County leaders run for higher office

By Charles Taylor
Senior Staff Writer

Four sitting county leaders have set their sights on their states’ governorships this year: Peter Corroon, Salt Lake County, Utah mayor; Dan Onorato, Allegheny County, Pa. executive; John Hickenlooper, city and county of Denver mayor; and Rory Reid, Clark County, Nev. Board of Commissioners chairman.

In Alabama, Ron Sparks, a former Dekalb County commissioner, as the shining star by the Obama administration and federal agencies as a way to jump-start the economy, promote green jobs and reduce greenhouse gases.

Participation in the program is voluntary. The premise of PACE programs is rooted in a long-standing, land-secured financing mechanism used by local governments to pay for improvements that provide a public purpose. It has been used by local governments for close to a century to finance projects such as roads, water or sewer projects, or schools. Basically eligible participants are allowed to pay for energy efficient improvements to their property via their property tax assessments.

The tax liens created by PACE assessments are considered “senior” to other loans, such as mortgages, and must be paid first in the event of a foreclosure.

As the clock ticks to the end of the 111th Congress, many local governments are anxious about the fate of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program.

In Miami-Dade County, Florida, the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program on the ropes.

Miami-Dade County Fire Rescue (MDFR) went pink Sept. 22–24 for October’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month. MDFR and the South Florida Firefighters Council teamed up with the Guardians of the Ribbon, Inc., who dress in pink bunker gear and drive fire trucks across the country every year to spread awareness and to support all women in their fight against cancer. (See more in News From the Nation’s Counties, page 9)

Analysis
Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program on the ropes

By Julie Usher
Associate Legislative Director

As the clock ticks to the end of the 111th Congress, many local governments are anxious about the fate of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program.

PACE allowed local governments to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements to homes and businesses through property tax assessments.

This summer, PACE ground to a halt after questions were raised about the program’s financial viability. This stands in stark contrast to a year ago when PACE was billed as the shining star by the Obama administration and federal agencies as a way to jump-start the economy, promote green jobs and reduce greenhouse gases.

Participation in the program is voluntary. The premise of PACE programs is rooted in a long-standing, land-secured financing mechanism used by local governments to pay for improvements that provide a public purpose. It has been used by local governments for close to a century to finance projects such as roads, water or sewer projects, or schools. Basically eligible participants are allowed to pay for energy efficient improvements to their property via their property tax assessments.

The tax liens created by PACE assessments are considered “senior” to other loans, such as mortgages, and must be paid first in the event of a foreclosure.

This created a problem with the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), which oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. FHFA said that PACE assessments are considered loans, not assessments, and violate standard mortgage provisions by requiring priority over other loans, such as mortgages.

FHFA’s ruling was a huge blow not only to local and state governments but also to the administration of a foreclosure. This created a problem with the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), which oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. FHFA said that PACE assessments are considered loans, not assessments, and violate standard mortgage provisions by requiring priority over other loans, such as mortgages.

FHFA’s ruling was a huge blow not only to local and state governments but also to the administration of a foreclosure.
Goslin speaks to business leaders to raise county awareness

By Terri Graham

Cook County Commissioner Greg Goslin takes the “County Government Works” message to business leaders at a local government summit.

Message that “County Government Works,” the title of Whitley’s presidential initiative, Goslin shared the stage with Mayor Tom Bluffton, Ind. and started with a basic County 101 approach. When putting together his notes for his presentation, Goslin utilized the tools and communication template available at the Presidential Initiative link at www.naco.org.

The room exploded with laughter when Goslin opened with, “Where do I go people ask, ‘Just what the heck does a county do?’” A participant offered that the group had asked that exact question before the introduction of the program.

Although Cook County is the second largest county in the nation, the services it provides and issues it addresses are shared by many counties, whether rural, suburban or urban.

“The county is with you from birth to death,” Goslin said, explaining its various record keeping functions, including marriage, property and business filings.

Further, Cook County government also has principal responsibility for the protection of persons and property, the provision for public health services and the maintenance of county highways, as mandated by state law.

For example, the Cook County Health & Hospitals System (CCHHS) oversees an integrated system of health care throughout Chicago and suburban Cook County with three hospitals, a growing ambulatory and community health network, a public health department, a correctional health care facility and an outpatient infectious disease center. Services ranging from specialty to primary care to emergency, acute, outpatient, rehabilitative, long-term and preventative care are available to patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

In the last several years, CCHHS underwent a major revamping, establishing an independent board of business and community leaders to run the system and implement improvements, many of which were ideas Goslin attributed to studying best practices in health care delivery around the country when he served as chair of the NACo County Hospital Task Force.

The county is often the sole provider of these basic, essential services, and Goslin described the relentless struggle to responsibly manage resources to ensure that help is available for those most in need. This also explains why officials are so active with associations such as NACo. “We’re always looking for innovative programs that are more efficiently serving citizens or saving dollars, and learning about successful initiatives from other communities helps us duplicate their achievements in our own communities.”

The old line goes that Chicago has two seasons — winter and construction — and the Cook County Highway Department has evolved to include jurisdictional authority over 557 centerline miles of highways. The department has maintenance responsibilities for 1,474 lane miles of pavement, 130 bridges, 332 traffic signals and five pumping stations.

The protection of persons and property falls principally to the Cook County Circuit Court, the state’s attorney and the Cook County Sheriff’s Department. The Circuit Court of Cook County is one of the largest unified court systems in the world with more than 2.4 million cases filed every year.

The Sheriff’s Department runs Cook County Jail, one of the largest single-site, pre-trial facilities in the United States, with an average daily population of 9,000 inmates. The majority of inmates at the jail (more than 90 percent) are held on a pre-trial basis, detained at the jail while their trials are conducted in the county court system.

