaced the usual closing general session at this year's NACo annual conference in Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn. — in a nod to many counties' continuing struggles to make ends meet. They afforded county officials a chance to question federal, state and local experts on implementation of the Recovery Act — and provided Obama administration officials with firsthand feedback from counties.

SpeedRead » » »

- » Conference puts Recovery Act front and center
- » Energy-efficiency retrofits can spur local economic development
- » Counties urged to inventory their local and regional energy resources

"Energy is about the laws of supply and demand: Who has it, and who doesn't, and how does that relate to economic development?" said Matt Chase, executive director of the National Association of Development Organizations, setting the tone for the dialogue to follow. The other sessions were Housing, Employment and the Economy; and Reporting, Transparency and Accountability: Recovery Act and Beyond.

Chase asked for a show of hands of how many counties had conducted an inventory of current energy assets in their county or region — very few. "Not enough," he said. "So you don't know what you have today, let alone potentially what you have as you move forward with renewable energy.

"If you're in the economic development industry, you're going to locate in those communities that have affordable, reliable, safe, cheap energy."

Localities that haven't analyzed their resources can live to regret it. Counties have to think about the "pros and cons of each new source," Chase said. Some communities have pursued ethanol plants only to realize later that rural roads needed to be reinforced to handle increased traffic; bridges needed to be rebuilt; and it takes a lot of water.

"I think that's one thing that probably local governments haven't done so well," Chase continued, "and mostly it's because your federal and state funding sources come in stovepipes, and you tend to work in those silos."

He said localities need to take a regional approach to energy issues — "You're going to have to work with your neighbors. Because just like roads, they cross county boundaries."

Gil Sperling, program manager in DOE's Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs, said passage of the Recovery Act added \$11.6 billion to his area of responsibility. "All of that is a down payment on a clean energy future," he said. Sperling said weatherization programs and energy retrofits, in particular, are good for economic development.

"What we found is that the workers who do the energy efficiency retrofits, they came out of the community. So people who weren't previously employed now have incomes, and they spent the money back with local businesses," he said.

That economic activity also attracts new businesses — such as expansion of local HVAC contractors and the retailers who supply them.

"What we find from these programs is one, you can't export these jobs; two, the money that comes out of saving energy costs gets put back into the community. So these are great examples for economic development in your communities," Sperling said.

Most of the 90-minute session was devoted to questions from



Photo by David Hathcox

Mayor Bob Dixon of Greensburg, Kan. explained the "opportunity" presented by a tornado that leveled his city in 2007. Greensburg, with its residents' buy-in, decided to rebuild "green" and "sustainable."

county officials. In impromptu remarks, NACo President Valerie Brown thanked the speakers for coming to listen and respond to counties. "We'll tell you the stories, and you can figure out how to give us the tools," she said. And "tell" they did.

One county official, referring to natural gas, asked: "What good is it for local governments to have an energy policy if Uncle Sam won't let us develop our own energy resources?"

Sperling advised the audience to look at their assets, not their constraints.

"Maybe you do have natural gas or you have oil, but work within the existing policy framework today. Maybe natural gas is 30 years away... but your community probably has other assets that you could be building on," he said.

The July 28 session's third speaker was Mayor Bob Dixon of

Greensburg, Kan. He talked about rebuilding his city, which was devastated by a tornado in May 2007. The community decided to go the "green" and "sustainable" route.

He said Greensburg is focused on reducing its energy consumption; to that end it has installed light-emitting diode (LED) streetlights to replace those the twister demolished. While initially more expensive, the city is saving 40 percent on energy consumption; if avoided maintenance is figured in, the savings rise to 70 percent, he said. And Greensburg's 313 LED streetlights save 40 tons of carbon dioxide per year.

In closing, Sperling quoted from a speech by his boss, Energy Secretary Steven Chu. "He talked about energy efficiency: everybody talks about it being low-hanging fruit. He talks about it as being the fruit on the ground, and we need to pick it up."

Profiles in Service



» Rose Gehring

Clerk, Auditor and Recorder
Idaho County, Idaho

NACo Board of Directors

Number of years active in NACo: 14, with 12 on the Board of Directors

Years in public service: 23

Occupation: Bookkeeper, full-time for the past 23 years

Education: Graduate of Idaho State University

The hardest thing I've ever done: watch my eldest son go through the hells of cancer for nine years. He is still very much alive and a miracle.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: My Mom, Dad and Mother Theresa

A dream I have is to: meet Ichiro Suzuki of the Seattle Mariners.

You'd be surprised to know: that I dined with Bev Doolittle, the famous artist in Lewiston, Idaho.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: spend two weeks in Indonesia and enjoy every day of it.

My favorite way to relax is: reading a book while soaking in a bubble bath.

I'm most proud of: my four children — Dean, Darren, Carmen and Wayne.

Every morning I read: *Lewiston Morning Tribune*.

My favorite meal is: chicken strips.

My pet peeve is: people who litter.

My motto is: "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff."

The last book I read was: *Quiet Strength* by Tony Dungy.

My favorite movie is: *Gone With the Wind*.

My favorite music is: Celtic.

My favorite president is: Abraham Lincoln.

Newsweek editor, transportation secretary address attendees

ANNUAL from page 1

Funds to Rural Revitalization. (See report, page 11)

Annual Conference

Economic recovery was the primary focus of the conference. It included three concurrent sessions on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The sessions addressed a variety of issues important to counties in these tough economic times, including employment, infrastructure and development. Counties also learned how to best use Recovery Act funds to their advantage, highlighted programs that are helping to improve services in their communities and other ways to improve service delivery with declining revenues (see story, p. 4).

Stapley said the choices counties make now will impact the economy and county budgets for years to come.

"It is crucial to use stimulus funds in ways that will best benefit America's counties long-term," said Stapley, completing his year leading the association. "It is im-

portant not only to fix short-term problems, but also to invest in our future to create prosperity and save taxpayer money."

Speakers and Workshops

Delegates heard presentations from several nationally renowned speakers, including Jon Meacham, the editor of *Newsweek* magazine; Tamara Erickson, a nationally renowned motivational speaker; U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood; U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius (via videotape); and Deputy Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ron Sims.

In addition to general session speakers and ARRA forums, delegates had their pick of 40 workshops that explored issues as varied as rural road safety, the municipal bond market, food safety and the impact of "green" jobs on local economies.

Award Winners

NACO's annual conferences traditionally provide the stage for several prestigious award ceremonies, among them the County

Courthouse Awards. This year, the awards were presented to:

- Franklin County, Wash. Coroner Dan Blasdel for his dedication to improving the lives of those in his community, including his work to end teen drug and alcohol abuse. Committed to addressing this problem, Blasdel created "Beat the Reaper," an interactive game that is designed to teach youth about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

- Harris County, Texas Justice of the Peace Russ Ridgway, who was recognized for his work to increase efficiency and transparency in county operations and a successful 10-step program to combat school dropout and absenteeism rates.

- Larimer County, Colo. Clerk and Recorder Scott Doyle was selected for his efforts to better manage taxpayer money and improve the democratic process through Vote Centers. By creating large centers where any county resident could vote, Larimer County increased voter turnout dramatically and lowered costs. The Vote Center concept has spread across the state and the country, as well as internationally.

Established in 2001, County Courthouse Awards recognize elected county officials who demonstrate innovative and effective leadership to improve the quality

of life of their residents (for more award winners, see page 17).

(Beverly Schlotterbeck, executive editor, contributed to this report.)

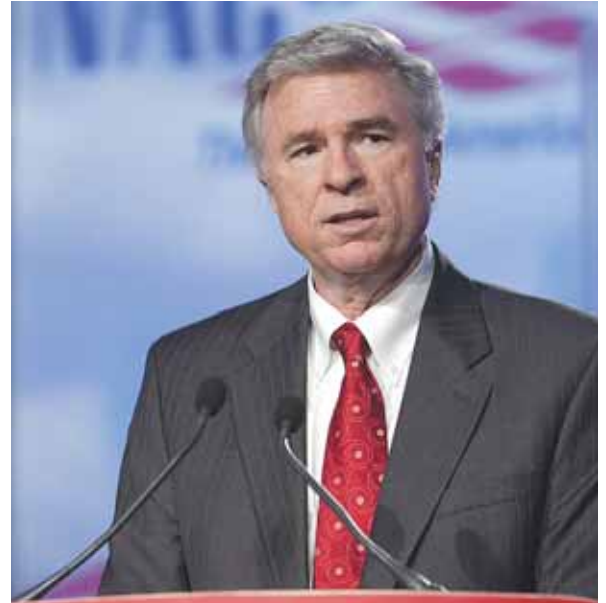


Photo by David Hathcox

Don Stapley gives his farewell speech as NACO president.

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Headliners give conference participants much to ponder

NACo conferences are notable for their top-notch speakers from both the private and the public sphere. The 2009 Annual Conference was no exception. Following is a review of the general sessions' headliners.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and noted workforce generational expert Tamara Erickson keyed the Opening General Session of NACo's 74th Annual Conference on July 26.

Ray LaHood

During his remarks, LaHood said the Obama administration understands that city and county governments have only a modest say in how U.S. DOT funds are spent. "We want to change that," LaHood said, by directly funding metro regions, which now receive their money via state pass-through.

"We want to allow counties and cities to work together to develop regional plans reflecting both regional and national priorities. Then we'd fund them directly," he said.

LaHood, a former congressman

"For instance, we think it makes sense to coordinate land-use planning and transportation, and build transit and affordable housing closer together. It makes sense to put more fuel-efficient transit buses, rail cars and streetcars in our cities, suburbs and villages. Federal funding should flow towards priorities like these."

To encourage the development of national priorities, DOT will use its \$1.5 billion TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) discretionary grant program funded through the Recovery Act.

"We've made it clear that the TIGER discretionary grants will reflect national priorities for projects that make us more competitive and enhance livability. In other words, we will not arbitrarily divide this money between highways and transit. Nor will we pit one mode against another. Instead, we're asking communities to put outcomes first — and then determine the type of transportation infrastructure that works best to meet those outcomes," LaHood explained.



