

CountyNews

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Photo illustration by Leon Lawrence III

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Counties should check sign laws after Supreme Court ruling

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Pastor Clyde Reed's good news could spell bad news for counties.

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Reed's favor in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* this summer, it unanimously found the Arizona town's sign ordinance was unconstitutional.

"Reed is probably one of the most significant decisions affecting local governments in the past several years," according to Chuck Thompson, executive director of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA). "It has the potential to require all local governments to reexamine their

sign laws and other regulations that may be considered content-based."

Rev. Clyde Reed sued the Maricopa County town after it treated signs giving directions to his itinerant church differently from other short-term signs. Gilbert's sign code limited the size and length of time the church's signs could be displayed. But the ordinance allowed other types of temporary signs — including political and

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GASB rules shine new light on costs for economic development incentives

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Tax abatements. Are they "business incentives" or "corporate welfare"? It depends on whom you ask.

Either way, if a new IKEA store comes to Shelby County,

Tenn., tax breaks will have played a major role in the Swedish home furnishings company's decision. The project — and others like it nationwide — would trip a new rule from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), Statement No. 77.

It requires, for the first time,

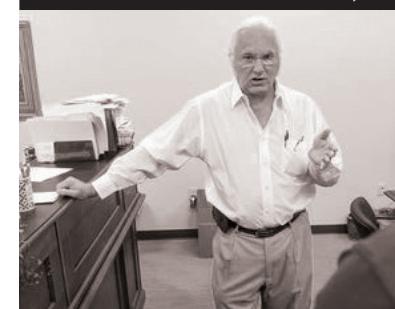
County officials visit Capitol Hill as PILT reauthorization looms

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

County officials made their annual trip to Capitol Hill to lobby for funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program against the background of smoke billowing from the largest wildfire in Washington state's history.

The fire, in Chelan County, had burned 860,000 acres as of the Sept. 10 Hill briefing and illustrated the need for better forest management policies to go along with the PILT authorization, a refrain from many speakers.

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California judge, now county supervisor, rescues ranch and juveniles to boot ▶ Page 6

Research Department releases new review of jails and health service delivery ▶ Page 8

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Wildfires put PILT concerns in new context

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the boundaries that taxation laws draw.

"We keep talking about the conditions of our forests and the disaster that's going to be happening if we didn't address that," said Chelan County Commissioner Ron Walter. "Well we haven't been able to do that, and now Mother Nature is taking control doing that."

Walter was one of several county officials and members of Congress who spoke in support of PILT reauthorization.

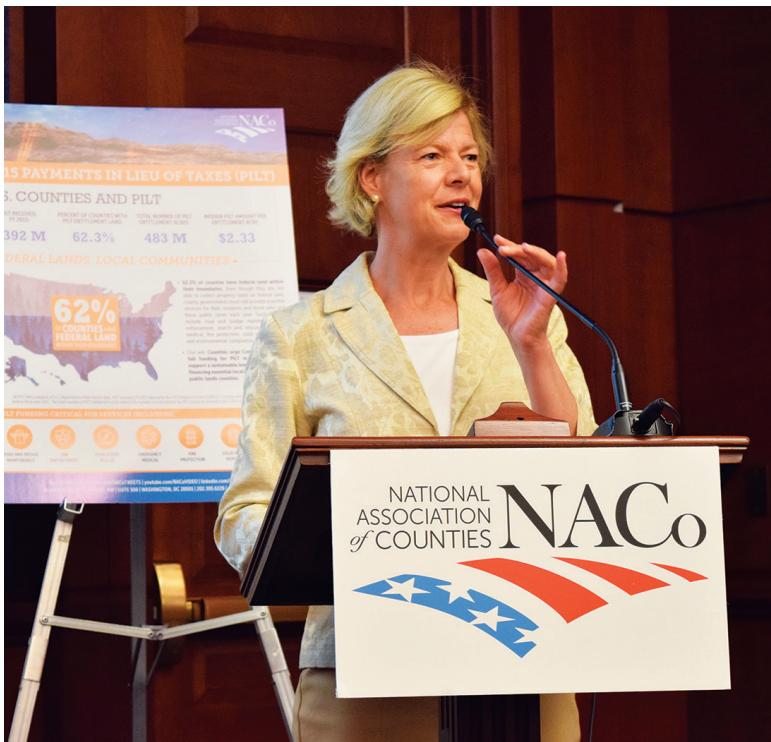
Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) pointed out that the House budgeted \$450 million for PILT, versus nothing in the Senate budget. It was, he said, a dramatic improvement over the roughly \$250 million budgeted toward the end of the Bush Administration. But annual lobbying trips and the disparity between PILT payments and the land's equivalent value in private hands was enough to fuel his advocacy for a change in ownership.

"Even at \$450 million, that's still 4–11 times less than if you can put the lowest, sagebrush tax rate on the same land," he said. "I've always felt it bad that you as county officials have to come up here and grovel for PILT money every year."

Bishop argued for greater local control of now-federally-owned land, saying the federal government couldn't manage it as well as the locals could.

Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) said that even at a healthy allocation, PILT put constraints on counties.

"Whether it's funded or unfunded, it's still a burden and a challenge to counties that all have



Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) leans on her experience as a Dane County supervisor to illustrate her support for PILT funding.

Photos by Alix Kashdan

limited resources," he said. "It's a challenge for us to make sure people understand what it means to have ownership of the land by the federal government."

He was one of several members to speak out about the need for a long-term funding solution.

"We recognize the need, or at least those of us who have it in our backyards, to fully fund PILT and to create that mechanism going forward so that it's no longer a question of if you get, but a question that says how are we going to plan for this the next year and the next year and the next year," he said.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), having worked on county budgets in four terms as a Dane County supervisor, was onboard.

"We need to make sure that

payments are made in a predictable way so that counties can budget, counties can plan and counties can meet the obligations that they have," she said.

Ouray County, Colo. Commissioner Lynn Padgett illustrated the annual bills counties pay to help the public get to those lands in her small, isolated county.

"Without PILT, we wouldn't be able to plow, maintain or repair our high mountain access roads leading to public lands," she said. "We spend \$70,000 a year just plowing a 13-mile stretch to have those roads open by the 4th of July, so people can visit them."

In addition, the county maintains restroom facilities to support the federal lands, pays rangers and provides emergency response services.



Chelan County, Wash. Commissioner Ron Walter describes the challenges counties face when much of their land is owned by the federal government.

"A plane crash a few years ago depleted our entire budget for our county coroner in one incident," she said. "We paid for that with PILT."

The role of emergency services in support of federal lands was poignant for Walter, and showed how the line between locally owned land and federally owned land disappears in a cloud of wildfire smoke.

This year, while fighting a fire in Okanogan County, three U.S. Forest Service firefighters died, adding a human toll to the mounting losses.

"We have to deal with the loss and see the anguish of not only the community trying to recover," Walter said. "This has been a very hard summer. We have lost 80 homes to two separate fires. These are my friends, my neighbors, people I know and I just see them suffer. I see them try to pick their lives back up."