“Having a better understanding of the needs and priorities of local government makes us more effective as we work to provide solutions,” said Siemens’ Chuck Hall, who moderated the event. “Attendees came away with a much better understanding of the unique issues facing elected officials today.”

Goslin is scheduled to repeat the presentation later this fall for several local service clubs. Whitley has asked county officials to seek out public speaking engagements and other opportunities where they can tell the county government story and share information about the good work and services counties provide.

Local leaders aim for state, federal office

Leaders from page 1

is running for governor. All are Democrats.

They are a few of the current and former county elected officials who are seeking higher offices. Nov. 2. In Delaware, New Castle County Executive Chris Coons is the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate. Queen Anne’s County, Md. Commissioner Eric Wargotz, a Republican, is running to unseat four-term incumbent Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D).

Coons’ race has become a marquee contest, drawing national interest — not only because the seat was formerly held by Vice President Joe Biden but also because his opponent, Christine O’Donnell, a Tea Party-backed candidate, scored an upset to win the Republican nomination.

In Nevada, Reid has also attracted national attention, in part, because he will share the ballot with his famous father, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D), who is seeking reelection.

County News queried state association of counties executives to compile a list of current and former county officials who are seeking to take their experience to the state house or Capitol Hill.

Arizona

Former Maricopa County Treasurer David Schweikert (R) is running for the state’s 5th District congressional seat.

New Mexico

State Sen. Dianna Duran (R), former Otero County clerk, is running for secretary of state against the incumbent, Mary Herrera (D), former Bernalillo County clerk.

Pennsylvania

State Rep. Scott Conklin (D), a former Centre County commissioner, is running for lieutenant governor. Bucks County Commissioner Jim Cawley is the Republican candidate.

Former Bucks County Commissioner Mike Fitzpatrick (R) is running to reclaim the state’s 8th District U.S. House seat. He lost the seat in 2006 after serving one term in Congress.

Oregen

Ted Wheeler (D), appointed state treasurer last May, is seeking re-election to the post. He is former chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

South Carolina

State Rep. Tim Scott (R), former member and chairman of the Charleston County Council, is seeking the state’s 1st District congressional seat.

Washington

Snoshorn County Commissioner John Koster (R) is running for the state’s 2nd District congressional seat. Pierce County Councilmember Dick Muri is the Republican candidate for the 9th District congressional seat.

Alabama

Madison County Commissioner Mo Brooks (R) is running for the state’s 5th District congressional seat.

Arizona

Former Maricopa County Treasurer David Schweikert (R) is running for Congress in Arizona’s 5th District.

Iowa

Story County Treasurer David Jamison (R) is running for state treasurer. State Sen. Kim Reynolds, formerly Clarke County treasurer, is the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor.

New Mexico

State Sen. Dianna Duran (R), former Otero County clerk, is running for secretary of state against the incumbent, Mary Herrera (D), former Bernalillo County clerk.

New York

Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards (R) is running for lieutenant governor.

South Carolina

State Rep. Tim Scott (R), former member and chairman of the Charleston County Council, is seeking the state’s 1st District congressional seat.

Washington

Snoshorn County Commissioner John Koster (R) is running for the state’s 2nd District congressional seat. Pierce County Councilmember Dick Muri is the Republican candidate for the 9th District congressional seat.

Arizona

Former Maricopa County Treasurer David Schweikert (R) is running for Congress in Arizona’s 5th District.

Iowa

Story County Treasurer David Jamison (R) is running for state treasurer. State Sen. Kim Reynolds, formerly Clarke County treasurer, is the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor.

New Mexico

State Sen. Dianna Duran (R), former Otero County clerk, is running for secretary of state against the incumbent, Mary Herrera (D), former Bernalillo County clerk.

New York

Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards (R) is running for lieutenant governor.

Pennsylvania

State Rep. Scott Conklin (D), a former Centre County commissioner, is running for lieutenant governor. Bucks County Commissioner Jim Cawley is the Republican candidate.

Former Bucks County Commissioner Mike Fitzpatrick (R) is running to reclaim the state’s 8th District U.S. House seat. He lost the seat in 2006 after serving one term in Congress.

Oregen

Ted Wheeler (D), appointed state treasurer last May, is seeking re-election to the post. He is former chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

South Carolina

State Rep. Tim Scott (R), former member and chairman of the Charleston County Council, is seeking the state’s 1st District congressional seat.

Washington

Snoshorn County Commissioner John Koster (R) is running for the state’s 2nd District congressional seat. Pierce County Councilmember Dick Muri is the Republican candidate for the 9th District congressional seat.

Arizona

Former Maricopa County Treasurer David Schweikert (R) is running for Congress in Arizona’s 5th District.

Iowa

Story County Treasurer David Jamison (R) is running for state treasurer. State Sen. Kim Reynolds, formerly Clarke County treasurer, is the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor.

New Mexico

State Sen. Dianna Duran (R), former Otero County clerk, is running for secretary of state against the incumbent, Mary Herrera (D), former Bernalillo County clerk.

New York

Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards (R) is running for lieutenant governor.

Pennsylvania

State Rep. Scott Conklin (D), a former Centre County commissioner, is running for lieutenant governor. Bucks County Commissioner Jim Cawley is the Republican candidate.

Former Bucks County Commissioner Mike Fitzpatrick (R) is running to reclaim the state’s 8th District U.S. House seat. He lost the seat in 2006 after serving one term in Congress.

Oregen

Ted Wheeler (D), appointed state treasurer last May, is seeking re-election to the post. He is former chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

South Carolina

State Rep. Tim Scott (R), former member and chairman of the Charleston County Council, is seeking the state’s 1st District congressional seat.

Washington

Snoshorn County Commissioner John Koster (R) is running for the state’s 2nd District congressional seat. Pierce County Councilmember Dick Muri is the Republican candidate for the 9th District congressional seat.