All photos by David Hathcox

Tamara Erickson

Department of Transportation is able to invest in the transportation network that our citizens need and deserve in the 21st century."

Tamara Erickson

The changing workforce now includes four generations of employees sharing the same workplace, a fact that is bound to create some friction as workers seek to understand each other, said Tamara Erickson, an award-winning author and expert on organizations and the changing workforce.

As members of the baby boom generation continue to work well into retirement age, Erickson said it is important to understand the differences the generations bring to work relationships.

The topic of her July 26 opening session keynote was "Avoiding the Workforce Crisis: How to Beat the Coming Shortage of Skills and Talent." She claimed growth in the size of the workforce in the U.S. is slowing dramatically, with not as many people looking for jobs after the recession is over.

Over the past 30 years, the number of baby boomers entering the workforce has remained in the double digits, but Erickson said the numbers are beginning to decline in the United States and around the world.

"Looking from 2010 forward, we are going to fall down into the lower single digits," she said. "Just three or four percentage points of growth in the workplace going forward. As the economy begins to grow, to the extent that organizations depend

on talent to fuel that growth, there are going to be a lot fewer people to choose from."

She said other factors involved in declining workforce numbers are lower birth rates, as society becomes more industrialized, and a "talent mismatch" between the jobs available today and the way people are educated. A majority of American workers have relatively low levels of education for the jobs that are available, with 22 percent dropping out of high school. "We don't have a match between the skill sets in our labor force and the job creation in our economy," she said.

For the first time in history, the number of jobs created could begin to outstrip the number of people who want to work, creating a sustained systematic scarcity of workers for decades. With a multigenerational workforce mix of those nearing retirement age, mid-career, and new workers, marketplace success involves getting the best out of everyone at a time when companies are faced with limited resources, she said.

In her conversations with older and younger workers about what it is like to work in multigenerational workplace, Erickson said she has heard complaints from a number of older workers who say younger

generations of workers are impatient, unwilling to work as hard as previous generations, have "lousy" communications skills and spend too much time online.

Younger workers have described today's organizations as inefficient, and say older workers "don't use technology to make their jobs easier," spend too much time in meetings and assume they are interested in building the same career paths as previous generations.

She summed up the generational groups by recalling historical defining events and their impact, including:

- Traditionalists, those born between 1928–46, tend to be respectful, comfortable with hierarchy and like to be part of organizations. "They take great pride in the identity of the company or organization for which they work."

- Boomers, those born between 1946–64, tend to be competitive and view life as a game of musical chairs, are anti-authoritarian, idealistic and interested in personally making an impact on the world. "The boomer game is you're going to run as fast as you can for as long as you can, in recognition that there aren't enough seats to go around."

- Generation X, those born between 1965–80, tend to be self-reliant, mistrustful of institutions, always have a contingency plan, are loyal to friends and dedicated parents.

- Generation Y, those born between 1980–95, tend to be impatient and interested in living in the moment, are confident, family-centric, technologically savvy and have close bonds with parents.

See **SPEAKERS** page 7



Ray LaHood
U.S. Secretary of Transportation

from Illinois, also spoke of the Obama administration's desire to substantially overhaul how transportation funding is awarded. He said funding should be determined less by the mode of transportation and more by a community's priorities for its growth and needs.

"For many years, federal transportation spending has mainly been driven by rigid formulas and divided by modes of transportation — with separate funding for each type of need, from highways to subways to ferries. We need to turn this around, so that our priorities, and the outcomes people care about, drive our investments," he said.

In his final remarks, LaHood took a polite swipe at congressional leaders who want to pass a new transportation bill this year.

"The president and I are committed to [investing in transportation projects] that enhance our quality of life. But we think the effort is too important, and too complex, to be rushed through Congress with so many competing priorities. We've asked Congress to provide an 18-month, \$20 billion extension of the Highway Trust Fund to ensure it remains solvent through March 2011.

"In the meantime, we'll continue to map out our plan to ensure the



Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius addressed conference delegates via pre-recorded video.

Sims: HUD moving towards regional investments in rural, urban areas

SPEAKERS from page 6

Ron Sims

In his July 27 General Session address, Ron Sims, deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said NACo has a seat at the White House's public policy table.

"We want your input," he said. "We want your aspirations put on the table. We want your candor as to what the relationship should be between NACo and the federal government, NACo and the White House. You will be invited to the table. We wish you to dine with us."

He also said the administration wants NACo to "continue to lead as (it) always has," and for member counties to help federal agencies to work effectively with them.

"HUD and President Obama's administration are moving into regional investments. I want to thank all of you who over all these years have lent your voices, saying 'Counties are regional,' whether you are in rural or urban areas, and now we have the solution."

In a spirited, nearly revival-like presentation, Sims proclaimed his agency's mission and plans for the



Ron Sims
Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

future. He said his agency's biggest job is to help the economy and stop the foreclosures, and that HUD is investing \$14 billion in states and counties across the country, including homeless prevention and rapid re-housing programs, community block grants, and efforts

to improve public housing, rebuild communities and increase energy efficiency.

"HUD is no longer a housing agency," he said. "HUD will be a world public agency and an urban development agency."

He said HUD's Sustainable

Communities program will link issue areas such as land use with housing, transportation and employment opportunity. He said it is not a coincidence that the areas with the highest foreclosure rates tend to be areas without access to public transportation, employment or local infrastructure. He said working families spend nearly 60 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation in those neighborhoods.

"Our Choice Neighborhoods Initiative will extend neighborhood transportation patterns behind public housing, broadening the range of eligible activities for funding," he said. "This will include housing interventions more closely linked with school reform and early childhood interventions."

He concluded his remarks with an impassioned tribute to his father, who achieved his dreams despite the reality of racism. "You should never aspire to run in second place," he quoted. "Always strive to be the best."

Jon Meacham

It pays to pay attention to even our flawed heroes, according to Jon


Meacham, editor of *Newsweek* and author of "American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House." A native Tennessean, Meacham said there is much to be learned from his fellow Volunteer that is applicable to today's political climate — even from Jackson's mistakes and volatility. He discussed his presidential biography during the day's general session.

Studying "flawed figures" like Jackson can make contemporary Americans "more attuned to the failings of our time," Meacham added. Jackson was motivated by the shortcomings in his life, including his loss of the presidency to John Quincy Adams in 1824, after having won a plurality of popular and electoral votes, Meacham said. The loss would drive his championing of popular democracy.

He drew several parallels between the age of Jackson and the age of Obama. As in Jackson's time, Meacham said America is in the midst of technological and global change. "We live in an era of debate about the extent of the role of government in people's

See **SPEAKERS** page 20

Kathy Bessent, VP, CVS Caremark, presented the awards to Wake, Montgomery, Marion, Honolulu, Hamilton and Franklin Counties.



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Workshops offer broad array of topics, experts

Sunday, July 26

• Who's Listening In?

Who Spoke:

Annabeth Surbaugh, Johnson County, Kan. Commission chair

Robert Tucker, public information officer, Johnson County, Kan.

John Owings, Tennessee County Attorneys Association

Ryan Bodnar, associate auditor, Maricopa County, Ariz.

What participants learned:

Counties ignore policies governing electronic voice and data communications at their own peril, workshop attendees learned. The consequences can be legal and financial.

Owings discussed the importance of having documented policies on the retention of e-mails, on what constitutes a public communication and on county ownership of county

employees' business communications. He cited the case involving a former Knox County, Tenn. commissioner and whether e-mails from her constituents were public records under the state's open records law. They were.

"Make your IT director your best friend," Bodnar said. He highlighted a series of videos his department created to reinforce to county employees the importance of data and hardware — even flash drives — security.

Produced by staff with no budget, the videos use humor to stress the importance of protecting passwords, securing county laptops and following official policies. It would have cost \$15,000 to outsource the project. The videos are available online at www.maricopa.gov/internal_audit ▶ "Got Controls."

He said the goal was to make the information accessible, entertaining and educational.

(Staff contact: Anita Cardwell, acardwell@naco.org, 202/942-4267)

• Preparing for the Public Health Emergency: What You Can Do Now

Who Spoke:

Carole Moehrle, district director, North Central Idaho Public Health; subcommittee chair NACO Health Steering Committee

Phyllis Mann, director, emergency management, Kitsap County, Wash.

What participants learned:

Public health and emergency management officials have key roles in preparing for a health emergency, such as an outbreak of H1N1 influenza. However, citizens will also look to their chief elected officials for information



Joe Connor, president, Kansas Association of Counties, and Sheila Biggs, commissioner, Dickenson County, Kan., listen as speakers discuss how county prevention and wellness programs can curb chronic diseases.

and reassurance during a pandemic, workshop presenters said.

The H1N1 flu pandemic earlier this year was "a drill" that can help governments prepare for what may

be forthcoming later this year, Mann said.

In particular, both speakers said that if elected officials don't currently have strong ties with their public

health departments and emergency managers, now is the time to develop them. In the case of a crisis, this will be key to ensuring that consistent messages are being delivered to the public.

Moehrle and Mann urged county officials to begin preparing their risk communications messages now. "We still have time to prepare," Moehrle said.

Get involved in the details of your local pandemic plan to avoid political and media nightmares, the speakers said.

(Staff contact: Rocky Lopes, rlopes@naco.org, 202/661-8841)

• Curbing Chronic Disease through Innovative County Prevention and Wellness Programs

Who Spoke?

Claude Ramsey, mayor, Hamilton County, Tenn.

See WORKSHOPS page 9



Ryan Bodnar, associate auditor, Maricopa County, Ariz., gives hardware and data security advice.



Lake County, Ill. Board Members Melinda Bush and Audrey Nixon attended the workshop "Let THEM Tell You Where to Cut" to learn more about involving citizens in setting county budget priorities.