Chelan is one of three counties in Washington that owns a helicopter, purchased specifically for search and rescue operations in the national forests—the county's responsibility.

Those federal lands' appeal as a destination for visitors is supposed to be an economic driver,

but Walter isn't so sure.

"They can drive from their door stop in King County, come to Chelan County, hike, climb a mountaintop, whatever, get back in the car and go home," he said. "So they don't necessarily come and buy groceries, buy gas and spend money in Chelan County."

In addition, the fires make the forest less attractive for visitors.

"We have burned up, in the last month, in just eastern Washington, more than the entire landmass of the state of Rhode Island," he said. "We can't continue to do that."

Rep. Dan Benishek (R-Mich.) represents a congressional district east of the Mississippi River with a significant proportion of federally owned land—1.85 million acres in three federal forests. He said federal rules regarding that land make it less attractive to visitors.

"They make these rules in Washington and they have no idea the impact they will have," he said. "They don't let anyone ride their four-wheelers in [the forests], so you don't have people coming and spending their money in the county in the grocery stores. They don't allow logging to occur, that makes it a hazard for fires and kills the paper mills in the area."

QUICK TAKES



COUNTIES WITH THE MOST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Los Angeles County, Calif. 234

New York City, N.Y. 193

Cook County, Ill. 147

Maricopa County, Ariz. 98

Harris County, Texas 83

Source: NACo Analysis of National Center for Economic Statistics (NCES) - Integrated Postsecondary Education

Is a long overdue TANF reauthorization on the horizon?

By HADI SEDIGH

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

During the Great Depression, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program was created by the federal government to help lift families with children out of poverty.

AFDC, which was established as part of the New Deal and came to be commonly known as the national "welfare" program, lasted for more than half a century, until criticisms of the program — specifically suggestions that it incentivized having children out of wedlock — led the Clinton Administration to undertake welfare reform and replace AFDC with a new program.

Since 1996, when the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program was established to replace AFDC, the federal government has sent a combined \$16.5 billion per year in TANF funding to states, which use the funds to operate their own TANF programs.

Under the 1996 authorizing law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, states can use these funds to meet one or more of four goals:

- providing assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
- ending the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
- preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and
- encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

In eight states — California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota and Ohio — TANF programs are county-administered. Generally, this means that county employees deliver TANF services in county-run local offices; county governments contribute funding for TANF; and county elected officials have a role in reviewing the local TANF budget, policy, or both.

Even though county involvement in state TANF programs is limited to a small number, the same highly populated states account for one half of the national

TANF caseload, so half of all TANF recipients are served by county-administered programs.

In July of this year, the House Ways and Means Committee released a discussion draft of TANF reauthorization legislation. The program was last reauthorized in 2005, and since then has been extended through a series of continuing resolutions and short-term extensions.

Reauthorization of the program is considered important because it provides lawmakers an opportunity to reassess TANF and attempt to remedy some of the issues that states and counties have faced in administering the program.

NACo's resolution on TANF reauthorization, approved at its 2015 Annual Conference, provides insight into some of the issues that states and counties have faced in administering the program. The resolution calls for Congress to allow "more state flexibility in TANF program design, such as allowing higher education to count as work."

Currently, states must require TANF recipients to engage in work activities — such as subsidized or unsubsidized employment or on-the-job training — and must meet an overall "Work Participation Rate" put forth under the federal TANF law.

To meet this rate, a state must demonstrate that half of the families receiving TANF assistance are engaged in work activities for at least 30 hours a week (requirements differ for single parents with young children and for two-parent families). States that do not meet the Work Participation Rate face fiscal penalties.

As the language from NACo's resolution suggests, the federal TANF law currently limits the types of activities that states can count towards the Work Participation Rate, creating a "one-size-fits-all" approach that prevents states from carrying out their programs in ways that best serve their low-income populations.

The discussion draft released by the House Ways and Means Committee would make changes to the federal TANF law that would grant states more flexibility in meeting the Work Participation Rate. For example, the discussion draft would allow states to receive partial credit towards the Work

SpeedRead »»»

- » Counties in eight states responsible for administering benefits for 50 percent of TANF recipients nationwide.
- » TANF was last reauthorized 10 years ago.
- » Allowing more flexible work participation measures is under discussion in discussion draft.
- » Program has not received an increase in funding since the initial appropriations of \$16.5 billion in 1996.

Participation Rate for individuals participating in work activities for half of the required hours, and would expand the types of activities that would count as "job search."

Another issue raised by NACo's resolution on TANF is the program's funding level, which has remained at \$16.5 billion since 1996. Adjusted for inflation, the actual value of the program has decreased by roughly one-third

since it was established. It should come as no surprise then that the effectiveness of the program in assisting families in poverty has also decreased.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, TANF served 68 families in 1996 for every 100 families in poverty. In 2013, 26 out of 100 families in poverty received assistance from TANF.

In its resolution, NACo urged Congress to "ensure that reauthorization includes the provision that the TANF block grant is increased annually in an amount commensurate with the rate of inflation." The House Ways and Means Committee's discussion draft does not feature such an increase.

Although the release of a discussion draft is a positive step towards a needed reauthorization of TANF, there remains much work to be done — in both chambers — before the program is actually reauthorized.

At this juncture, the prospects of a reauthorization being signed into law in the 114th Congress are — as with most other matters in Washington — uncertain.

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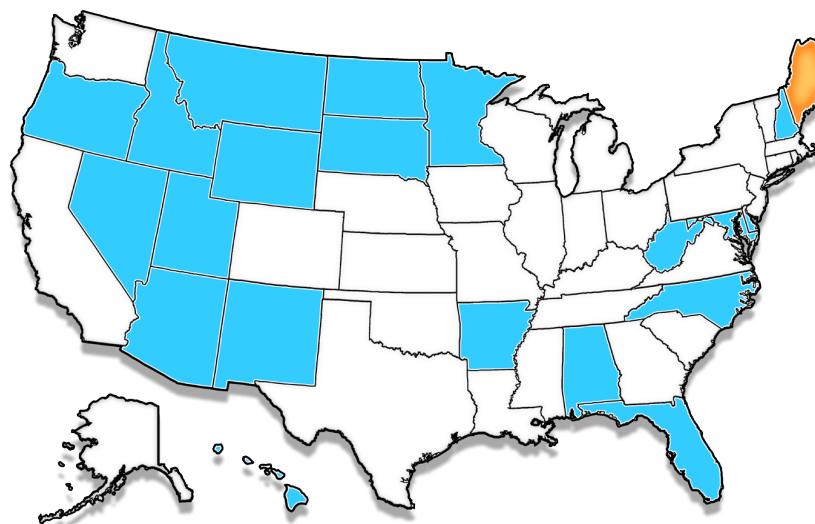
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Other 100% NACo Members are shown in blue

NACo is proud to congratulate Maine for achieving 100% NACo membership for the first time in history. Thank you to Maine and the other twenty 100% membership states for your support of NACo.

BRIGHT LIGHTS SMALL COUNTY

With the media gone, Rowan County is slowly getting back to normal

By BEVERLY A SCHLITTERBECK
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Things are much quieter now that Rowan County, Ky. Clerk Kim Davis is out of jail and her office — if not her — continues to grant marriage licenses to both gay and straight couples. But that wasn't the case several weeks ago.