Arizona

Former Maricopa County Treasurer David Schweikert (R) is running for Congress in Arizona’s 5th District.

Iowa

Story County Treasurer David Jamison (R) is running for state treasurer. State Sen. Kim Reynolds, formerly Clarke County treasurer, is the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor.

New Mexico

State Sen. Dianna Duran (R), former Otero County clerk, is running for secretary of state against the incumbent, Mary Herrera (D), former Bernalillo County clerk.

New York

Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards (R) is running for lieutenant governor.

Pennsylvania

State Rep. Scott Conklin (D), a former Centre County commissioner, is running for lieutenant governor. Bucks County Commissioner Jim Cawley is the Republican candidate.

Former Bucks County Commissioner Mike Fitzpatrick (R) is running to reclaim the state’s 8th District U.S. House seat. He lost the seat in 2006 after serving one term in Congress.
President Obama signs Small Business Jobs Act

The Small Business Jobs Act, signed into law by President Obama on Sept. 28, includes a NACo-backed provision that allows those participating in Section 457 (deferred compensation) plans to do so through a Roth retirement plan. Inclusion of a governmental Roth 457 provision, which permits 457(b) plans to offer the designated Roth accounts already permitted in 401(k) and 403(b) plans, levels the playing field for state and local government workers. Those who use Roth plans do not receive a deduction from their current income for a contribution to the plan, but they do earn returns within the plan tax-free and the withdrawals from the plan are tax-free.

The legislation also includes approximately $12 billion in tax breaks to help companies invest and hire, and a $30 billion small-business lending fund and enhanced government assistance programs. The measure, blends a $30 billion government fund to help open up credit-starved small businesses with bipartisan tax provisions.

The $30 billion loan fund would be available to community banks to encourage lending to small businesses, and supporters say banks should be able to use the fund to leverage up to $300 billion in loans. The bill also offers $12 billion in tax breaks to businesses to encourage investment, entrepreneurship and hiring. Businesses would be able to write off more of their capital equipment and improvement costs.

Those who are self-employed could deduct health care costs from the self-employment tax. The bill would also continue to waive Small Business Administration loan fees that had been eliminated as part of the 2009 Recovery Act.

The bill, which includes a series of proposals to help small businesses invest and hire, accomplishes the following:

- Extends SBA Recovery Loan Provisions: With funds provided in the bill, SBA will begin funding new Recovery loans. In total, the extension of these provisions has the capacity to support $14 billion in loans to small businesses.
- Increases the Loan Size for the Largest SBA Programs: The act also increases the maximum loan size for SBA loan programs, which in the coming weeks will allow more small businesses to access more credit to allow them to expand and create new jobs.
- Establishes a New $30 Billion Small Business Lending Fund: The bill would establish a $30 billion Small Business Lending Fund, which — by providing capital to small banks with incentives to increase small business lending — could support several multiples of that amount in new credit.
- Strengthens Innovative State Small Business Loans: The act will support at least $15 billion in small business lending through a new State Small Business Credit Initiative.
- Decreases for 2010 Taxes on Capital Gains from Key Small Business Investments: Under the Recovery Act, 75 percent of capital gains on key small business investments this year were excluded from the tax. The Small Business Jobs Act temporarily puts in place for the rest of 2010 a provision that eliminates all capital gains taxes on these investments if held for five years.
- Extends and Expands Small Businesses’ Ability to Immediately Expense Capital Investments: The bill increases for 2010 and 2011 the amount of investments that businesses would be eligible to immediately write off to $500,000, while raising the level of investments at which the write-offs phase out to $2 million. Prior to the passage of the bill, the cap on capital gains would only be $250,000 this year, and only $25,000 next year.
- Extends the 50 percent Bonus Depreciation: The act extends — as the president proposed in his budget — a Recovery Act provision for 50 percent “bonus depreciation” through 2010.
- Establishes a New Deduction of Health Insurance Costs for Self-Employed.
- Eliminates for 2010 Taxes on Capital Gains from Key Small Business Investments: Under the Recovery Act, 75 percent of capital gains on key small business investments this year were excluded from the tax.
- Increases the Deduction for Entrepreneurs’ Start-Up Expenses: The bill temporarily increases the amount of start-up expenditures entrepreneurs can deduct from their taxes for this year from $5,000 to $10,000.
- Permits a Five-Year Carry-back of General Business Credits: The act would allow certain small businesses to “carry back” their general business credits to offset five years of taxes, while also allowing these credits to offset the Alternative Minimum Tax, reducing taxes for these small businesses.
- Limits Penalties for Errors in Tax Reporting that Disproportionately Affect Small Business: The act would change, beginning this year, the penalty for failing to report certain tax transactions from a fixed dollar amount — which was criticized for imposing a disproportionately large penalty on small businesses in certain circumstances — to a percentage of the tax benefits from the transaction.
- Provides Tax Relief and Simplification for Cell Phone Deductions: The act changes rules so that the use of cell phones can be deducted without extra documentation.

In a marketplace full of numbers, how do you know which ones to trust when valuing a vehicle? Look to NADA. Our analysts take the industry’s most comprehensive data and turn it into reliable values that are relevant to your business. Auction. Trade-in. Retail. Loan. Whether you need them for wholesale or resale. Retail or repo. Leasing or lending. Insurance or assurance that you’re making the right decision about any used car. It’s all the information you need. All the time. All from one source. NADA.

Experience the full power of NADA’s vehicle information. Visit www.nada.com/power to learn more.
Commissioner Gouge testifies on Livable Communities Act

BY DARIAN DANIEL
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

During testimony before the House Financial Services Committee, Carroll County, Md. Board of Commissioners President Julia Gouge gave high marks to legislation that would provide nearly $4 billion in funding over four years to regions and localities for sustainable development planning. The Perspectives on the Livable Communities Act (H.R. 4690), introduced by Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-Colo.), would formally establish the Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities, an existing partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency that focuses on better coordination among federal agencies on sustainability issues including research and grants.