'Drug Czar' addresses addiction, prescription drug disposal

America will see a sharp decline in health care costs if treatment for addiction is made widely available, said Gil Kerlikowske, director, Office of National Drug Control Policy.

"Treatment for addiction is half the cost of incarceration," he said. "If we provide drug treatment on the scale required for those who need it. We could significantly control health care costs."

Appointed by President Obama as the U.S. "Drug Czar," Kerlikowske coordinates all aspects of federal drug control programs and implementation of the president's national drug control strategy.

He brings nearly four decades of law enforcement and drug policy experience to the position, serving as police commissioner in Buffalo, N.Y. from 1994 to 1998 and as the chief of police for the Seattle Police Department from 2000 to 2009. When he left, crime in Seattle was at its lowest point in 40 years.

Speaking to NACO's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee, Kerlikowske presented what the Obama administration would like to accomplish regarding addiction, treatment of addicts and prescription drugs disposal.

"The Obama administration

recognizes addiction is a disease," he said. "Prevention and treatment must be included to stop drug use and bring help to those who need it."

According to the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, the cost of dealing with substance abuse is \$470 billion on the state and local level. In 2007, more than 20 million people over the age of 12 had substance abuse problems. Only 10 percent got the treatment they needed.

Kerlikowske then spoke about a prescription drug forum he attended

where a teenage girl spoke about going to "Pharm Parties," where teens get prescription drugs from their home medicine cabinets and trade them with other teens. Some of these medications were expired but were still in their medicine cabinets.

"The only way people can properly dispose of prescription drugs is handing them over to law enforcement or their doctor," Kerlikowske said. "We are trying to come up with safe alternatives to dispose of prescription drugs so they don't end up in the wrong hands."



Photo by Jack Hernandez

Drug Czar Gil Kerlikowske stressed the importance of addiction treatment during the Transportation Steering Committee meeting.

Counties can adopt low-cost measures to improve rural road safety

WORKSHOPS from page 8

Liz Kniss, supervisor, Santa Clara County, Calif.

Silvia Sierra, director, Health and Human Services, Dona Ana County, N.M.

What participants learned:

The connection between obesity and chronic health concerns such as diabetes and heart disease came up a number of times during this workshop.

Ramsey talked about the Step ONE (Optimize with Nutrition and Exercise) initiative, which stresses healthy eating and regular exercise for all residents. Two efforts that worked well involved cartoon characters, The Step 1 Kids, designed to promote improved nutrition and increased activity, and Fruit Friday, where a different type of fruit is sampled each week in school cafeterias.

Kniss said promoting health and wellness involved community mapping, engagement and mobilization. Some of the initiatives passed by the Board of Supervisors included a menu-labeling ordinance, which led to statewide legislation; smoke-free county facilities; nutritionally beneficial foods in vending machines;



Making rural roads safer appears to be a high priority, judging by the number of conference-goers who attended a July 26 workshop on the topic.

a diabetes center; and a pediatric healthy lifestyle clinic.

Sierra discussed the Colonias Initiative. She said the HUD definition of a colonia is a rural community located within 150 miles of a U.S. border that lacks basic infrastructure

and social services. Through its community outreach division, the county is a liaison between colonia residents, programs and service providers.

(Staff contact: Anita Cardwell, acardwell@naco.org, 202/942-4267)

• Save Lives by Making Rural Road Safety a Priority Who Spoke?

Harry Forbes, commissioner, Pike County, Pa.

Howard Preston, senior transportation engineer, CH2M Hill

David Brand, county engineer, Madison County, Ohio

Matt Ryan, supervisor, Coconino County, Ariz.

Stanley Batemon, commission chair, St. Clair County, Ala.

What participants learned:

Interstate highways have lower crash and fatality rates than other conventional highways. County road systems, in general, have the highest fatality rates — between 40 percent to 50 percent of traffic fatalities occur on local roads. Among the points made by speakers:

1) The single most important practice to support safety at the local level is for agencies to dedicate a portion of their capital improvement program to low-cost safety measures on their road systems.

2) Preparing a data-driven safety plan will help identify the factors involved in serious crashes and point the way towards specific safety improvements.

3) Examples of some low-cost safety improvements: install larger (36-inch) stop signs; replace faded signs or those with little reflection; identify road edges through better

See **WORKSHOPS** page 10

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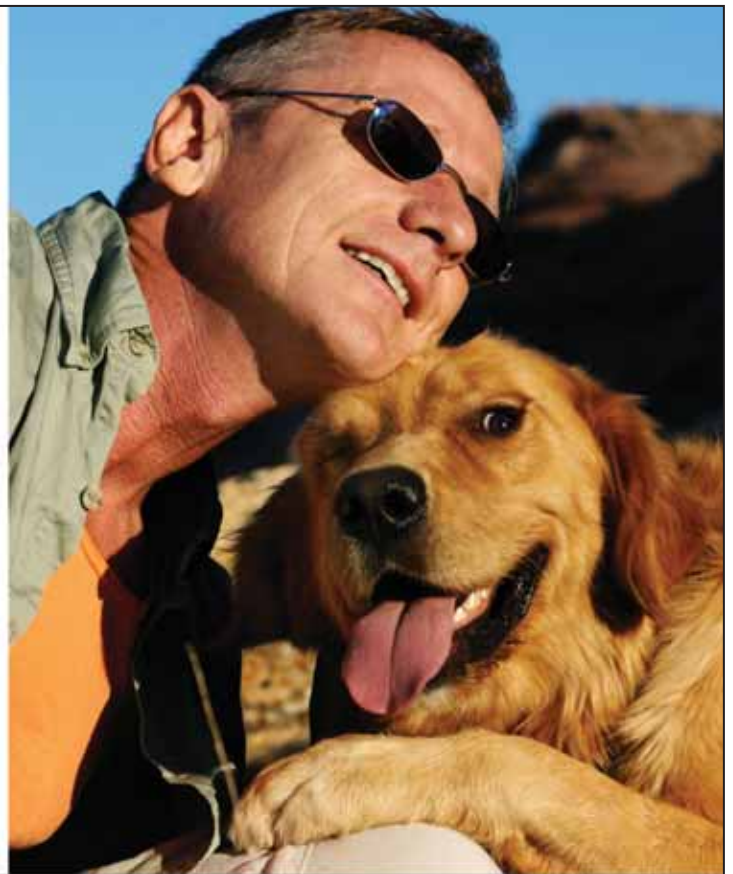
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NOAA official: Be aware of climate change risks, prepare for natural hazards

WORKSHOPS from page 9

markings or rumble strips.

Workshop presenters mentioned many resources to help participants make their roads safer. They include the following:

- *Low-Cost Treatments for Horizontal Curve Safety* booklet, published by the Federal Highway Administration. Download from the Internet at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov> ▶ “Local and Roadway Departure Safety” ▶ “Horizontal Curve Safety” or call 301/577-0818 and request report FHWA-SA-07-002.

- saferoadsmaps.org — fatal accident data aggregated by the federal government and repackaged by the Center for Excellence on Rural Safety. Shows three years worth of fatalities for your community.

- Center for Excellence on Rural Safety: <http://www.ruralsafety.umn.edu/>

- Sample Signing and Striping Guidance Policy, Cass County, Minn. Download from http://www.co.cass.mn.us/highway/highway_home.html

(Staff contact: James Davenport, jdavenport@naco.org, 202/661-8807)

Monday, July 27

• Let THEM Tell You Where to Cut Who Spoke?

Harry Hayes, senior public service associate, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Athens, Ga.

Mark Belton, administrator, Page County, Va.

Richard Clark, Ph.D., survey research unit director, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Athens, Ga.

Brenda Hayes, public service associate, Fanning Institute, Athens, Ga. and a former Hall County, Ga. commissioner

What participants learned:

A University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill study found that less than half of localities made any effort to go beyond the minimum required by state law to involve the public in the budgeting process, said Harry Hayes, who moderated the workshop. It also found that local elected officials believe that public hearings are one of the least effective ways to involve citizens. (the study results, *Citizen Participation in Local Government Budgeting*, are available online at www.sog.unc.edu/pubs/electronicversions/pg/pgspr01/article3.pdf)

The workshop explored alternatives for seeking public input.

Clark focused on the value and

limitations of survey research to gather citizen input about budgets — and how surveys can be used to decide what to cut. One pitfall, he said, is that with some surveys, you run the risk of creating opinion where none existed. “If people aren’t paying attention to an issue that you’re asking about — people are polite; they’ll give you an answer.”

He said surveys should not be used to ask the public to choose programs to cut, but rather to ask the public the questions that will help elected officials make better-informed decisions about what to cut. As an example, he cited a county’s needing to save money on recreation programs. Rather than ask citizens whether a center should be closed, instead ask if and how they use the center, and how often.

Belton discussed the role of diversity in helping to make budget decisions. He said elected officials often bring geographic diversity to the table, if they’re elected from districts. But there are many other factors to consider, and they should go out their way to seek the opinions of those not represented on their county board. These include other economic strata, young adults, and racial and ethnic minorities.

Brenda Hayes explained Visual Explorer, a tool that can be used in “visioning” sessions to facilitate dialogue “around very complex challenges.” It uses participants’ verbal responses to 224 images to begin a discussion on the importance of various issues, programs and services. She said Visual Explorer does not create decisions or suggest actions, but rather helps groups understand contexts and perspectives. Incidentally, Hayes is the sister of the session’s moderator, Harry Hayes.

(Staff contact: Jacqueline Byers, jbyers@naco.org, 202/942-4285)

• The Economy’s Effect on Counties, Their Nonprofit Partners and the Community Who Spoke?

Eric Dewey, president and CEO, United Way of Metropolitan Nashville



Author Jan Hargrave, a body language expert, says anyone who has to negotiate should be aware of the power of nonverbal cues.

and 3) enhancing the “quality of life.” The three-level system is helpful to counties to prioritize scarce funding and to build or to decrease budgets.