Dozens of media outlets had descended on this eastern Kentucky county as its clerk, Kim Davis, defied a judicial order to issue marriage licenses to gay couples.

At the county courthouse, people were chanting outside its windows. "It's been tough on the whole courthouse," Rowan County, Ky. Judge Executive "Doc" Blevins said. "If they couldn't get her [Davis] on the phone, they'd call my office or the Sheriff's Office or even the circuit clerk's office, where there is also a 'Kim,' Kim Tabor to be exact. She was receiving so many phone calls, Blevins said, that she had a T-shirt made that read, "I'm not that Kim Davis."

People came to the Morehead State University town from Colorado, Louisiana, North Carolina. A couple came from San Francisco, Blevins said, hoping to get a license in Rowan County. They did.

"We've been inundated with press, on TV, the Internet, Facebook. Everybody has their 2 cents to add to it. I guess when there's a chance to be on national TV, they show up."

Five of the six deputy clerks in Davis' office decided to obey the judge's orders and grant licenses. They gave out eight or nine licenses while she was in jail, according to Blevins.

The one holdout was Davis' son, who, following in his mother's footsteps, was serving as a deputy clerk.

Davis, too, worked as a deputy clerk for her mother, for 28 years. When her mother retired, she ran

for the office. Her primary race was a close. She won by 20–30 votes, according to Blevins.

Shortly after her election, she let Blevins know she didn't intend to issue any marriage licenses should the state's stand on same sex marriage lose in the Supreme Court. On June 26 the court ruled that states must recognize and allow same sex marriages. On June 29, Davis declined to issue licenses to either straight or gay couples.

"The county attorney and I went over to her office to encourage her to follow the law, but she said she wouldn't do it." Shortly, thereafter, the ACLU sued Davis and Rowan County.

The attention, Blevins said, has painted an unflattering picture of his county. "'It shouldn't be like this. I try to set the record straight. We're a wonderful community with wonderful people."

Two years ago, the Morehead City Council, without any community protest, unanimously approved an anti-discrimination Fairness Ordinance, extending discrimination protections in employment, housing and public accommodations to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

But, when the Supreme Court made same sex marriage the law of the land, "Marriage just struck people," he said. The community may have felt it was okay for same sex couples to love one another, but maybe they just weren't supposed to marry one another, he suggested.

When asked how he has been faring in the face of all the attention, Blevins, who served in the Kentucky General Assembly before he ran for county office said, "I'm a rookie judge, but have been in the legislature for 33 years. When you stay in office that long, you learn how to deal with a lot of things."



Illustration by Leon Lawrence III



Rowan County, Ky. Judge Executive Walter "Doc" Blevins talks with William Smith, Jr., left, and James Yates Aug. 13 at the Rowan County Courthouse after the two were denied a marriage license at the county clerk's office in Morehead. Photo by John Flavell, Reprinted with permission, The Independent Online, Ashland, Ky.

Tax abatements now need to be disclosed under new GASB rule

GASB from page 1

State and local governments across the United States spend an estimated \$70 billion a year for economic development—"most of it through tax expenditures," according to Good Jobs First, a Washington, D.C.-based national policy research center. It tracks economic development subsidies and other types of government financial assistance to business.

It was earlier this year that the Economic Development Growth Engine (EDGE) of Memphis and Shelby County approved \$9.5 million in tax abatements to attract what would be IKEA's first store in Tennessee, according to Reid Dulberger, EDGE's president and CEO. Since 2011, the economic development organization has offered more than \$277 million in tax incentives to attract new or expanded businesses. Its primary direct business incentives are partial, temporary tax reductions known as a payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT.

Dulberger said EDGE officials worry that the new rule "misrepresents" the nature of economic development incentives by focusing too much on the cost of tax abatements while disregarding their benefits.

EDGE has approved 36 PILOTS over the past four years. Altogether, they've made, not lost, money—exceeding benefit-to-cost projections by returning \$2.58 of new local taxes for every dollar of tax abated, Dulberger said.

"GASB is perpetuating a myth that tax incentives 'cost' cities and counties revenues that they otherwise would have collected—and thereby threatens to distort reporting of local governments' financial condition," he said. "I think in the long term our concern is that the new GASB rules are going to make it actually harder, not easier to evaluate economic development incentives and their impact."

In an interview, Stephen Gauthier, director of the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) technical services center, said that because financial

SpeedRead »»»

- » GASB rules designed to bring more transparency to government tax breaks
- » New requirements take effect after Dec. 15, 2015

statements and notes are audited, there's a limit to how much can be said about upside effects.

Before the new rule was finalized, several local government organizations, including NACo, jointly sent written comments to the GASB. They noted that governments might be prevented by non-disclosure agreements from revealing the amount of tax abatements. "In addition, some income tax abatements would

will allow taxpayers and policy-makers to see the real costs of economic development.

"Given the squeeze on municipal and local finance these days, we think everybody deserves to know how much revenue is being lost this way," LeRoy said, "so people can make prudent, balanced decisions about spending priorities."

GASB's disclosure rule also requires governments to spell out provisions for recapturing abated taxes, the types of commitments made by the recipients of tax abatements and other commitments made by a government in abatement agreements, such as to build infrastructure.

"It is a true cost that needs to show up somewhere," said Stephen Burdett, Brevard County,

"Given the squeeze on municipal and local finance these days, we think everybody deserves to know how much revenue is being lost this way." – Greg LeRoy

require disclosure — contrary to state law — of what is often considered to be confidential information."

For governments with few tax abatements, disclosure could be tantamount to violating confidentiality agreements, because the small number of abatement recipients would make it easier to identify them, they wrote. GFOA, International City/County Management Association, National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors also signed on to the comments.

Often, critics of what some see as sweetheart deals have complained about a lack of transparency. The new GASB rule is designed to address that.

"Our reaction is very positive," said Greg LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First. "This is very tectonic good news for taxpayers. We've been critical of GASB for many years for being missing in action on these huge tax expenditures." He added that the new reporting requirements

Fla.'s finance director. In his comments to GASB, he noted that while tax abatement agreements result in reduced tax revenues for a given reporting period, they also represent commitments to future-year revenue reduction.

The final rule applies to budgets that begin after Dec. 15. The new data will start appearing in 2017.

LeRoy said the increased reporting requirements aren't designed to disadvantage any company or require governments to disclose propriety business information.

"Nobody's saying disclose a corporate income tax return; nobody's saying disclose a profit; nobody's saying disclose a tax liability," he said. "All we're saying is disclose the tax credit, that is, the amount of money claimed as an incentive, because it's no different than if the state wrote the company a check for the same amount. And if the state did write a check, obviously that would be automatically disclosed."



Profiles in Service

Richard A. Oden

NACo Board of Directors
Chairman & CEO, Rockdale County, Ga.