During her testimony Sept. 23, Gouge discussed the importance of all counties being eligible for these federal incentive grants. She noted many counties have been using sustainable planning for decades. However, many rural and mid-size counties would like to begin such planning, but lack the resources to do.

The final bill also includes a NACO-supported rural fix, which provides a 15 percent set-aside for rural communities under 200,000 in population. NACO played a key role in ensuring that all aspects of the bill are voluntary to counties interested in the program.

Sen. Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), who introduced a Senate version of the bill, S.1619, held a hearing on the Livable Communities Act in June at which Gouge also testified. The Senate bill is ready for a floor vote.

After banking committee mark-up, the authorized funding level was reduced from $4 billion to $2.67 billion in grant funding over four years. This of $2.67 billion, $475 million is targeted for implementation grants and $2.2 billion for implementation grants.

No mark-up date has been scheduled yet in the House. The Livable Communities Act has the support of more than 200 national and local organizations, including NACO.

PACE programs stalled by Fannie, Freddie

In June 2009, the FHFA first raised concerns that PACE financing would increase a homeowner’s debts and “could cause a greater probability of default.” As a result of this statement, the White House coordinated a number of interagency meetings in the fall of 2009 to allay fears on PACE. These meetings led to the publication of the Policy Framework for PACE Financing Programs. This document suggested writing standardized underwriting criteria and safeguards to protect participants and minimize financial risks to the homeowners and mortgage lenders.

In early May of this year, both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac issued letters that suggested PACE violated regular mortgage provisions. These letters put PACE programs in a state of uncertainty and many PACE programs suspended services. The FHFA and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency recently stated the PACE program “presents significant safety and soundness concerns” to the mortgage finance industry.” They went on to state that homeowners who participate in residential PACE programs will violate standards for all borrowers in jurisdictions with PACE programs.

Within the past month, Fannie and Freddie have taken it a step further by requiring owners who currently have PACE assessments to pay off their PACE liens before allowing them to refinance or sell their homes.
EPA launches Green Power Community Challenge

BY CINDY WASSER
COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSISTANT

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Green Power Partnership recently kicked off its national Green Power Community Challenge, a year-long campaign to encourage counties, cities, towns and Native American tribes to use renewable energy and fight climate change. The goal is to double the collective amount of green power used by participating communities.

Green power is electricity generated from renewable energy sources, such as solar photovoltaics, wind, biomass and low-impact hydropower.

Communities will compete from Sept. 20, 2010, to Sept. 1, 2011 to see which one can achieve the highest green power percentage of which one can use the most green power and promote and recognize the use of green power on-site.

The Green Power Partnership is voluntary program designed to promote and recognize the use of green power by leading U.S. organizations and communities. Nearly 1,300 organizations are Green Power Partners, including a growing number of counties, municipalities and communities.

Nearly 1,300 organizations are Green Power Partners, including a growing number of counties, municipalities and communities.

To learn more about EPA’s Green Power Community Challenge, visit www.epa.gov/greenpower/communities. To learn more about the Green Power Partnership, visit www.epa.gov/greenpower.

---

Letter to the Editor

I am writing this letter in recognition of the fact that as leaders of our nation’s counties, we are in a powerful moment and in a position to provide true leadership and rise to the challenges facing our communities. It is so easy to retreat during these difficult times of strained resources when we are in survival mode. However, I would like to argue that we can press the “restart” button and powerfully shape the future of our counties.

After years of being battered, our citizens are yearning for someone to step forward and start building our economies again. We are in a position to shape how this occurs. How we design and build our communities as they recover and the pent up economic forces burst through will impact our quality of life and resource demand for generations. The decisions we make today will determine how much water, energy and transportation fuel our communities needs to sustain local economies.

Through thoughtful and bold redevelopment of public infrastructure and supporting programs, we can rebuild our local economies using design, technologies and programs to permanently free our businesses and homes of the need to rely on increasingly limited natural resources. Through this lens, we can create renewed economies based upon healthy and self-sufficient frameworks.

I have recently been elected chair of Applied Solutions, a new organization of counties and cities whose sole purpose is to do just this. Formed by and for elected leaders of local governments, Applied Solutions is working to build a critical mass within local governments to advance new financial tools, programs and policies necessary to achieve permanent energy, water and transportation reduction in a fiscally feasible and realistic manner. This group is having a national conference just to build this critical mass around these new ideas in Boulder, Colo. Nov. 10–12 (http://www.appliedsolutionsconference.org).

All are welcome — we would love to see you there.

Supervisor Valerie Brown
Sonoma County, Calif.
NACo immediate past president
To some, medical marijuana is the proverbial camel’s nose under the tent — before you know it, the whole animal is inside. And the “animal” whose entry is feared is the legalization of pot for all.

“California passed their medical marijuana statute back in 1996,” said Trevor Jones of South Dakota’s Department of Criminal Investigations. “Well, now on the ballot today what do we see? They want to legalize a certain amount of marijuana (for anyone).” He’s working with counties in his state to stop a medical marijuana measure there.

Four states have marijuana-related questions on their Nov. 2 ballots. In California, where medical pot is legal, Proposition 19 would completely legalize the drug and tax its sale, letting the camel in. Arizona and South Dakota voters would completely legalize the drug related questions on their Nov. 2 ballots. In Oregon, voters, who approved medicat pot in 1998, will decide whether to legalize marijuana dispensaries.

Medical marijuana is legal in 14 states and the District of Columbia. The laws are proposed as acts of compassion care, to benefit the terminally ill and sufferers of chronic, debilitating pain. But the laws’ passage in some states provides a cautionary tale. And for their counties, the story doesn’t always have a happy ending.