Dewey said partnerships between public and private businesses and nonprofits are important because all are seeking alternate ways to do business in light of the recession, including provide consumer access and program availability. Already available is the Tools for Tough Times program, an Internet-based approach to help people connect with essential services and programs.

(Staff contact: Marilina Sanz, msanz@naco.org, 202/942-4260)

• Let Me See Your Body Talk: The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication Who Spoke?

Jan Hargrave, author and body language expert

What participants learned:

From handshakes to headscratches, movements matter. Hargrave schooled a standing-room audience in the ways of reading and sending nonverbal communications.

Among her key messages to county officials: research shows that about 55 percent of a person’s communication is nonverbal; 38 percent is vocal inflection; and only 7 percent is conveyed by the words they speak.

“Seventeen, 18 years ago, it was only criminal justice majors or pre-law majors who were interested in body language,” said Hargrave, who also teaches college classes on the topic. “But now I think that anyone who has to negotiate has got to have an interest in it.”

Her hour-plus of show-and-tell

was tinged with humor and tips that entertained as much as educated.

The session was sponsored by the National Association of County Information Officers (www.nacio.org), a NACO affiliate.

Hargrave has written several books on nonverbal communications, including *Judge the Jury* and *Strictly Business Body Language*. For more information, she directed the audience to her Web site, www.janhargrave.com.

(Staff contact: Tom Goodman, tgoodman@naco.org, 202/942-4222)

• Community Resiliency in a Changing Climate Who Spoke?

Sandy Eslinger, a coastal hazard specialist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center

What participants learned:

Eslinger spoke about climate and hazard risks, identifying risks and vulnerabilities, and living with the reality of climate change. While it is still too early to project with certainty what changes will occur in precisely in each location, she said there are observations NOAA can make based on longer-term trends, including fewer significant cold weather events and more extreme heat-related events.

She defined resiliency as being aware of risk and preparing for natural hazards, such as hurricanes, tornados and flooding by adapting response to changing conditions. She said that some of the largest disaster losses experienced in this country are due to droughts and flooding, which can occur in the same areas.

One approach to adaptation is building and maintaining a green infrastructure — a managed network of natural lands, working landscapes and other open spaces that conserves ecosystem functions and provides benefits such as storm buffering, storm water management, flood protection and erosion control.

Eslinger suggested counties inventory key ecosystem assets such as wetlands, forests and freshwater aquatic areas, and document changes in land use, environmental degradation and habitat fragmentation.

(Staff contact: Carrie Clingan, cclingan@naco.org, 202/942-4260)

(Elizabeth Perry, Beverly Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor, County News staff, contributed to this report.)



Iberia Parish, La. Councilman Larry Richard asks a question during the workshop “Community Resiliency in a Changing Climate.”

NACo takes stances on food inspection, illegal dumping

Policies about medication disposal, sage grouse management, uranium mining in the Grand Canyon watershed and the Medicaid Services Restoration Act were among the more than 20 new proposals submitted for consideration at the Annual Conference.

Following is a report on the ones NACo members adopted at the association's annual business meeting.



NACo President Don Stapley presides during policy discussion.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

• Wildlife Services

Issue: Protection of citizens from health and economic hazards posed by wildlife through the USDA Wildlife Services program

Adopted policy: NACo supports USDA Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) programs and encourages Congress and the Administration to provide necessary resources to strengthen these programs. NACo also opposes efforts to weaken WS programs, including efforts to decrease funding and change authorized abilities to cooperate with counties and other entities needing assistance.

• Inspection of Imported Food Products

Issue: Assurance that foreign-made foods undergo mandatory inspections and follow labeling procedures

Adopted policy: NACo supports requiring all American companies manufacturing and processing foods in foreign countries to be required to have a USDA inspector on site in an effort to protect our citizens against possible contamination

from imported food products. Also, all imported containers of products for human consumption should be marked with the country of origin.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• Maintaining the Current Public Services Cap within the Community Development Block Grant Program

Issue: Increase the cap on the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for public services

Adopted policy: NACo believes that the CDBG program is primarily an infrastructure, affordable housing and economic development program. NACo does not support changing the primary focus of the program to one that would give equal weight to the use of CDBG funds for public services as H.R. 2532 would do.

• Integration of Housing, Transportation, Energy and Environmental Planning Through Regional Efforts

Issue: Integration of regional housing, transportation, energy and environmental planning integration

Adopted policy: NACo supports legislation that would encourage agencies at the federal and regional level to integrate housing, transportation, energy and environmental planning to support sustainable development.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

• Federal Assistance Related to Climate Change

Issue: Support federal funding and technical assistance for local adaption and mitigation programs

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to provide financial and technical assistance to local governments to help develop and implement local climate change adaption and mitigation plans and projects, including smart growth initiatives, mass transit development, renewable energy deployment, acquisition of high-efficiency fleet vehicles and protection of water supplies.

• Land & Water Conservation Fund Stateside Grants

Issue: Federal matching grant funding for land acquisition and outdoor recreation amenities



Photos by David Hathcox

NACo board members (l) Marc Hamlin and Steve Jennings discuss NACo legislative positions.

• Safe, Convenient Medicine Return Program

Issue: Safe disposal of unwanted medicines from households

Adopted policy: NACo supports annual allocation of adequate "stateside" funding in the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund to provide matching grants to counties, special park, forest preserve and conservation districts; and other local governments for purchase of park lands and other open space, and development of trails and other outdoor recreation amenities.

• Urban Forestry

Issue: Support increased federal funding for the USDA urban forestry programs

Adopted policy: NACo supports full funding for the US Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry program at a level that will help counties become more sustainable and prosperous. NACo supports Congressional funding of the U&CF Program at no less than \$100 million annually.

• Prevention and Clean-Up of Illegal Dumping

Issue: Illegal dumping of solid waste along the U.S./Mexican border.

Adopted policy: NACo supports maximizing the collection and safe disposal of unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medicines through an internalized pharmaceutical manufacturer financing mechanism that covers the cost of collection, transportation, and hazardous waste disposal, and does not rely on state and local government funding.

• Safe, Convenient Medicine Return Program

Issue: Safe disposal of unwanted medicines from households

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to support bi-national projects between private, state and federal, tribal and public organiza-

tions which develop and implement programs to educate, prevent and clean up illegal dumping along the United States-Mexican border.

FINANCE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

• Funding for State and Local Oversight of ARRA Activities

Issue: Funding for state and local government oversight of activities conducted pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Adopted policy: NACo supports legislation that would permit state and local governments receiving funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to set aside a portion of those funds, in addition to any funds already allocated for administrative expenditures, to conduct planning and oversight to prevent waste, fraud and abuse.

• Establishment of a Liaison from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs to NACo

Issue: Establishment of a liaison who can articulate federal Indian law, tribal history and tribal government in order to help facilitate informed deliberations among federal, tribal and county governments.

Adopted policy: NACo requests that the Department of the Interior assign a liaison with experience with tribal and local governments to facilitate communication and information sharing among tribal government, NACo and county governments. The position should be modeled upon the current successful relationships with the Department of Interior and U.S. Forest Service.

• Elimination of Floor on Deductible Medical Expenses

Issue: Federal legislation eliminating the 7.5 percent Adjusted Gross Income floor on deductibility of medical expenses

Adopted policy: NACo supports legislation that would eliminate the 7.5 percent AGI floor on the deductibility of medical expenses.

• Federal Assistance to the Municipal Bond Market

Issue: Federal legislative and regulatory efforts to assist access to the municipal securities market.

Adopted policy: NACo supports legislative and regulatory



Waymon Mumford, Florence County, S.C., listens to a health policy presentation at the July 26 board meeting.

NACo adopts resolutions on veterans' benefits, child support

RESOLUTIONS from page 11

efforts to assist state and local governments to access the municipal securities market.

• National Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs

Issue: Support for a National Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs

Adopted policy: NACo supports the passage of H.R. 3332, a bill to create a National Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs

HEALTH

• Reduction of the 24-month Waiting Period for Participants in Social Security Disability Insurance

Issue: Coverage of the current 24-month gap in health coverage for disabled individuals receiving SSDI

Adopted policy: NACo supports and urges passage of legislation to eliminate the 24-month waiting period for health care coverage, for those individuals who have worked and paid into the system and then become disabled, seeking assistance through SSDI.



Photos by David Hathcox

Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee Chair Tony Bennett presents his committee's policy recommendations as NACo staff to the committee, Don Murray (l) and Dalen Harris (r) look on.

• County Organized Health Systems

Issue: Local administration of Medicaid and expanded public programs via County Organized Health Systems

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to remove current statutory prohibitions that prevent the establishment

of additional County Organized Health Systems. NACo also urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to adopt a policy of encouraging the formation of County Organized Health Systems as a means to more effectively deliver Medicaid benefits at the local level and also to serve as a regional "public option" under national health reform.

• Medicaid Services Act (S. 1217)

Issue: Preserving vital rehabilitative and case management services for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders, developmental disabilities and children in foster care

Adopted policy: NACo urges support for the Medicaid Services Restoration Act (S.1217), and opposes changes to rehabilitative and targeted case management (TCM) services which would place restrictions on the ability of state and county governments to finance

the Medicaid program and provide these services. NACo further opposes any actions that will reduce federal payments and/or shift costs to local safety net providers.

• Living Organ Donation

Issue: Promoting living organ donation

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to revise the eligibility criteria for the Family Medical Leave Act and to allow tax credits and other financial incentives to offset non-reimbursed costs of donation in order to expand opportunities for living organ donation.

• Public-Private Health Care Alliance Pilot Programs

Issue: Public-private health care alliance pilot programs, based on existing county models

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to support public-private health care alliance pilot programs to test models

that counties have initiated to provide health care to uninsured residents.