Number of years active in NACo: 7

Years in public service: 7

Occupation: Personal and Professional Development as a Process and Peak Performance Improvement Executive and Life Coach

Education: B.S. from Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

You'd be surprised to learn that
I: I'm a survivor of multiple gunshot wounds when I was critically wounded and left for dead while being robbed during my employment in the corporate world.

The hardest thing I've ever done: Bouncing back from life-threatening injuries as a survivor of multiple gun shots. I'm blessed to have been able to overcome this near-death experience.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Tyler Perry, Ms. Oprah Winfrey and Warren Buffet.

A dream I have is to: Take my wife to South Africa, Hawaii (Big Island) and Taiwan.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Climbing and walking up the uneven steps on the Great Wall of China and ascending to a very high elevation on the mountain.

My favorite way to relax is: Regularly working in my yard cutting grass, edging, grooming and blowing debris, and then drinking a lot of water afterwards.

I'm most proud of: My family life with my children and grandchildren and their love for me, along with witnessing the joy and happiness people get when their life is transformed as a result of my life-changing personal and professional development and improvement strategies.

Every morning I read:
Something inspirational and encouraging.

My favorite meal is: Fish or baked chicken with collard greens, sweet potato custard, mac and cheese and corn bread.

My pet peeve is: When my daughters visit my home and I am constantly asking them to put socks on my grandsons' feet while they are playing and walking around on tile floors.

My motto is: The stars are at your fingertips and the world has always been yours, so reach out for your better world today because the world awaits the missing YOU!

The last book I read was: The book of Matthew about the family history of Jesus.

My favorite movie is: *The Temptations* – Motown version.

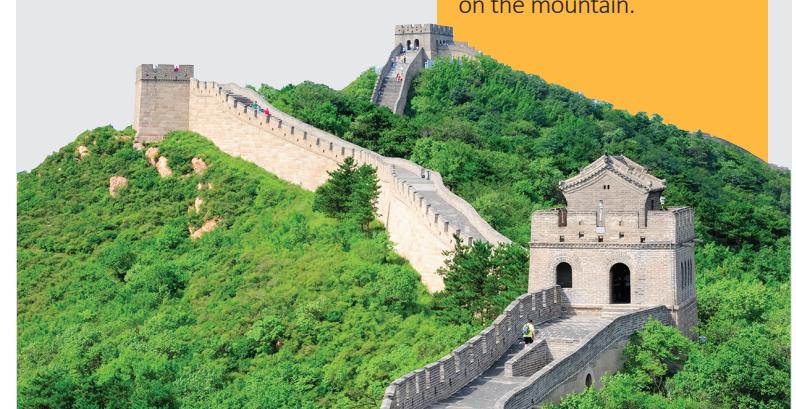
My favorite music is: From the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s including jazz and R&B.

My favorite president is: a tie between John F. Kennedy and Barack H. Obama.

My county is a NACo member because: My county is a member because of our state county association's partnership (ACCG) with NACo, as well as the mission, synergy and proactive stance NACo takes in advocating for all counties at the federal policy level.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:

Climbing and walking up the uneven steps on the **Great Wall of China** and ascending to a very high elevation on the mountain.



Ramshackle old ranch becomes economic ladder for youth

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Most people looked at the remains of the Natividad Boys' Ranch in Monterey County, Calif. and saw a money pit. John Phillips saw a future for wayward teenagers.

The former county prosecutor and Superior Court judge, now a county supervisor, saw the same potential in the shuttered campus that he did in

the teenagers. It had been a dumpsite for Monterey County since 1982, but that wasn't how he remembered it.

"I knew about the property because when I got here in '71 we'd play basketball with the kids at the ranch," he said. "Even when it was closed down, I remembered what it was."

While serving on the Superior Court, he saw sentencing guidelines tying his hands and setting teens up for failure. Even in the juvenile

justice system.

"You felt like you were just sending kids to prison, many of whom didn't have the best breaks in life," he said. "There was a big push to try juveniles as adults, but it seemed like providing vocational training was the one thing that worked for turning kids around."

In 1992 and 1998, he tried to get the county to reopen the facility to house diversion programs.

"They said it was impossible," Phillips said, before he got the go-ahead, and carte blanche, in 2000. "Even then, nobody thought we could do anything with the property."

After incorporating the Rancho Cielo Youth Campus nonprofit organization to run the ranch, he got to work rehabilitating the property in 2003, shortly before he retired from the bench. Though he grew a stout board of directors, which included judges, supervisors, city councilmen and business leaders, the odds were stacked as high as the debris on the property. A feasibility study said it would take as much as \$30 million to restore the 100-acre campus.

He added board members from the business community and with some of their contributions of materials and labor, Phillips worked on weekends to rehabilitate the campus.

"I got to the point where I knew where everything was on the campus," Phillips said.

The cleanup effort included removing 730 loads of trash and debris. A leaky roof in a gymnasium needed repairs, and the birds that lived inside were most appreciative

of the work at that point, until they were later evicted.

Persuading the construction industry to help out ended up being simple.

"They came around on the point that locking people up was locking up their workforce, and the better job we did keeping kids out of detention, the better employees they'd have in the future," Phillips said.

By 2004, administration and educational facilities were built or repaired and ready for occupation by staff from the county's probation department and office of education. Phillips worked as an unpaid executive director and his wife managed the office.

On a \$75,000 budget in 2005, Rancho Cielo graduated its first class of 20, now coed, all of whom were given the option to attend, rather than an ironclad sentence.

"Having been on the bench when sentencing got so strict, I didn't want Rancho Cielo to become Natividad Boys' Ranch again," Phillips said. "I wanted it to be a place boys at risk could learn and get what they needed from a collaboration of county services. As we grew, we got behavioral health workers, social workers, education personnel. It became a comprehensive service center."

The vocational training offers several tracks: the Drummond Culinary Academy, the Rancho Cielo Construction Academy and the

Rancho Cielo Youth Corps.

Given the demand for hospitality and construction workers in Monterey County, the culinary and construction academies are popular with both the students and local industries.

"The students see themselves being valued for the professional prospects at the same time that they are addressing other issues in their lives," Phillips said. "It's effective and motivating. About 90 percent of them have jobs waiting for them."

Now, Rancho Cielo works on a \$1.9 million budget for 150 students, from state and local funding, grants and private donations.

The program has received a grant to build transitional housing, which the construction program students build.

"We have young men participating in the program who will have a place to live they themselves built," he said.

With his election to the Board of Supervisors last year, Phillips left the Board of Directors for Rancho Cielo to avoid conflicts of interest with county business, but he still volunteers.

"I was always basically a volunteer," he said. "My work was always a freebie. We have a diverse board and a lot of support from the community. I'm still up there once a week helping out and am involved in our capital campaigns."

NACo on the Move

►NACo Officers, County Officials

- Linn County, Iowa Supervisor and Past NACo President **Linda Langston** joined First Lady Michelle Obama and representatives from the National League of Cities and several federal agencies at the White House Sept. 16 for a celebratory event honoring the achievements made by local elected officials participating in the *Let's Move!* Cities, Towns and Counties initiative. Langston was a guest speaker at the event where she shared examples of Linn County's success.