In 2008, 63 percent of Michigan voters approved medical marijuana. Patients there may possess up to 2.5 ounces of medicinal pot and 12 cannabis plants. The law also established a state-run patient registry that issues ID cards to qualifying patients. Eligible patients include those diagnosed with cancer, glaucoma and AIDS, among other conditions.

However in Michigan, some counties have found the law, initiated by citizens, is fraught with problems — mostly due to its lack of clarity and specificity. Last month, Oakland County Sheriff’s Office raided two “medical marijuana facilities,” seizing several hundred pounds of pot and arresting 15 people.

“The law went into effect, but the law does not legally provide anybody the ability to sell and buy marijuana,” Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said. “Our position is, that being the case, and for the people who are selling, [they] can go anywhere and have our officers on that street taking marijuana. That’s an issue we have been startled by the speed of their proliferation.

“The county is on the Nov. 2 ballot, however, largely because the citizens made their petition for a ballot question, but the board may refer the question to the ballot. Whether El Paso County, Colo. will change its mind and pass on medical grass is up to the voters next month.

The county’s medical marijuana dispensaries in unincorporated areas, about 21, have been bereft of criminal activity, according to the sheriff’s office, and tightly regulated by the county since December 2009. Yet, a ban on dispensaries in unincorporated areas of the county is on the Nov. 2 ballot, however, largely because the citizens have been startled by the speed of their proliferation.

“The DEA stopped raiding dispensaries, they started popping up, and people said what was happening wasn’t what they expected when they voted in favor of medical marijuana use,” said Commissioner Amy Lathen. The Obama administration announced in 2009 that the Drug Enforcement Administration would not raid dispensaries in states that had passed medical marijuana laws to enforce federal drug laws.

Current ordinances restrict dispensaries to three different commercial zones and one industrial zone, with distance requirements from schools, churches, playgrounds and child care facilities similar to liquor stores.

After twice voting unanimously to regulate medical marijuana businesses in the county, the county Board of Commissioners voted 3–2 in August to put the question of banning medical marijuana businesses on the ballot. El Paso County does not allow citizens to petition for a ballot question, but the board may refer the question to the ballot.

Lathen, who voted in favor of the referendum, said citizen concern and two statewide referenda on marijuana — 2000’s vote in favor of medical marijuana and 2006’s defeat of a proposition to legalize small amounts of the drug — motivated her support.

“Each referendum gave citizens a chance to make their voice heard and set policy on marijuana,” she said. “Because we heard enough from residents and they didn’t have the process to do that without the board’s action, we felt it was right.”

Abolishing medical marijuana will mean a loss in tax revenue for the county — 1 percent of all sales in unincorporated areas — but the overall impact will not be significant because the majority of the dispensaries are in Colorado Springs, an incorporated city.
Counties recognized as ‘Best Communities for Young People’

BY CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Thirty-one counties made the 2010 list of 100 Best Communities for Young People, an annual competition sponsored by America’s Promise Alliance in celebration of America’s young people and the communities dedicated to helping them graduate from high school.

More than 7,000 U.S. students drop out every school day, totaling 1.3 million young people a year. That amounts to about one out of every three students not graduating from high school. This program is designed to help curb those statistics.

“The 100 Best Communities for Young People are taking bold and effective steps to help youth graduate and lead healthy, productive lives,” said Alma J. Powell, chair, America’s Promise Alliance. NACo is an alliance partner.

The 100 Best competition is part of the Alliance’s GradNation campaign, a 10-year initiative to mobilize all Americans to end the dropout crisis. This year, more than 350 communities in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., were nominated for the 100 Best competition. The panel of judges included some of the nation’s most well-known civic, business and nonprofit leaders such as Bill Bell, president and CEO of Casey Family Programs; Fr. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA; Javier Palomarez, president and CEO of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Larry Nacek, executive director, NACo; Jane Beshear, first lady of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and Dominique Dawes, Olympic gold medalist and youth advocate.

This year’s county winners include Prince William County, Va. It was honored for its Office of Student Management and Alternative Programs that created several opportunities and paths for youths to finish high school through Learn and Serve classes, leadership classes and Students L.E.A.D. (Learning Essential Assets of Development) committees. As a result, the dropout rate has decreased by 52.8 percent over the last four years.

Another winning community was Hancock County, Ohio, which found innovative ways to keep students in school despite floods and the economic downturn. Partnering with the city of Findlay, the county commissioners provided youth opportunities to attend college and prepare for the 21st century workforce by the continuing 4-H youth programs, and adding two new middle schools and a career technology center.

The 2010 winners were highlighted at a ceremony in front of the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Sept. 21. Winning communities were pinpointed on an expansive ceremonial U.S. map.

First held in 2005, the 100 Best competition is open to all communities that make children and youth a priority, including small towns, large cities, counties and school districts. In addition to enhancing local educational opportunities, most winning communities help facilitate greater access to quality health care for young people, encourage youth civic engagement and supply developmental resources that create better places for young people to live and grow.

To learn more about the competition and how to nominate a county, see the full list of winners or view an interactive showcase of the accomplishments, visit www.americaspromise.org/100best.

This Month in County News

County News celebrates NACo’s 75th Anniversary with a look back at the issues and events that affected counties over the past several decades.

★ October ★

1975
• Wayne County, Mich. Board Chairman Roscoe L. Bobo told a House subcommittee that counties desperately need federal financial assistance to aid them in coping with excessive unemployment brought about by the recession and help in solving long-term structural unemployment.
• NACo urged the House economic development subcommittee to move on emergency public works and anti-recession legislation.

“The anti-recession — or counter-cyclical — assistance program would save jobs in the public sector and minimize local tax increases or service cuts,” he said.