• Health Benefits for Veterans in Custody Pending Disposition of Charges

Issue: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical benefits for veterans detained in county facilities prior to conviction and sentencing to secure detention

Adopted policy: NACo supports changing federal policy such that veterans in custody pending disposition of charges remain eligible for V.A. health benefits.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

• Reinstating the H-2B Visas Exception for Returning Workers

Issue: H-2B visas for returning workers

Adopted policy: NACo supports the extension of the H-2B returning worker exemption with a cap on the maximum number of workers to be no more than the count existing in 2007.

• Restoring the Ability to Use Federal Matching Dollars for Child Support Enforcement

Issue: Restoration of the ability to draw federal match dollars on the reinvestment of child support incentive payments for performance

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to permanently restore the ability to draw federal match dollars from the reinvestment of child support incentive payments.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

• Funding for the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Reauthorization and Improvement Act

Issue: An appropriation to effectively implement the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-414) as authorized

Adopted policy: NACo fully supports the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act of 2004 and an appropriation of at least \$75 million in FY10.

• Including Pretrial Justice in the Scope of the National Commission on Criminal Justice Reform

Issue: Including pretrial justice in the National Commission on Criminal Justice Reform



Share Best Energy Practices for International Recognition

NACo is supporting a project to collect U.S. local-level best practices in energy efficiency and renewable energy to share with developing nations. With funding and support from the U.S. State Department, the most innovative and successful local programs will be highlighted in a Compendium of Best Practices, which will be used at the highest levels of the U.S. government to provide a resource of replicable models for China, India and other developing countries. This is an opportunity for counties to be recognized as leaders in energy efficiency and clean energy efforts on an international stage.

The project is in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP). Best practices are being collected by the Alliance to Save Energy and the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE).

If you would like to submit your practice for consideration, fill out a short online survey (www.surveygizmo.com/s/159012/compendium) by the end of August or early September at the latest.

The practice must:

- promote the use of energy efficiency and/or renewable energy
- have measurable outcomes, and
- currently be in practice in the United States.

For questions, please contact Kelly Zonderwyk, project manager, at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202/942-4224.



Chair Roger Dickinson gives his Human Services and Education Steering committee report. Also pictured is NACo committee staff, Marilina Sanz.

NACo urges Congress to modify PILT payments structure

RESOLUTIONS from page 18

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to include an examination of pretrial justice policies and practices in the agenda of the National Commission on Criminal Justice Reform.

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974

Issue: Support for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) as amended

Adopted policy: NACo supports the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 which authorizes states and local programs to serve at-risk youth. In reauthorizing the legislation, NACo urges Congress to maintain the four core provisions of the act: sight and sound separation; deinstitutionalization of status offenders; jail removal; and language addressing the disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system, and further strongly urges Congress to authorize \$500 million to fund Title V of the Act in FY10.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Roth 457 Provision

Issue: Roth Arrangements in 457 Plans

Adopted policy: NACo supports the governmental Roth 457 provision, which permits 457(b) plans to offer the designated Roth accounts already permitted in 401(k) and 403(b) plans.

Public Health Workforce Programs

Issue: Public Health Workforce Programs

Adopted policy: NACo supports workforce policies and funding priorities for public health workforce programs, which are responsive to both the supply of public health workers and the demand for their skills in urban and rural areas, to ensure that programs are appropriately tailored to the unique configuration of needs and resources in each state and in each local jurisdiction.

Proposed Tax on Self-Insured Health Plans

Issue: Oppose proposed tax on self-insured health plans

Adopted policy: NACo strongly opposes provisions which propose a tax on public employee self-insured health plans.

PUBLIC LANDS

Expedite a Commercial Oil Shale Leasing Program

Issue: Oil shale leasing program in Utah and Wyoming

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to address, in a timely manner, the regulatory review process in order to facilitate a functioning, environmentally responsible commercial oil shale leasing program in Utah and Wyoming.

Forest Service and Money and Forest Health Stewardship Projects

Issue: Forest stewardship prospects

Adopted policy: NACo urges Congress to provide as follows:

When entering into or renewing a multi-year stewardship contract, the Forest Service does not have to set aside funds sufficient to pay estimated contingent contract-cancellation charges.

Instead, the Forest Service may (a) draw upon appropriated but as yet unobligated stewardship contract funds for all stewardship contracts to pay cancellation charges on any one contract should they actually fall due, or (b) look to Congress for additional appropriations to pay such cancellation charges if and when they ever fall due.

Modifications to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program

Issue: The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program requires several necessary updates

Adopted policy: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to pass legislation modifying the PILT program (31 U.S.C. Chapter 69) to make payments to counties more equitable. With sufficient funding now available to the counties, it is important that they undertake a review of how such funds are allocated.

Review of Scientific Studies Concerning Uranium Activities and the Grand Canyon Watershed

Issue: Uranium activities and the Grand Canyon watershed

Adopted policy: NACo agrees to the following:

The National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council should conduct a review under Section 204(c) of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of all previously conducted and current scientific studies to determine any impact to the Grand Canyon or its Colorado River watershed from uranium exploration and mining



Photo by David Hathcox

John Prinkki, commissioner, Carbon County, Mont., discusses a policy proposal during deliberations on new NACo policies.

on BLM land in Northern Arizona, known as the Arizona Strip, and U.S. Forest Service lands south of the Grand Canyon;

- Existing exploration and mining activities may continue on these lands, as long as operators continue to abide by existing state and federal environmental laws, regulations, and standards, including reclamation;
- Exploration and mining activities should not expand within those

areas released under the Wilderness Act of 1984, until such time as the Section 204(c) review has been completed; and

- The operators shall be monitored going forward in time to verify their continued compliance with environmental requirements.

Sage Grouse Management Efforts

Issue: Shall the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service place the Greater Sage Grouse on the threatened/endangered species list

Adopted policy: Ongoing sage grouse management efforts of state and local governments, stakeholder working groups, and BLM Resource Management Plans throughout the 11 Western states are protecting and restoring sage grouse habitats and reviving sage grouse populations. Therefore, NACo opposes listing the Greater Sage Grouse as a T and E [threatened and endangered] species at this time.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

Broadband Adoption

Issue: Improving broadband adoption

Adopted policy: NACo calls on the federal agencies distributing the broadband funding included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to expressly require that

broadband awareness, adoption, use and digital literacy programs receive funding priority, and suggests that all levels of governments work cooperatively with the private sector, nonprofits, and academia to develop robust broadband awareness, adoption, and use programs.

TRANSPORTATION

Commuter Rail Trackage and Operating Rights

Issue: Provision of Commuter Rail Service

Adopted policy: NACo supports access for commuter and intercity rail providers to freight rail tracks for the provision of commuter rail service in return for reasonable compensation and terms, and recommends the Surface Transportation Board have jurisdiction therein.

Mitigation of Impact of Rail Mergers and Buyouts on Local Communities

Issue: Impacts on a county or other local government and its residents of a freight rail merger or buyout

Adopted policy: NACo supports a change in federal law requiring the Surface Transportation Board (STB), in a proceeding involving the merger or control of at least one Class I railroad, to consider the effect on the public interest.

Model Programs FROM THE NATION'S COUNTIES

Polk County's Playscape Ignites Imaginations with All-Natural Elements

By DAN MILLER
STAFF WRITER

"Dad! Is this the island where the Wild Things are?" shouts a three-year old boy standing in a wading pool.

Molly McGovern recalls a long list of amusing comments made by kids at Polk County, Iowa's Jester Park Natural Playscape — a three-quarter acre play area made completely out of natural materials such as rocks, water and soil. McGovern, a botanist and mother of three, enjoys seeing local kids experience nature and use their imaginations through the playground's non-artificial elements.

The idea for the county's playscape was hatched by Lewis Major, a naturalist with the county, in an effort to encourage local children to establish a relationship with nature and develop their own creativity.

"[The playscape] harbors a lot more creative and imaginative play, where the standard, structured playgrounds are more scripted. Not a lot of imagination, not a lot of creativity," he said. "Having kids

playing with rocks and water and dirt and plants, and rolling down hills and crawling through hollow logs — all of those kinds of play we used to do as kids have kind of disappeared."

"Is this the island where the Wild Things are?"

The playscape includes a variety of natural elements including trees and plants, mounds of soil, boulders and water structures that kids can dam up with rocks. Those unique water elements, according to Major, are the park's most popular — especially in the warm summertime months.

Major worked hard to adopt a "purist" approach to the park by forgoing any metal or plastic elements. Often, he said, he'll visit similar parks that claim to be a natural park or garden, but it will incorporate concrete and other man-made features.

Since there are no current stan-



Photo courtesy of Polk County, Iowa

Polk County's Jester Park Natural Playscape includes a variety of natural features including boulders, mounds of earth and water features. According to naturalist Lewis Major, the water features draw visitors during the hot summer months. The play area is intended to foster children's relationship with nature and encourage them to use their imaginations while they play.

dards or guidelines for this type of playground, Major and the crew in charge of creating the park followed existing playground safety guidelines to the best of their abilities, taking note of fall zones as well as head and foot entrapments.

"This was kind of a different animal — trying to put a square peg in

a round hole — but we tried the best we could to follow those guidelines when applicable," he said.

Both Major and McGovern agree that the community has embraced the playscape.

"People like to come to the Natural Playscape because it's not only a play area for children, but it's a very tranquil, very nice environment which makes it a nice place for parents to relax as their kids play," Major said. "Kids are shocked, amazed or afraid of new natural experiences because they're getting removed from their environments."

McGovern has sensed some nervousness on behalf of visiting parents due to the unusual nature of the playground.

"It's not so much the kids, I watch the parents," McGovern said. "You see resistance from a lot of parents initially, saying 'Oh no, don't touch that.' But I go 'You can't hurt anything!'"

Eventually, she says, the parents relax and come around.

"The parents realize this is different, but it's not harmful and my child is engaging in ways that I have not seen other places."

McGovern not only visits the playscape with her children, aged 5, 7 and 9, she also works for the county by cultivating the structure's vegetation. Since Iowa was originally 85 percent prairie, McGovern has worked to incorporate native

plants into the structure.