Langston

• Douglas County, Neb. Commissioner **Mary Ann Borgeson**, chair, NACo Health Steering Committee, participated in a panel discussion, "Connecting for Prevention: Impacting Mental Wellness" at the 2015 Warrior Family Symposium, Sept. 9 in Washington, D.C., cosponsored by the Military Officers Association of America and Wounded Warrior Project. The symposium reviewed how government and non-government organizations are aligning to improve the overall mental wellness of the nation's service members and veterans and their families.



Borgeson

- NACo President **Sallie Clark** was a featured speaker at the Wisconsin Association of Counties Annual Conference in La Crosse County, Sept. 21 and at the Montana Association of Counties' Annual Conference held Sept. 20-24 in Missoula County.

- Immediate Past President **Riki Hokama** was in Marion County, Ind. Sept. 13-14 for the International Association of Assessing Officers' Annual Conference. IAAO is a NACo affiliate.

►NACo Staff

- **Deborah Cox**, legislative affairs director, was a presenter at the Association of Minnesota Counties Fall Policy Meetings in Crow Wing County Sept. 17-18.
- **Maeghan Gilmore**, County Innovations and Solutions program director, spoke at the Michigan Association of Counties' Annual Conference in Grand Traverse County Sept. 20-22, on the Stepping Up Initiative.
- **Matt Chase**, NACo executive director, spoke at the New York State Association of Counties Fall Seminar held Sept. 21-24 in Essex County.



Cox



Gilmore



The gates to Rancho Cielo, in Monterey County, Calif. Once a county dumpsite, a former prosecutor, who is now a county supervisor, organized vocational education programming for at-risk youth.



COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Ad Blitz Draws Novice Recyclers

By CHARLIE BAN

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Recycling has been around long enough that people can begin to take it for granted and discount it.

But for Dakota County, Minn., complacency just wasn't going to be enough. With pressure coming from the state to be on track for a 75 percent recycling rate by 2030, bumped up from the prior 50 percent rate, the county had to get the mundane, but important, habit back on everyone's mind.

The county does regular phone surveys of residents, and the 2013 survey found only four of 10 residents had visited the Recycling Zone facility, the county's central

recycling depot.

"Of that 60 percent that didn't come to the Recycling Zone, 43 percent said they didn't know about it," said Jenny Kedward, an environmental specialist. "Basically everyone had hazardous waste in their homes—a typical home has about 100 pounds of it—so there was a lot we could gain from closing the education gap about what the Recycling Zone offered."

An advertising campaign was the surest bet, but to be effective, more would be needed than just a few signs on buses. On top of redesigning everything for the Recycling Zone, the advertisements for the "What's New" campaign would be everywhere:

- posters in county service centers, license centers and libraries

- direct mail postcards to every home in the county

- still images broadcast on municipal cable channels

- messages on high school marquees

- advertisements in catalogs printed by county and city departments

- billboards along major highways

- door hangers placed on 25,000 homes

- advertisements in six area newspapers, and

- articles in the Dakota County newsletter, sent to 160,000 homes.

And it wasn't window dressing for empty fluff—the ads sent the message that there were new services and improvements to the existing services the Recycling Zone offered.

"We dramatically improved the services we could offer," Kedward said. "Before, our hours were a little difficult. We had separate hours for hazardous waste and separate hours for electronics. We just combined the two and made one set of better hours that would be easier for everybody."

The Recycling Zone also began to accept all kinds of batteries, not just rechargeable ones, as they had before. And small household electronics, including appliances.

On top of all that was new and approved, the Recycling Zone was celebrating its 20th birthday.

The county set a goal to increase the number of visits to the Recycling Zone by 10 percent in 2014, over 2013 numbers, and when the year was over, the number of visits was actually a 20 percent increase.

The Recycling Zone is still analyzing its collection to see how it performed on its goal of increasing materials collected by 8 percent.

"Based on the much-better-than-expected boost in visitors, we're pretty confident we hit that mark," Kedward said. "We hope we brought in more plastics, cartons and fluorescent bulbs—we were underused for recycling those."

The advertising campaign

was planned, written and designed by the county's communications and environmental services departments, with printing being the only outsourcing. The total campaign cost roughly \$100,000.

Feedback showed it reached residents a number of ways. Volunteers at the Recycling Center surveyed visitors and heard that the newsletter placement, county website and word of mouth prompted a lot of new customers.

Kedward saw a lot of success in the digital billboards along the roads in three cities that had low

use rates at the recycling center, and she got a lot of feedback about the refrigerator magnets the county mailed to all residents.

"People brought up the magnets all the time," she said. "Anecdotally, that's what seemed to reach people, at least as far as I heard."

County Innovations and Solutions features award-winning programs. The Recycling Zone was named best in category for Civic Education and Public Information for the 2015 NACo Achievement Awards.



A cartload of paint waits to be safely disposed of at the Dakota County, Minn. Recycling Zone. The facility recently expanded its hours for hazardous materials. Photo courtesy of Dakota County, Minn.

WORD SEARCH

Fremont County, Colo. Facts

Learn more about this featured county in 'What's in a Seal?'

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ARKANSAS RIVER (A defining geographical feature and popular whitewater rafting site)

BEAVER CREEK (State wildlife area in north county)

CANON CITY (County seat, pop. 16,400)

COTOPAXI (Town along the Arkansas River)

FLORENCE (East-county city, site of first oil field west of the Mississippi)

HOT SPRINGS (Several mineral springs located in county)

JOHN C FREMONT (County's namesake: Union Army officer and explorer)

KRISTY GOTHAM (Co-creator of county seal)

PENROSE (Census-designated place sharing county's eastern border with Pueblo County)

ROYAL GORGE (World's highest bridge, 955 ft., from 1929–2001)

SAGUACHE COUNTY (One of seven border counties surrounding Fremont)

SANGRE DE CRISTO (Sub-range of the Rockies partly located in county)

SEQUICENTENNIAL (County celebrated 150th "birthday" in 2011)

TELLER COUNTY (Forms part of county's northeast border)

TOM MIX (Actor, one of many who starred in movies filmed in the county)

ZEBULON PIKE (Namesake of Pike's Peak who explored county in 1806)

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Retiring from the Fray without Becoming Frayed

The HR Doctor recently had the great opportunity to have breakfast with three colleagues with whom he had worked for many years. Working together years ago now seems like the far distant past.

These three ladies were several years into their retirement, and breakfast was a great opportunity to hug and catch up on what their retirement lives look like.

Are we ever really ready for retirement? The answer in general is "no." We might plan and take advantage of the many television commercials about investment opportunities. We might even think we are ready. However, several factors can create a wide gulf between our planning and the reality we may find. These factors can jump out at us in ways we might not expect.

The first dose of reality is that, laws of physics notwithstanding, we have indeed mastered time travel. The older one gets the faster

great fortune to spend decades as participants in a defined benefit (DB) retirement system. They now have the security and stability of regular, lifelong pension benefits that most members of our species do not have and likely will not have. This is because DB plans are expensive and becoming more so as life expectancy increases and assumptions about investment returns prove to be less accurate than the actuaries predicted.