1992
• Both houses of Congress overrode President George H.W. Bush’s veto of the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992. The legislation granted local governments the authority to regulate basic cable rates in markets with no competition. The rates are established by the Federal Communications Commission. In 1992, the cable television industry took in more than $20 billion. The cable bill was estimated to save consumers $6 billion annually.
• The NACo Radon Project began its second year with a call for ambitious expansion. The education program, operated in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency, operated three model programs in counties, but NACo Radon Project Director Jerry McNeil and advisory committee members expected the number to increase to 24. NACo worked closely with many state associations of counties to conduct workshops and seminars to educate county officials about the dangers of radon and distributed more than 1,300 radon test kits.

2010 Best Communities

Madison County (Huntsville), Ala.
Tuscaloosa County, Ala.
Sacramento County, Calif.
Solano County, Calif.
Alachua County, Fla.
Manatee County (Bradenton), Fla.
Sarasota County, Fla.
Hillsborough County (Tampa), Fla.
Forsyth County (Cumming), Ga.
Bibb County (Macon), Ga.
Troup County, Ga.
Barren County, Ky.
Clark County, Ky.
Fayette County (Lexington), Ky.
Calloway County (Murray), Ky.
Barnstable County, Mass.
Calvert County, Md.
Wicomico County (Salisbury), Md.
Butler County, Mo.
Platte County, Mo.
Orange County, N.Y.
Pitt County, N.C.
Hancock County (Findlay), Ohio
Indiana County, Pa.
Harris County (Houston), Texas
Chesterfield County, Va.
Hanover County, Va.
Prince William County, Va.
Surry County, Va.
Mercer County, W. Va.

Keep up with NACo online...

www.naco.org
Reconciliation now has a seat at the table with crime and punishment for some Chippewa County, Minn., youths.

Circle sentencing, a holistic technique based on Native American conflict resolution methods, has gained traction as a corrective measure for juvenile justice, especially in Minnesota. Its effectiveness in deterring recidivism and saving money by forgoing traditional incarceration is encouraging Chippewa County Family Services to expand its use.

Coordinator Emily Wright touts its savings and effectiveness, but relishes the opportunity participants have to avoid criminal records as teenagers.

“People typically think juvenile records don’t follow you, but they do,” she said. “Kids who are adjudicated won’t be able to hold some jobs or serve in the military.”

Volunteers undergo 16 hours of training and comprise a cross section of the community.

The offender answers a variety of questions that set the parameters for his participation in circle sentencing:
- What did you do that was wrong in the first place?
- What are your personal strengths?
- What do you need to work on to prevent this from happening again?
- Who did you harm and why did your act hard them, and how can you make amends?
- We have the opportunity to hear from the kid but also for his family to see what it’s like,” Wright said. “We decide together if the circle will work for them.”

Only one applicant has not stuck with the group, which speaks to the self-selective population that pursues that route.

“Some kids choose to not do it, they’re so angry they would rather do the time and get over with,” Wright said. “Circle sentencing isn’t an easy way out — participants have to work hard and open themselves up. It’s not a slap on the wrist and a bunch of lectures from adults.”

James Payne, a consultant with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.

“It gets people to loosen up and talk and relate to each other, and demonstrates the difference between listening and hearing,” he said. “You’re not sitting there making someone feel bad, you’re figuring out ‘how did we get here, and how do we be sure we don’t get to this point again?’”

While inmates at the detention center can serve their sentences in relative anonymity, keeping to themselves, circle participants immediately have eight adults who are keenly aware of who they are. For some, it is a welcome increase from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, said that he has seen the technique adapted from the Native American application of getting people to talk about gender, racial and ethnic disparities.
News From the Nation’s Counties

ARIZONA
The MARICOPA COUNTY Board of Supervisors cancelled 32 school board races with no candidates or competition. The board appointed unchallenged candidates to the open seats and declared vacancies for seats without candidates. County records show that since 2006, when state law allowed supervisors to cancel unopposed elections, as few as one-third to close to half of candidates were voted into office, the Arizona Republic reported. Not having elections in those races will save the school board $54,000.

CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES COUNTY supervisors voted to restrict foam food containers from most county offices and concessions.

The ban will cover restaurants, catering trucks and snack shops from the county’s massive public hospital system to beach concessions, golf courses and even food delivery to senior citizens.

They also requested a study examining a more extensive ban. Department of Public Works officials and the county counsel will report back in a year on the potential implications of banning foam food containers in private restaurants and other businesses in L.A. County’s vast unincorporated areas, which cover 2,600 square miles and more than a million residents.

The Sheriff’s Department, which runs the county jail system, will probably be exempted from the ban because officials there rely on the lightweight containers because they cannot be made into weapons the L.A. Times reported.

FLORIDA
The recession has meant a boost for the LEE COUNTY Clerk of Court, with a 15 percent increase in marriages performed there in 2010’s first eight months.

Between January and August, the clerk’s office performed 527 marriages, about 15 percent more than the same time last year, the News-Press reported. Couples are charged by the $123.50 fee — $30 for the ceremony, $93.50 for the license — that pales in comparison to the tens of thousands of dollars it can cost to rent a church and pay for a catered dinner.

GEORGIA
McINTOSH COUNTY Commissioner Mark Douglas changed the name of several streets to curb road sign theft.

The county is losing about 550 street signs a years to thieves and a commission said he has a solution: Make the names boring.

Douglas said signs marking Green Acres, Boone’s Farm and Mary Jane Lane are frequently stolen. He suspects the thieves are targeting those signs because they share names with a popular TV series, a low-cost wine or, in the third case, a slang term for marijuana. Douglas figures the thieves just like the alliteration in signs for Harmony Hill. County Manager Luther Smart says the area is paying $17,000 a year to replace the signs, the Associated Press reported.

INDIANA
VIGO COUNTY adopted a responsible bidder ordinance for county construction projects.

County Attorney Michael Wright said the ordinance establishes criteria for bidders on taxpayer-supported public construction projects. It is based on legislation that Terre Haute city officials passed.