During the first few years of the playscape's existence, McGovern plans to do heavier maintenance to the plant life. After that, the right vegetation will have established itself in the soil.

"You want to plan on some maintenance the first two years, just like you would any landscaping project," she said. "The knowledge is critical too — what you want and what you don't want."

Many of the plants surrounding the water elements serve as a natural filtration system.

According to Major, the structure cost about \$230,000. That cost, however, was driven greatly by the fact that the playscape was constructed in an under-developed portion of the park and officials approved the cost of laying down utilities and building a parking lot. A comparable structure in another location could be much less expensive.

Major said he's already been approached by several other governmental and private organizations for help constructing similar projects.

(Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights Achievement Award-winning programs. For more information on this and other NACo Achievement Award winners, visit NACo's Web site, www.naco.org ► Resource Library ► Model County Programs.)

Jackson biographer: Even flawed American heroes can teach us important lessons

SPEAKERS from page 7

lives; we're concerned over the balance between banks and the real economy, and the politics of partisanship are particularly ferocious and vicious — and play themselves out in terms of personality and scandal."

One lesson from Jackson's era has an unlikely parallel in the way the Obama administration continues to reach out to supporters via the Web and social networking. Jackson understood that his supporters didn't just want to vote for him, "they wanted to be characters in an ongoing drama." To that end, Jackson created a direct channel to the people — his own newspaper. This would be the 21st century equivalent of President Bush founding Fox News or President Obama creating NPR, Meacham said.



Jon Meacham
Editor, Newsweek

On why he wrote the book, Meacham said, "My view of Andrew Jackson is that any president who tries to attack his own assassin, who has two bullets in him, who fought a dozen duels, who married his wife before she was divorced from her first husband and who threatened to kill his own vice president is worth a book."

(Elizabeth Perry, Beverly Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor, County News staff, contributed to this report.)

Achievements honored at annual awards reception

By KATHRYN MURPHY
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

A record 498 county programs in 21 categories were recognized at the annual Achievement Award reception at NACo's Annual Conference in Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn. This year's winning programs represent 30 states and 123 counties.

"In a year where we saw more applications than in the past four years, counties once again demonstrated their resilience and their ability to work harder in tough times," said Larry Naake, NACo executive director.

The Achievement Award program is a way to recognize the work of county staff on new and effective county programs. In addition to each program's receiving an Achievement Award certificate, each reception attendee also received an Achievement Award Winner lunch bag filled with giveaways to promote the county staff as award winners.

This year's ceremony also featured keynote speaker Steve Wrigley, Ph.D., director of the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

The reception individually recognized the most innovative programs in each category that received the Best of Category distinction. The 2009 Best of Category award winners include: Maricopa County,

Ariz.; Los Angeles County, Calif.; Sacramento County, Calif.; San Diego County, Calif.; Alachua County, Fla.; and Hillsborough County, Fla.

Other top winners included Indian River County, Fla.; Sarasota County, Fla.; Fulton County, Ga.; Gwinnett County, Ga.; Hennepin County, Minn.; and Brunswick County, N.C.

Wake County, N.C.; Lubbock County, Texas; Augusta County, Va.; Fairfax County, Va. and Powhatan County, Va. also received top honors.

Beltrami County, Minn. won Best Rural Program honors, which recognizes the most innovative program from a county with a population of less than 50,000.

Abstracts from all award-winning programs can be found on the NACo Web site under "Awards."

Now in its 39th year, NACo's annual Achievement Award program gives national recognition to new and innovative county programs. It is a non-competitive awards program that seeks to reward county innovation and share successful programs from across the country.

To qualify, county programs must have been implemented in the last five years, have measurable results, and have innovative methods to modernize and streamline county government.



Photo by Jack Hernandez

Steve Wrigley, Ph.D., director of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, welcomes the reception crowd before he and Jacqueline Byers, NACo research director, present the achievement awards.

Research News

A Fair to Remember

County fairs date back to the early 1800s. They came into existence when agricultural proponents wanted to develop an organized local venue that could be used to promote and encourage modern farming techniques.

County fairs offer a community the opportunity to showcase the personality of a county, showing the talents and specialties of the area. Traditionally, county fairs run for several days, but many have grown to run a month or more with the majority of the activity occurring on weekends.

Many generations have enjoyed the cotton candy, corn dogs and Ferris wheels that are common to many fairs around the county and like to introduce the newest generations to these pleasures.

These fairs have become so popular that a Web page called Countyfairgrounds USA at www.countyfairgrounds.net has been created where lists of the dates and locations of county fairs are maintained by state. One of the first lines on the webpage states, "There is nothing more American than Mom, apple pie and county fairs!"

As the economy has slowed, something interesting has happened to the venerable county fair. According to a recent article in *USA Today*, families that have been hit hard by the economic slowdown are finding their way to county fairs all across the country. The economic downturn has worked to the favor of the county fairs, long seen as the purview of the agriculturally inclined, because they are generally inexpensive and close to home. As more people search for different options for vacations they are finding that the local county fairs are an acceptable alternative.

The county fairs held so far this summer are seeing major increases in attendance. Many fairs have created special discount packages that are attractive to many, especially those families with children. Since many of the fairs last over several weeks, some as long as 22 days, a fair pass for \$22 that is good for admission throughout the run of the fair is a good value for a good time.

According to *USA Today*, the San Diego County Fair set a record for attendance; Alameda County, Calif. County Fair drew a record crowd; and so did Boone County, Mo.'s fair. Vigo County, Ind. recently ended its 80th County Fair on July 18 with record-breaking numbers. The attendance was helped by its affordability and variety. Estimates of attendance range up to 100,000 in this county with a population of 105,968. East Otter Tail County Fair in Minnesota went a step further in affordability by throwing its gates open to all and not charging an admission fee. They made up for the lost fees by charging for parking and for grandstand events, and experienced an increase in attendance up from 5,000 in 2008 to about 7,000 this year.

The Los Angeles County Fair runs from Sept. 5 through Oct. 4 and is one of the largest in the nation. Among the activities this year will be Kids Discovery Field Trips and featured entertainers including Al Green, Peter Frampton, Good Charlotte, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Creedence Clearwater Revisited, War and LeAnn Rimes. In addition to these entertainers, they will also have Monster Truck Madness Rally. General admission seats at all of these performances are included in the price of admission to the fair.

(Research News was written by Jacqueline Byers, director of research.)

NACo on the Move

» In the News

NACo was mentioned in the article "U.S. counties call for health reform" in *The Tennessean* of Davidson County (Nashville), Tenn. July 28 during NACo's Annual Conference.

Valerie Brown, NACo president, was quoted in the article "Supervisor Brown takes reins of national group," in *The Press Democrat* of Sonoma County (Santa Rosa), Calif. July 25 during NACo's Annual Conference.



Tim Loewenstein

» NACo County Officials

Tim Loewenstein, Buffalo County, Neb. Board of Supervisors, represented NACo with stakeholders from the Department of Homeland Security's Command, Control and Interoperability Division, and the alerts and warnings community July 30 to determine the next steps in implementing the Commercial Mobile Alert Service (CMAS).

» NACo Staff

Jim Sawyer, director, NACo Financial Services Corporation, led a workshop demonstrating the Network of Care for Seniors referral Web sites at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging Conference July 19-22 in Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Minn.

Rocky Lopes, program director, spoke at a workshop about "How to Promote Disaster Preparedness When the Economy is Lousy," during the National Conference on Community Preparedness held in Alexandria, Va., Aug. 11-13.

Donald Murray, senior legislative director, spoke at the annual meeting of the American Bar Association in Cook County (Chicago), Ill. on Aug. 1. Murray spoke about governmental reform in the justice system.



Donald Murray

» Coming Up

Andrew Goldschmidt, membership/marketing director, will exhibit and speak on NACo's membership benefits to member and non-member counties at the Texas Association of Counties Annual Conference in Travis County, Texas Aug. 23-26.

On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson.

Keep up with NACo online ...

www.naco.org



News From the Nation's Counties

► ALABAMA

The **LEE COUNTY** Justice Center now boasts the title of Alabama's **first public building to use solar power**.

Researchers from Auburn University installed the building's solar array, which includes 64 cells on the roof and eight on a pole. The equipment generates 16 kilowatts of power during its most productive moments.

Officials have no estimates on how much they will save on their electric bills, but the system has already offset more than 3,500 pounds of carbon emissions and generated more than 2,800 kilowatt-hours of power, *The Birmingham News* reported.

The project was financed by a grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and Lee County.

► CALIFORNIA

While death itself may be recession proof, the business behind it is not.

The **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Coroner's Office reports an increased number of **unclaimed body cremations** due to relatives who cannot afford to pick up or bury their loved ones.

In fact, the demand for cremation has been so high that the office has contracted with two private crematories to handle the work load, according to CNN.

Jessica Koth, a spokesperson for the National Funeral Directors Association, said that while unmanageable levels of cremation haven't become a national issue, families are working to reduce costs associated with burials and cremations.

"Families are choosing less expensive caskets and urns," she said. "They may be having reduced services, where instead of having a visitation or a wake one day and then having the funeral service the next day, they might just do everything in one day."

In Los Angeles County, claiming a body from the coroner's office costs \$200 while the average funeral runs approximately \$7,300.

► IDAHO

As a cost and energy saving measure, officials in **BLAINE COUNTY** voted 2-1 to adopt a **four-day work week** for government employees.

According to the Associated Press, officials claim that the shortened week could save \$12,000 in energy costs and reduce carbon emissions by up to 141 tons. Blaine County employs approximately 160 people across 27 departments and four major buildings.

The switch will begin Aug. 31 and last for a 12-month trial period, to be evaluated every quarter. Employees will work 10-hour days.

Prior to the vote, some business leaders opposed the change, stating that they would lose revenue and commissions by not being able to file transaction paperwork on Fridays.