The result is a wholesale fleeing from defined benefit plans to the less secure (from the employees' standpoint) and less costly and risky (from the agencies' standpoint) version of retirement savings—the defined contribution model.

So it is that being in a retirement plan with no or few guarantees puts an added premium on aggressive long-term action by employees to secure their own financial futures. Those

safaris offered us proof of the combination of taking precautions while enjoying adventure is quite possible. Life without adventure and a reasonable degree of risk is a life doomed to be boring or perhaps all too "normal."

The final leg of the great retirement triad should also be implanted very early in our lives — way before our careers even begin. That is learning to understand personal risk and taking steps to mitigate those risks. We all face them. The HR Doctor's considerable security experience gave rise to the mantra "Don't walk by something wrong!" The practice of not walking by stems from experience as an intelligence officer in a time of terrorist risks and car bombs. No, it wasn't today, it was decades ago.

We all have the opportunity to take steps right away to identify and reduce risks. It might be around how you secure your home against crimes like burglary or the risks of fire. It certainly may also involve being prudent in those moments in life when you might be at an ATM in the dark of the evening or at a party where the alcohol is flowing like a mighty stream. How you drive home and how you adopt an attitude of prudence and observation around that ATM can be quite important in preventing problems that become disastrous later.

How we teach our children the importance of those three elements of security — financial, health and physical security — plant the seeds for their own positive future.

In addition to the financial leg of supporting a great retirement, there are two others. First there is the health dimension. A retirement full of wonder and amazement, of contribution and of fun needs to be built on a foundation of good health. Good health does not occur in a vacuum or in a bubble. We live in a world of dangers to our health and too often a sense of arrogant immunity from those dangers.

It is possible to live a life of concern for health but also to experience the joy of adventure and reasonable risk-taking. The Rosenberg family's four African

after retiring from my "day job," I chose to mention engaging with other people, the passionate pursuit of hobbies, enjoying the company of the beautiful HR Spouse Charlotte and our two loving, strong and fast K9s. I definitely included ongoing charitable engagement.

If I were to print new business cards, I would love for those cards to say "philanthropist!" I would love my retirement job description to include volunteering and hopefully making a difference in the lives of young people. Teaching and lecturing as a volunteer, not to mention active consulting in public administration and human resources, has all happened as a result of advanced planning and paying attention to opportunities that came by — and still do. The best retirements, I have come to learn, involve making choices to engage rather than to retreat.

The word "retire" in military parlance can mean "withdraw." However, if thought of in the sense of how to live decades more of an amazing life, the notion of withdrawing has to be replaced with a different idea. Retire really means moving forward with more opportunities than ever before along with the wisdom that comes from seeing long-held plans, often amended by circumstance, becoming reality.

Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor



LIFE WITHOUT ADVENTURE AND A REASONABLE DEGREE OF RISK IS A LIFE DOOMED TO BE BORING OR PERHAPS ALL TOO "NORMAL."

time seems to move. The more senior we become, the more we tend to use phrases like "it was only yesterday when..." Or "it seemed like just a little while ago when..."

It is hard to convince very young professionals just beginning their careers that the time to begin planning for the end of their careers may best be found at the beginning of their careers. This seems like an anomaly that is so weird that it is hard to believe.

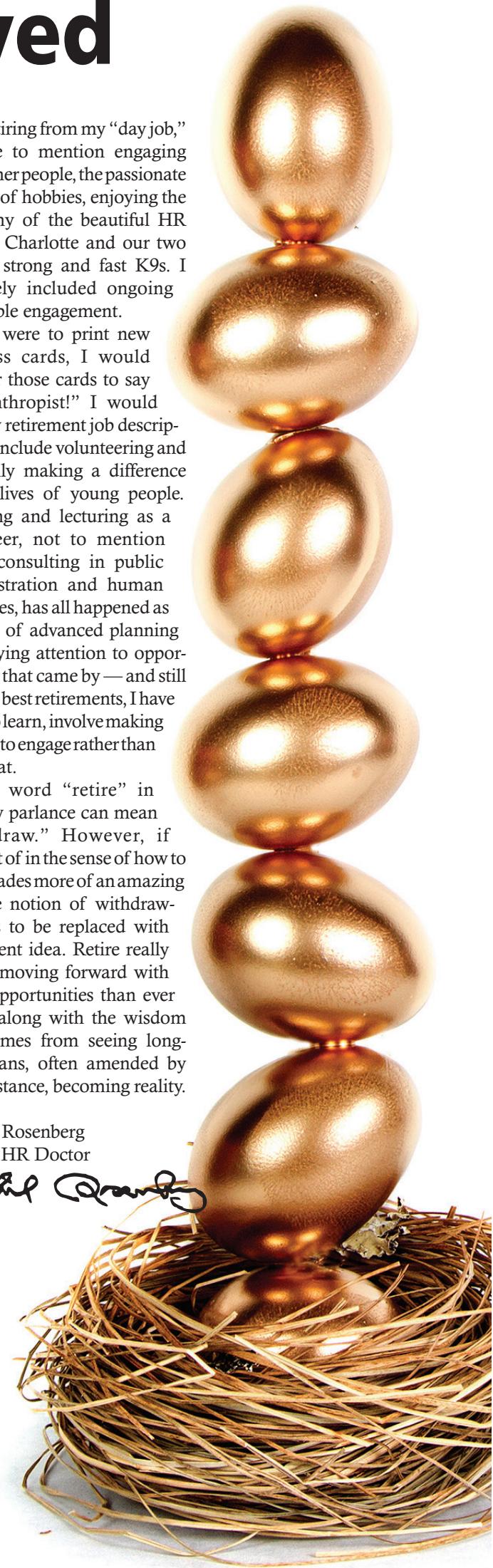
Because it doesn't seem to make immediate sense, people are unwilling or unable to wrap their brains around the concept of early planning. Therefore, they don't. This inertia and the disbelief which drives inaction causes us to lose the very precious opportunities to begin meaningful financial, health and personal security preparation. It also will cause the loss of many chances for greater personal joy later in life.

My three colleagues all had the

who invest as much as they can, as early as they can, in deferred compensation plans, such as those offered through the National Association of Counties, are showing a degree of wisdom and courage (or frugality) which will serve the more elderly version of themselves very well indeed.

In addition to the financial leg of supporting a great retirement, there are two others. First there is the health dimension. A retirement full of wonder and amazement, of contribution and of fun needs to be built on a foundation of good health. Good health does not occur in a vacuum or in a bubble. We live in a world of dangers to our health and too often a sense of arrogant immunity from those dangers.

It is possible to live a life of concern for health but also to experience the joy of adventure and reasonable risk-taking. The Rosenberg family's four African





News From the Nation's Counties

► ALASKA

Alaska's Supreme Court will decide whether to uphold a lower court ruling in favor of **KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH** that the state's required local contribution(RLC) to education is an **unconstitutional state tax**.

Ketchikan, with a supporting amicus brief from **FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH**, argues that the RLC penalizes boroughs because school systems in unincorporated areas don't have to make the local contribution.

The state of Alaska is appealing the ruling. The RLC is imposed on 34 of the state's 145 municipal governments. Oral arguments were to be heard this week.