The concept is that public construction projects paid for by taxpayer money not be automatically awarded to the lowest bidder. The government body undertaking a project can retain discretion to award the project to the lowest “responsible bidder.”

KANSAS

MARYLAND
HOWARD COUNTY Department of Fire & Rescue Services joins its many colleagues across the country in going pink during October to help promote and raise awareness for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The campaign kicked off with a station-lighting ceremony Oct. 1. Howard County fire personnel will put away their normal uniform shirt for the entire month of October in favor of a pink breast cancer awareness shirt.
The H.R. Doctor Is In

By My Simple Example

The key role of a leader in a family and in a public or private organization is to communicate goals, principles and visions to others in a compelling and inspiring way. Extraordinary communications skills also include coaching and constructive criticisms, as well as praise and recognition. The most successful leaders get it when it comes to this vital role. Conversely, leaders who experience repeated business failures, frustrations, and many human resources problems such as high turnover or departures by the best and the brightest, are those who ignore the impacts of their communications on others.

Example is critical to communications excellence. Example is also unconscious as well as deliberate.

The role-modeling and mentorship, both positive and negative, done by leaders can range from a specific coaching appointment on the calendar, an unconscious act of walking by a person and not acknowledging their existence, or walking by a person in distress in order to get to some allegedly important meeting. It involves ignoring or taking full advantage of the precious Genuine Encounter moments (GEM) in life, when a person in need seeks out help and advice from the leader, or the leader sees an opportunity to encourage, motivate or correct behavior. Bypassing a GEM or letting such a GEM opportunity sashimi because of indifference is a serious leadership failure.

So is raising your voice and criticizing in public rather than in private. It is a manifestation of bullying behavior stemming from an over-inflated view of what one’s rank or title as an elected or appointed official permits them to do. This is the kind of behavior also common to the harasser and the perpetrator of violence.

An early HR Doctor article focused on Public Enemy No. 1 in our lives — the arrogance of pride or, from the Greek, hubris. The idea was to create and apply in every agency a new medical procedure, an “ego-suction.” The purpose would be to remove portions of the ego of elected officials and their appointed colleagues when these functions become over-inflated to a level where other qualities, such as empathy and humility, are pushed out.

There is a growing need in America for ego-suction to be covered by health insurance with no co-pay. Perhaps in the next reform package. If there is any doubt, just look at the pundits who use or are used by the media to showcase their skills as demagogues. The raised voice of incivility is a prime weapon in such a person’s arsenal. It’s easy to find them. They are everywhere, and their shouting behaviors are getting louder and louder.

What can be the best source of a great example for leaders? The HR Doctor can find none better than the one in a comment once made by Mario Cuomo, former governor, presidential candidate, and most eloquent speaker and more. The comment described his number one teacher and mentor, the one who had the greatest impact on his future behavior and outlook. That was his father who taught him by the simple eloquence of his example.

Dallas County reaps dividend from alternative sentencing program

NEWS FROM page 9 to the state, it may be too late to ensure the viability of the region’s hoofed-animal population, such as deer and elk, and hunting economy, the Ravalli Republic reported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW YORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A federal judge has tossed out a land-claim lawsuit against the Onondaga Nation filed against ONANDAGA COUNTY and several other entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian nation alleged that land from the Canadian border to Pennsylvania had been illegally taken by the state in the 1700s and 1800s, when it negotiated treaties that violated federal laws, The Post-Standard reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In his ruling, U.S. District Judge Lawrence E. Kahn said the case was brought too late and would disrupt generations of land development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dallas County’s alternative sentencing program is paying off with two congressional representatives of government IT, telecommunications companies, education, county staff and community members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISCONSIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establishment of a seven-county family care district could be BROWN COUNTY’s ticket out of the long-term care business. The County Board recently approved an enabling resolution. Family care was established by the state in 2007 and allows persons in need of long-term care to decide where they wish to live while receiving services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brown would be part of a district that includes DOOR, KEWAUNEE, SHAWANO, OCONTO, MENOMINee and MARINETTE counties. The county’s involvement is significant, since 55 percent of the long-term cases in the seven-county region reside in Brown County.

The state must pass a second resolution outlining its financial participation in the district in about a year.

| • The MARATHON COUNTY city and county of Wausau human resources won’t be merging departments, as had been proposed. But while closing one door, Marathon’s County Board opened another. |
| • The County Board and Wausau City Council had approved the merger, but the board’s executive committee rejected it after Wausau Mayor Jim Tipple and the City Council made changes to it. |
| However, members of the executive committee said they would consider contracting out human resources services to villages and cities, including Wausau. The county’s Human Resources Committee will look into how such a system might operate, according to the Wausau Daily Herald. |

(News From the Nation’s Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please e-mail Taylor or Ban at naco.org or chb@naco.org.)
Downturn Creates the New Poor

In mid-September, the U.S. Census Bureau released the latest statistics on poverty in America. In 2009, 11 percent of all families (about 8.8 million families) were classified as below poverty level. The data, from a report called \textit{Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States; 2009}, reveals the poverty rate in 2009 was the highest reported since 1994 and reflects the largest number of people in poverty in the 51 years that the estimates have been available.

According to the report, poverty increased for every type of family. Married couple families had a poverty rate of 5.8 percent, with 3.4 million in poverty, and female head of household families had a rate of 29.9 percent, or 4.4 million of these families in poverty.

The federal Office of Management and Budget defines the poverty threshold in 2009 as $21,954 for a family of four. Rates of poverty increased from 2008 to 2009 in the Midwest, South and West, but the rate for the Northeast was not statistically different.

The impact of the new economy has hit people in all walks of life, and the phrase now being used in the media to describe them is the “newly poor.” Many of the newly poor formerly considered themselves middle class, but because of job reverses, unemployment, upside-down mortgages and foreclosures they can no longer lay claim to that status. In reality many of them were actually just below middle class, but claiming the lifestyle on a two-paycheck income. The lifestyle easily fell apart when one of the working members of a household lost his or her job. The strain of trying to make it on one paycheck often proves to be too much.