► IOWA

Starting this month, **BLACK HAWK COUNTY** became the first in the nation to allow **text messages to its emergency call centers**, the Associated Press reported.

"I think there's a need to get out front and get this technology available," Police Chief Thomas Jennings said. 9-1-1 texting will also help the county's hearing-impaired residents. Furthermore, since kidnapping victims have been known to text family members for help, the ability to text 9-1-1 directly can help them reach help faster, he said.

Call center operators can text back to callers from their computers.

Still, the technology company that upgraded the county's call center said that phone calls should remain the preferred way to reach 9-1-1.

► MINNESOTA

• Two new pilot programs in **HENNEPIN COUNTY** will help save recyclables from the scrap heap.

After approving an agreement with NetWork for Better Futures, work crews will **sort recyclable materials from airplane waste**. The crews will remove plastic bottles, aluminum cans, newspapers, magazines, clear glass, corrugated cardboard, other plastics and textiles for recycling.

Another crew will divert reusable materials — such as furniture, clothing, small household goods and appliances, lawn and garden products, construction materials and items from home remodeling projects — from incoming household waste beginning Oct. 5.

NetWork for Better Futures is a nonprofit organization that promotes the recovery, resiliency and prosperity of high-risk adults. NetWork and county staff will summarize the results of both projects and recommend advancing any aspects that are practical and financially sustainable.

• The U.S. Department of Justice named **ST. LOUIS COUNTY** as the first county in Minnesota to receive the federal **American with Disabilities Act Compliance Certification**.

At a cost of more than \$734,000, the county has worked for five years

to upgrade its facilities to comply with the act. The certification requires barrier-free access for a variety of disabilities, from support for the sight-impaired to wheelchair access.

The county government operates 170 buildings, which were all deemed fully compliant.

► NEW JERSEY

BERGEN COUNTY is taking a novel approach to cope with a consequence of the foreclosure crisis. They're using mosquito fish to deal with abandoned swimming pools that have become **mosquito breeding grounds**.

County mosquito control workers have dumped 30,000 of the fish — *gambusia affinis* is their scientific name — in stagnant backyard pools.

"They eat the mosquito larvae up like piranhas," said Peter Rendine, a county mosquito control inspector. The state provides the fish to counties for free, and they've also been used in ponds and other stagnant water, according to *NorthJersey.com*.

► NORTH CAROLINA

Keep Mecklenburg Beautiful, a division of **MECKLENBURG**

See **NEWS FROM** page 23



Photo courtesy of Gwinnett County, Ga.

As two iconic landmarks are torn down in **GWINNETT COUNTY**, Ga., residents and travelers along I-85 can only say "Tanks for the memories!"

The two 35-year-old water tanks proclaiming the slogans "Success Lives Here" and "Gwinnett Is Great" are on a list of facilities and equipment made obsolete by recent water system improvements. Together, the tanks once held two million gallons of water and helped pressurize water mains in the area as well as provide water for times of high consumption.

It was costing the water department about \$40,000 a year to operate the facilities, and another \$250,000 every seven years on painting and maintenance. County officials said the tanks and equipment would be put out for bid as surplus.

"Decommissioning all these tanks and pump stations will save about \$100,000 in annual operating costs and about the same in annual capital costs," County Administrator Jock Connell said.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Cutting the Future

Of course local government is suffering under the sad cocktail of a general economic downturn, a "cut the size of the government" mantra and a zeal to limit or lower taxes (especially on property). So what else is new? In the HR Doctor's career of 35 years as a city and county HR director and a chief administrative officer, there have been repeated cycles of "Cut government. No, wait, add new government programs." The cycle looks like an EKG strip in a cardiologist's office.

The current reduction trend however, is likely to remain in our future for several years. The hope however, is that the cutting doesn't become mindless, wanton, and designed to mortgage our future, condemning our kids and grand-kids to live in a less civil society.

The future state of public administration is, without doubt, the most compelling of all HR and public administration issues. Elected officials serve for limited terms. County and city managers come and go. Most

bureaucrats come to realize later in their careers that they only rent their chairs from the taxpayers. We are all replaceable.

Despite all of this, there remains one absolutely compelling urgency towards being a good steward of the public interest long-term: that is to plant seeds now to create a future where government leaders are full of hope, optimism, respect and innovation. That objective can only be fulfilled when we make investments in the career development of others. Without that investment, administration decays in the same way that bridges, roadways and buildings decay.

If creating this future is the real imperative in public excellence, why is it that one of the first thoughts of those responsible for putting numbers in Excel spreadsheets for budgets, accounting or auditing often point first to the "opportunity" to cut training, internships, employee education and supervisory development?

A short-term whack in the budget — a change at the expense of the future — is frequently a very poor long-term choice. We come to look back and realize what could have been, and how our actions late one night before a budget deadline create, in effect, administrative malpractice years later.

A time of fiscal distress and worry about the future is the very best time to reinvigorate the organization with internships, volunteer opportunities, youth employment programs, supervisory training, and mandatory programs for personal accountability and personal behavioral excellence in government.

Usually cutting budgets also has the effect of cutting morale. There are fears of layoffs, furloughs, pay cuts, benefit slashes, as well as fears about how programs will be maintained. Out of the fear comes uncertainty and the reduced willingness to risk innovation. The very

See **H.R.DOC** page 23

Western Utah counties voice concern over proposed water deal

NEWS FROM from page 22

COUNTY, is teaming with the local NFL team and other sponsors to tackle tailgating trash.

A pilot program will launch Aug. 29 to make it easier to recycle tailgate refuse. It will cover a four-block area near the Bank of America Stadium where the Carolina Panthers play. Tailgaters will receive two bags as they enter their usual parking lot. One is designated for trash. The other, a bright yellow bag with the sponsors' logos, is for all recyclable bottles and cans.

Tailgaters will be instructed to leave both bags at the curb for collection by the city of Charlotte before they head into the stadium.

Tailgating generates nearly 10 tons of waste on most game days, according to Charlotte officials.

► VIRGINIA

● **ARLINGTON COUNTY'S** loss will be **ICMA's gain**. County Manager Ron Carlee will leave his position this fall to join the International City/County Management Association. He will be ICMA's executive-in-residence and director,

Strategic Domestic Initiatives.

"My goals going forward are to take the lessons I have learned in Arlington and help advance professional local government management and prepare the next generation of local government leaders," Carlee said.

● The safest place in America in late June 2015 just might be **FAIRFAX COUNTY**. That's when more than 10,000 competitors will converge in northern Virginia for the **World Police and Fire Games**.

The county bested two Canadian

cities, Toronto and Winnipeg, in the bid to host the games. Founded in 1985 by the California Police Athletic Federation, the games are held every two years for police, customs and corrections officers, and firefighters.

► UTAH

Several of the state's western desert counties want Utah to bow out of a proposed Snake Valley water deal with neighboring Nevada. **MILLARD, JUAB** and **SALT LAKE COUNTY** officials fear the state is about to cede rights to a large share of the aquifer that spans the states' border.

They're concerned about "water mining" for a 285-mile pipeline that could supply Las Vegas—and that it could dry up farms, ranches and wildlife habitat, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported. "By the time they realize what the impacts are, it'll be too late," Millard County Commissioner Daron Smith said.

Utah negotiators are poised to release a draft agreement for public review later this summer, according to a state official.

► WISCONSIN

● A state Court of Appeals has struck down a **CALUMET COUNTY** ordinance regulating wind turbines, the *Post-Crescent* reported. The regulation prescribed

setbacks, and maximum heights and sound levels for wind energy developers.

The court said the county's ordinance was too broad and restrictive, and that it went against state laws supporting alternative energy. Other counties in the state with similar measures could also be affected.

● All emergencies are not created equal. A **FRANKLIN COUNTY** pilot program bears that out by **not requiring lights and sirens** for all 9-1-1 response calls.

During a three-month pilot, Fire Department dispatchers used a new question-and-answer format to prioritize responses. This enabled them to respond to 24 percent of emergency calls without lights and sirens. On average, they arrived about 27 seconds later, the *Journal Sentinel* reported.

Assistant Fire Chief Lloyd Bertram proposed the experiment. He attended a public safety conference two years ago, after which he concluded that fire departments could put their personnel and the public at risk by responding to all 9-1-1 calls as life-or-death situations.

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Dan Miller, staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please e-mail ctaylor@naco.org or dmiller@naco.org.)

When making cuts, don't cut employee training and development programs

H.R. DOC from page 22

employees with valuable experience and knowledge about how to do things better become reluctant to "step up" to accept new responsibility for change. They worry about what the change might mean for them and their families. In fact, a crisis is exactly the time when the "stepping up" concept itself needs to be stepped up in the organization.

This article's defense of training and development absolutely does not mean simply continuing programs the way they have gone before. In fact, as in many areas of public service, including HR, "just doing things the way they have always been done" leads to a build-up of rust and barnacles on the hull of the *USS Local Government*. This is also a time to innovate in how training is done. It is a time to reduce costs and make training more meaningful and less mindlessly repetitive.

There are many ways to do this, however they all begin with asking questions. Does the current training program equip the organization to defend a lawsuit or other challenge after a critical incident such as workplace violence? Do we have clear policies, in which employees have been trained? Does every supervisor know not to walk by something wrong? Are we in a position to say we have a mandatory supervisory academy? In fact, no one should be promoted to supervisor without having to complete the academy curriculum. Do the training programs measurably reflect enhanced public service?

Are we able to say that our training programs are delivered with a great respect for people's time and the avoidance of overtime costs? Can we say that we use multimedia approaches that make training available online at 3 a.m. for insomniac

firefighters as well as in a classroom with 25 semi-conscious employees? In fact, is the training presented in an interesting, compelling way so that people emerge more awake and aware at the end of the program than when they first entered the room?

Does each personnel file contain signed receipts by employees acknowledging that they are aware of key policies in the organization, received training about them and accept their responsibilities under those policies? The latter will include non-discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and violence prevention and intervention as well as organizational ethics, conflict of interest prevention and the proper use of government property.