► CALIFORNIA

SANTA CLARA COUNTY has launched the first **Pay for Success (PFS)** project in the state, one designed to address homelessness.

The county partnered with Abode Services, which develops and implements innovative programs to end homelessness — based on the "housing first" model, county officials said.

Known as Project Welcome Home, the PFS project will provide community-based clinical services and permanent supportive housing to 150–200 chronically homeless persons.

PFS is a funding model in which governments pay for services only if and when a service provider meets defined, measurable results.

► IDAHO

ADA COUNTY currently spends hundreds of thousands of dollars each year on manned aircraft to survey a regional landfill. **Pilotless drones** could do it for a lot less, county officials say.

They recently applied to the Federal Aviation Administration for permission to use drones to collect geographical data about the landfill. A decision is expected in 60–90 days, the *Arizona Daily Star* reported.

At present, the county can only afford to take aerial photos of the 2,700-acre landfill once a year because airplanes can cost up to \$700 an hour to rent, and the surveillance takes several hours.

► INDIANA

A federal appeals court has upheld a lower court ruling that found the state law governing



► NEW YORK

County Executive Steve Bellone and his daughter finish the inaugural **SUFFOLK COUNTY marathon and half marathon**, which drew 2,665 finishers and raised more than \$100,000 for nonprofit organizations providing veterans services.

Bellone, who spearheaded the effort to start the race, finished the 26.2 mile course in 4:41:46, at 10:44 per mile. Their half marathon attracted two-time U.S. Olympian Anthony Famiglietti. Photo courtesy of Suffolk County

how MARION COUNTY elects judges unconstitutional.

Under that system, candidates for judgeships who get political party nominations for the primary election are assured of a seat, according to *The Indianapolis Star*. The county's Democratic and Republican parties nominate judicial candidates for the exact numbers of seats available during the primary election. Each party makes nominations for half of those seats.

The appeals court noted in its opinion: "The Statute burdens the vote by essentially removing all competition and electoral choice before the general election, severely undercutting the second stage of the 'two-stage process by which the people choose' the judges for the Marion Superior Court."

► MARYLAND

No medical marijuana licenses have been issued yet, but that hasn't stopped **BALTIMORE COUNTY** from putting zoning ordinances in

place. It's the first jurisdiction in Maryland to do so, according to WBAL TV news.

Last year, state lawmakers legalized the sale of medical marijuana. Now it's up to individual counties to specify **zoning areas for medical marijuana growers**, manufacturers and dispensaries.

County Councilwoman Vicki Almond said growing and manufacturing facilities would be limited to industrial areas, while dispensaries would be in business districts. "We decided that we needed to do something to give certainty to residents, people who want to do business. We wanted to be proactive," she said.

► MICHIGAN

A group of **OAKLAND COUNTY** commissioners want the **Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA)** to hold public meetings and publish its proposed budget because the museum accepts taxpayer money.

The museum receives fund-

ing from Oakland, **MACOMB** and **WAYNE COUNTIES**. In 2012, those counties passed a millage that provides 70 percent of DIA's budget, *The Detroit News* reported.

DIA has recently come under fire for backing a \$600,000-plus compensation package for its top executives.

Commissioner Shelley Taub said, "We are paying the bills, the taxpayers; publish and let us know where the money is going."

► MINNESOTA

STEARNS COUNTY Commissioner DeWayne Mareck wants public employees who are convicted of a crime to **reimburse their employer** for paid leave.

His proposal stems from the instance, five years ago, when a county sheriff's deputy was charged with providing alcohol to minors and sexually abusing them, according to the *St. Cloud Times*.

The deputy remained on the county payroll for more than two years before he pleaded guilty to

three of the 26 counts against him. He was paid almost \$250,000 in salary and benefits during that time before being fired in 2012.

Mareck said if the employee is exonerated, he or she shouldn't have to reimburse the county.

► MONTANA

An engineering firm hired by **GALLATIN COUNTY** has recommended \$29 million in upgrades to the county's **aging 911 radio systems**. The lion's share of that cost would be for equipment updates, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* reported.

The price, quoted by Seattle-based ADCOMM Engineering, is more than twice what a company representative projected several months earlier.

"They're just estimates," said Kerry O'Connell, director of Gallatin County 911 communications. "The numbers, we're not going to know what they'll end up being."

See NEWS FROM page 11

Oil boom busts for some N.D. counties

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

It remains unclear how the project would be funded.

Last year, the Bozeman Police Protective Association wrote a letter of no-confidence in the system, citing a number of times when their radios did not work.

► NEW JERSEY

A vintage WWI aerial bomb was found by the Army Corps of Engineers at MIDDLESEX COUNTY College during a survey of the area. The college is built on the former U.S. Army Raritan Arsenal, which was open from 1913–1963.

The bomb found was approximately 14 inches long and 5 inches thick. One of the college's parking lots was identified as being a storage facility when the site was active, leading to the survey to find ordnances, the *NJ Advance* reported.

In April, a 500-pound World War II bomb was found on the campus during excavation for a new enrollment center.

► NEW YORK

ERIE COUNTY will soon become a safe haven for hundreds of Syrian refugees.

County Executive Mark Poloncarz announced that as many as 300

refugees will move to Erie County, WGRZ News reported.

The refugees will arrive over the next six to nine months. The county will work with agencies to try and place them where people speak the same language; there is already a small Syrian population in the county.

► NORTH DAKOTA

The Bakken shale oil boom that drew tens of thousands of workers to western portions of the state has been a **net loss for the region**, according to analysis by researchers from Duke University's Energy Initiative.

Crime in DUNN COUNTY skyrocketed 60 percent in just three years, and the road maintenance budget soared from \$1.5 million to \$25 million. Meanwhile, demand for government services outpaced the growth in tax revenue by as much as 40 percent, a gulf that will only grow as oil prices drop.

WILLIAMS COUNTY had to buy one building and build another in order to provide county employees with affordable housing and office space, according to McClatchyDC.

MCKENZIE COUNTY's emergency services responded to about five traffic accidents a month before the oil boom. By 2013 it was as many as five a day. The sheriff's office went from six officers to 22.

► PENNSYLVANIA

DAUPHIN COUNTY may join ALLEGHENY COUNTY in "banning the box" — eliminating

questions about prior criminal convictions on some county job applications.

Jack Wright, county grants and human services development fund manager, said the change would give qualified former offenders the chance to progress to an in-person interview before potentially having their application discarded due to their past offense.

Background checks would continue to be done on all employees before hiring, Wright said.

The city of Harrisburg in Dauphin County approved taking the box off its applications, as have the state's largest cities, Pennlive reported.

► TEXAS

Two counties have been told they must once again start allowing jail inmates access to **in-person visits** under a new law.

WOOD and HAYS counties were among 31 counties across the state that formally asked to be grandfathered into the legislation which aims to curb the trend of those county jails offering only video visits. But the Texas Commission on Jail Standards has determined that those two counties didn't incur a "significant" expense to install their video systems. That was the key threshold — added as an amendment to the bill — to earn an exemption from the rules, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

► VIRGINIA

AUGUSTA COUNTY Supervisors will negotiate with the

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and U.S. Forest Service to protect the county's water resources in the face of the **Atlantic Coast Pipeline**. Wells supply water to more than half of the county, and the county wants the pipeline moved away from the well water recharge area for fear of pipeline failure.