Many types of people are being caught by the slow economy. College and other post-secondary education graduates are finding it tough to break into the working world. At the same time many people who are working are being affected by cutbacks in the availability of state and county funding for subsidized childcare and find themselves on long waiting lists for the fewer available slots. According to data from the Census Bureau, childcare costs up to one-third of the total household budgets of low-income families. Others are seeing their jobs phased out or their employers going out of business.

In La Crosse County, Wis., county staff conducted an analysis of the increased demand on its human services because of the recession. They examined the increased case loads in all of their human services agencies attributed to the downturn in the economy. The following results were found:

- Crisis contacts in Mental Recovery Health Services increased from 3,700 in 2008 to 4,200 in 2009.

- College and other post-secondary education graduates are finding it tough to break into the working world.

- Economic support cases increased by 150 between January and December 2009, and

- Food share cases increased by 500 between 2009 and 2010, and total benefit support increased from $817,539 in 2009 to nearly $1.17 million 2010.

Sterns County, Minn. reports that the number of people seeking food support was 5.5 percent higher than in January 2009. County officials believe that many of the new recipients are people who have experienced job loss. Altogether, 8,810 people sought some form of support from the county human services department in April 2010, double the number receiving it in April 2007.

The cost of these services jumped from $370,000 a month in 2007 to about $1 million a month in 2010. Nearby Sherburne and Benton counties are experiencing similar increases.

Meanwhile county human services departments are facing budget cuts themselves just as demand is increasing. Facing a $60 million shortfall for the county’s 2011 fiscal year, King County, Wash. Executive Dow Constantine recently proposed to zero out all general funding for human services.

After already gutting the nearly $20 million that the county budgeted for human services only two years ago, there was little left for the executive to cut. Washington state counties do not have a legal mandate to fund these services.

The Oregon Food Bank Network, which serves counties in Oregon, and Clark County, Wash., conducted a Hunger Factor Assessment of its recipients. Some of the information they found includes:

- 31 percent of surveyed households listed long-term unemployment as the reason they sought emergency food. That compares to 22 percent in 2008 at the beginning of the recession

- 28 percent of adult recipients are unemployed and looking for work, compared to 20 percent in 2008

- the average length of time of unemployment was 15 months

- 16 percent of adult recipients work full time, compared to 21 percent in 2008, and

- 52 percent of respondents cite “to be employed” as critical to improving their situation (compared to 45 percent in 2008).

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

Job Market / Classifieds

Financial Services News

U.S. Communities Unveils New Online Marketplace

U.S. Communities, the largest national local government cooperative, has announced a new online system that enables participating public agencies to access and purchase goods and services from multiple U.S. Communities vendors at one time. The integrated, online marketplace is available to registered users on www.uscommunities.org.

Any public agency, including local and state government, school districts and nonprofit organizations, can take advantage of the savings and products available through the program. The new online marketplace offers access to thousands of products from multiple suppliers with a single payment and order. Current products available through the marketplace include technology products, school and classroom supplies, labware, homeland security and safety supplies, electrical items, janitorial supplies and maintenance equipment.

These products are available through existing contracts between U.S. Communities’ lead public agencies and suppliers such as School Specialty, HD Supply, Insight, Tech Depot, Graybar, Fisher Science Education, BSN and US Games, Hagemeyer and Zep. Offerings from additional U.S. Communities suppliers will be available through the online system in coming months.

“We are pleased to offer another new solution that delivers value and cost savings to public agencies,” said Steve Hamil, general manager, U.S. Communities. “Our new online marketplace is a convenient platform that simplifies the purchasing process and provides agencies with real-time access to the best overall government pricing across our nationally recognized suppliers.”

U.S. Communities is also offering weekly webinars to educate participating agencies on the new portal. There is no additional cost to purchase online and no minimum purchase requirement for participating public agencies.

To register for a webinar, go to www.uscommunities.org > News and Events > Webinars.

(Financial Services News was written by Nancy Parrish, director, NACo Financial Services Corporation.)
PASS THROUGH

The "pass-through" requirement for states that require their counties to contribute to the non-federal share of Medicaid has also been extremely important, Naake wrote. "When the economy is down, more individuals will be eligible for Medicaid at precisely the same time that states and counties experience revenue shortfalls… Congress should change the law permanently so that Medicaid can fulfill its role in the safety net as well as counter-cyclical spending," he wrote.

The letter also addressed tax reform, urging the commission to preserve local governments' ability to finance their legitimate functions.

"Tax-exempt financing is a component of that ability and should be preserved as an affordable option for local governments to use for budgeting and financing of long-range investments in the infrastructure and facilities necessary to meet the demand for government services," Naake wrote.

Expressing appreciation of the magnitude of the task ahead, he added: "There are many tough decisions yet to be made at all levels of government… While none of the decisions will be easy, [counties] are ready to continue our intergovernmental partnership and welcome consultation or any questions you may have."

The complete text of the letter is available on NACo’s website at www.naco.org.

Sign Up Now for NACo’s Fall Webinar Series

Save Your County Money. Make Your Roads Safer. Become an Even Better Leader… And more

For NACo Members Only.

For more information and to register go to www.naco.org/webinars

October 7: Exploring Carbon Credit Revenue from County Parks and Open Spaces
October 14: How Smart Growth Can Put Your County on a Path to a Green Economy
October 19: Rural Counties and Health Reform: Opportunities for Improved Care
October 28: Green IT Strategies that Save Your County Money and Protect Resources
October 28: Justice for all: Effective County Juvenile Justice Efforts
November 9: Save Money through Green Purchasing

All from the convenience of your own computer

www.naco.org/webinars