The assessment of where we are in our training efforts represents a GPS waypoint. By knowing where we are, we can create the vision of future plans to do more, better and more effective training for the same or less money.

That "more better, less cost" model may be achievable through partnerships with other agencies. After all, these agencies also have very similar if not identical training needs. It may be achievable through collaboration efforts with local colleges and universities. This is especially true of the growing capabilities of public community colleges.

Success may be possible through partnerships with private businesses in the area which also have training needs, facilities and resources government agencies may not have readily available. There can be a public-private sharing of cost. For many agencies it may involve cost-effective consulting arrangements to help in the design and conduct of training. The HR Doctor would be more than happy to provide such

an arrangement fully appreciating the cost concerns. The latter may even involve major training activities such as semi-annual management "stand-down" days in which current practices can be reviewed, updated and presented, often by an outside speaker, in a compelling context which would not occur otherwise in the press of day-to-day business.


Stepping back from the urgency of an instant budget fix, it is very important to recognize the need to be a "Johnny Appleseed" administrator. Looking for opportunities to build capacity for the future makes attention to training and development more important now than ever before.

This importance is further evidenced by recognizing what will happen soon, as huge numbers of baby boomers leave the workplace. They will leave in the hands of the next generation of employees the stewardship of public programs. A huge number of air traffic controllers in the Federal Aviation Administration, for example, are now eligible for retirement. Imagine that you are on what the airlines regrettably refer to as "final approach" to an airport in a jumbo jet where the air traffic control staff is full of rather new employees just out of air traffic controller fantasy camp.

This is not a pleasant scenario for passengers to think about, but perhaps it brings home the importance of training and development even when we think it's not affordable. In fact, what is really not affordable in serving the public is to risk malpractice by failing to plan for and create an affirmative public service future.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor • www.hrdt.net



What's in a Seal?

» Campbell County, Va.
www.co.campbell.va.us

Campbell County, settled in 1736 and incorporated in 1781, is located in Virginia's south central Piedmont region in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Rich in both natural beauty and history, Campbell County was named for Gen. William Campbell, the Revolutionary War hero famous for his leadership in defeating the Tories and Loyalists at the Battle of King's Mountain in the Carolinas.

The official seal of Campbell County was adopted June 17, 1974. The circular seal has a border of dogwood blossoms, the state flower. Across the top is the date 1781, the year the county was formed out of Bedford County. The center of the seal is Gen. Campbell's coat of arms and below the seal is a front elevation of the county courthouse. The inscription, "Terra Mare Fide" means "Faithful on Land and Sea."

(If you would like your county's seal featured, please contact Christopher Johnson at 202/942-4256 or cjohnson@naco.org.)

Financial Services News

Continue to Save for Retirement

In today's economy, many people feel uneasy and insecure about their budgets and their financial futures. An unpredictable market can be intimidating, especially when working to pay bills and save money for retirement at the same time.

But before reacting emotionally by moving investments to cash or discontinuing contributions, it's smart for county employees to know why they may want to stick with their long-term strategy including their supplemental retirement savings such as a 457(b) deferred compensation plan, regardless of market conditions. Here are some reasons for employees to stick with it:

Retirement Savings Have Tax Benefits

Employer-sponsored retirement plans like a 457(b) deferred compen-

sation plan offer tax benefits that are not tied to the market. Contributions are pre-tax — meaning that the money goes into an account before the participant pays taxes.

For example, if an employee pays 25 percent in income taxes, then a contribution of \$100 in a retirement account results in only a \$75 reduction from their take-home pay, and taxes are not due on the \$100 or any gains until withdrawal, usually at retirement. So, not only does \$75 out-of-pocket put \$100 in the account, the \$25 that would have been taxed now has the potential to grow and compound over the years (investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal).

Compounding is when money can earn more money over time. That same employee saving \$75 out of their pocket every payday for

35 years, will have invested \$91,000 (remember a 25 percent income tax, that only felt like \$68,250). At an average annual return of 7 percent, the \$91,000 would grow many times over to be worth more than four times the original investment — \$372,338.

Not all American workers today may be able to afford to invest the amount in this example right now. In real life, people often start smaller and increase regularly when they get a pay raise. Beginning to contribute is the most important step, but continuing to invest as much as possible throughout the working years is equally important, even when markets are volatile. The tax benefits are not affected by volatility.

Markets Bounce Back

There have been down markets before. Today, it's easy for emotions to reflect the market — they go up, they go down. And while past performance cannot guarantee future results, over the past 75 years every down cycle has been followed by an up cycle. And while no one can definitively say when the market will upswing, most financial experts agree that the market will recover. And that's something that no one wants to miss out on.

In mid-May, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that "Since bottoming out, the Dow has surged 26 percent. That means investors who sold at the bottom have missed out on one of the most powerful rallies in decades." Rather than "cutting losses" by selling at a low point, investors can think of a market downturn as an opportunity to "buy low." When the market is down, investors who buy get more for their money when it rebounds. However, selling or waiting to invest until the market improves could mean an investor actually pays a higher price. A "down market" might actually be a good time to buy more while prices are potentially lower.

The Right Strategy is Important

Even though planning for retirement is a long-term goal, many investors think short-term, especially in times like these. There are strategies, such as asset allocation, that may help deal with a volatile market and reduce market risk without having to miss out on potential returns.

Experts suggest that investors use different types of investments because even though all investments go up and down over time, typically

they do not move the same way at the same time. Investors can drive commitment to a long-term investment discipline by understanding their own comfort level with market risk, how long until they will actually retire, and when they will start spending their retirement assets. And in turn, this can help determine what asset allocation strategy to use. It's important to remember though that asset allocation does not guarantee returns or insulate against potential losses in a declining market.

Stick with the Strategy

A good strategy is a good strategy, regardless of market conditions. Many county employees are in for the long-term and should not make investment decisions based on short-term drops or gains. It's important to evaluate how an investment fits into an overall long-term financial strategy including current and future tax implications, adjusting as needed.

The message is clear: If not already doing so, everyone should contribute to a supplemental retirement account. They shouldn't wait,

but instead get started and evaluate the tax benefit. If they are already participating, they should continue to contribute to their future. Pulling out of the market at a low point is not a great strategy.

County employees participating in the NACo deferred compensation plan can talk with Nationwide representatives to discuss their specific situations and to find out which strategies may help reach long-term goals by calling 877/677-3678. Learning tools are also available at www.nrsforu.com.

County employees should know that finding creative solutions for employers has been a hallmark of Nationwide's service to the public sector, and especially NACo. For more information, contact Louie Watson, vice-president of strategic relationships, by e-mail at WatsonL2@Nationwide.com or by phone at 614/854-8895.

(Financial Services News was written by Kate Jaeger, communications consultant, Nationwide Retirement Solutions.)

Connolly: Economic recovery depends on cooperation

PARTNERSHIP from page 1

Fairfax County, Va. Board of Supervisors, along with cosponsor Rep. Leonard Lance (R-N.J.) said in a Dear Colleague letter that Congress' "... long-term success on [The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act] and many other legislative initiatives is dependent on [Congress'] ability to work effectively with [its] local and state partners."

"For decades, the various levels of government have worked together to answer the challenges facing our nation," said NACo Executive Director Larry Naake.

"But in recent years, that partnership has begun to wane. To combat this decline, NACo embarked on a mission to remind our leaders of the importance of Federalism to our system of government. We call our effort 'Restore the Partnership' and one of its key components is to establish a commission such as the one outlined in Congressman Connolly's legislation. This is why NACo's membership voted unanimously to support this very important piece of legislation."

For more information, contact Steve Traylor at 202/942-4254 or straylor@naco.org.

Job Market / Classifieds

► DEPUTY AUDITOR/TAX DIRECTOR – BURLEIGH COUNTY, N.D.

Salary: \$47,568 – \$55,008; DOQ. Appraisal and assessment of commercial, residential, and agricultural property to determine value for tax purposes. Qualifications: Bachelor's degree and 3 years' experience, and/or combo of education and experience. Starting salary: \$3,964 – \$4,584 per month. For more information, go to www.co.burleigh.nd.us or contact Human Resources at 701/222-6669, or e-mail ajhorner@nd.gov. EOE.

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – YOLO COUNTY, CALIF.

Salary: \$208,000; DOQ. One of California's original 27 counties, Yolo County offers an outstanding quality of life to its 200,000 residents. Encompassing over 1,000 square miles of rich agricultural land, the County includes the thriving and dynamic incorporated communities of Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, and Woodland. Appointed by the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator will possess proven leadership and management skills necessary to oversee the 2009/10 budget of \$330 million and 1,465 dedicated employees. The ideal candidate will have a strong commitment to collaboration and customer service. Bachelor's degree in public or business administration or a closely related field is required; Master's preferred. Appoint-

ment will be made depending upon the qualifications of the selected candidate. Please send your cover letter and resume electronically to: Peckham and McKenney at apply@peckhamandmckenney.com. Call Bobbi Peckham at 866/912-1919 for more information or to request a detailed brochure. The brochure is also available on our Web site at www.peckhamandmckenney.com. Filing deadline: Monday, Sept. 14.

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – HORRY COUNTY, S.C.

Salary: DOQ. County Administrator – Horry County, S.C. Population 257,380. Requires an MS/MA in Public Administration or related field with 8 years' public administration/management experience or a BS/BA in Public Administration or related field with 10 years of public administration/management experience. The County Administrator carries out the policies and ordinances passed by the County Council and oversees day-to-day operations of the County government. Starting salary market competitive DOQ/E, plus benefits. Brochure at www.mercergroupinc.com. Confidential resumes immediately to James Mercer, The Mercer Group, Inc., 5579B Chamblee Dunwoody Road, #511, Atlanta, GA 30338. Phone: 770/551-0403; Fax: 770/399-9749. E-mail: jmercerc@mercergroupinc.com; Web: www.mercergroupinc.com. EOE.



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