They're using a law called "coordination," baked into the National Environmental Protection Act, which gives localities the right to participate on an equal basis in all phases of planning and management of land, water and wildlife resources, *the News Leader* reported.

► WEST VIRGINIA

Auditors found that 36 counties — 65 percent — **received less money than they were due** according to the state's school aid formula. Meanwhile 19 counties were overfunded by \$21.6 million. The misappropriations totaled \$73 million since 2008.

The worst year for underfunding was 2008–09, when 45 county school districts were underfunded to the tune of \$18.4 million while 10 were overfunded for \$100,047, according to *The Register-Herald*.

The audit was released during the state Legislature's September interim meetings.

The Legislative Auditor's office recommended the Department of Education calculate the school aid formula according to the state law, and work with the

Legislature to clarify the code section that could be misinterpreted or result in miscalculation.

► WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE COUNTY plans to switch to a new, more rigorous **policy for selling property**, following a state law change that eliminates County Board approval of such sales. The current policy does not require public notice or a listing with the multiple listing service, and officials say the new policy will mean higher prices for non-park land or buildings.

Whether selling surplus, tax-foreclosed or properties for business developments, the county will, under the proposed policy, go through a detailed, step-by-step marketing process. The process ends with a compliance check by the county comptroller or an appointee of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council of municipal officials, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported.

County Executive Chris Abele gained new authority over sales of county-owned land not zoned for park use in the two-year state budget approved in July by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Scott Walker (R).

News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.

Financial Services News

Consultants Review NACo Deferred Compensation Program



All county employees are future retirees. Most county employees participate in some sort of pension or retirement program that is funded, at least in part, by the county for which they work.

However, this future benefit most likely will not equal an employee's pre-retirement income. The NACo Deferred Compensation Program offers a way for county employees to voluntarily supplement their retirement savings while deferring income tax on these savings.

By participating in the NACo Deferred Program, administered by Nationwide Retirement Solutions, 350,000 county employees have saved more than \$15 billion to help bolster the financial quality of their retirement.

As part of the oversight of its Deferred Compensation Program, NACo hires an independent consultant to evaluate several different program aspects. These include the creditworthiness of Nationwide Financial, the parent company of program administrator, Nationwide Retirement Solutions, and the competitiveness of the fixed annuity investment option return to program participants.

The consultants stated that Nationwide Life Insurance Company provides a high degree of safety for employees of NACo member counties who have invested in the fixed account. This opinion refers only to the financial strength of Nationwide Life Insurance Company and the regulatory structures currently

in place to protect life insurance company policy and contract holders.

One of the investment options available to participants is the fixed annuity that offers county employees the opportunity to earn an investment return at a fixed rate that is established quarterly by Nationwide. In addition, on an annual basis, Nationwide sets an investment rate minimum (or floor) for the year.

According to the study, the 2014 return on this investment

option placed highest among its competitors. The report was released at the July 11, 2015 meeting of NACo's Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee. This study has been conducted every year since 1989, and the NACo program has always come out on top.

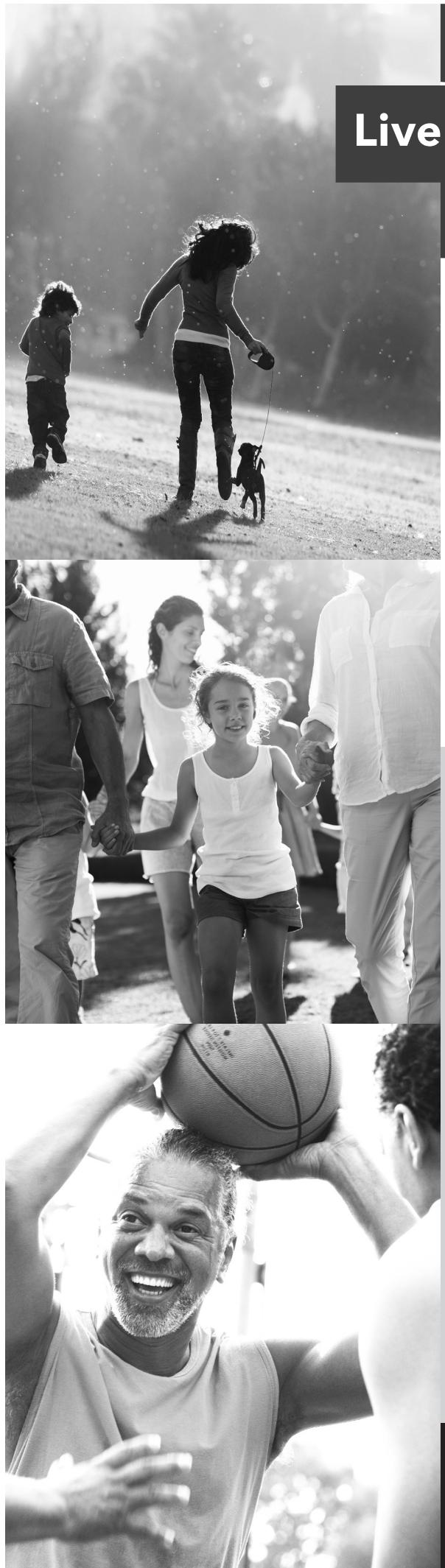
"NACo's 35-year partnership with NRS continues to deliver a quality program to county employees. Saving for a more comfortable retirement is more important than ever as changes in public sector pensions are under

review," said Matt Chase, NACo executive director.

The consultants' analyses are only one feature of NACo's Deferred Compensation Program that distinguishes it from others. As a result of NACo's Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee, the NACo Program is the only one in the country that receives oversight and is advised by county participants. Further, many state associations of counties also endorse and lend oversight to the program.

For further information on NACo's Deferred Compensation program, please contact NRS at 877/677-3678 or www.nrsforu.com.

Written by David Thompson, president and managing director, NACo Financial Services Corporation.



Live Healthy U.S. Counties

FREE for NACo Member Counties

Be a Live Healthy county with health discount programs for residents

Help your residents save on everyday prescription, dental and health costs.

Prescription Discounts at more than 68,000 pharmacies nationwide.

- Free to residents – they can save an average of 24%* off retail prices

Dental and Health Discounts at a national network of providers.

- Low-fee programs save residents 15% to 50% on dental and health costs

The Live Healthy program is offered at no-cost to our member counties – and we'll provide everything you need to market these savings to your residents, including:

- Customizable posters
- Customizable free prescription discount cards
- Dimensional counter display
- Press releases and more

Become a Live Healthy county – it's free!
Visit www.naco.org/health or call toll-free 1-888-407-6226.



The Live Healthy discount program is NOT insurance.

* Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy.

The Prescription Discount Card is operated by CVS/caremark™. The Discount Medical Organization for NACo Health and Dental Discounts is Alliance HealthCard of Florida, Inc.

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