

## Disposal boxes for flags ready

**By Alex Koroknay-Palicz**  
membership coordinator

After a pilot program last fall, a program that provides flag disposal boxes is ready to go national. Through a partnership between NACo, the National Flag Foundation and the National Sheriff's Association, counties can request flag disposal boxes to place throughout their counties so residents can drop off their old, tattered and torn flags for a proper, dignified disposal.

The 25 counties in the pilot program have already seen great success.

"The community response continues to grow as more people learn about how they can properly dispose of their worn

*See FLAGS page 4*



**The West Front of the Capitol is readied for the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump Jan. 20.** Photo by Hugh Clarke

## ANALYSIS | Drones: latest technology on county radar

**By Kevan Stone**  
associate legislative director

In 1783, the first hot-air balloon was launched and mankind could finally touch the sky. 1903 saw the famous Wright Brothers flight and the

first helicopter flight soon followed in 1907. It stayed that way for nearly a century. Eventually, we began to hear of the U.S. military using something called a "drone" to conduct reconnaissance and eventually military warfare campaigns

across the world. It was indeed a brave new world.

Fast forward to today, and we find ourselves welcoming the first new aerial technology in nearly a century. A technology that anyone can own. While manned aircraft

was exorbitantly expensive to purchase, an unmanned aerial system or UAS — AKA "drone" — is not. While this brings a wealth of opportunity for local governments, it also brings

*See DRONES page 2*

## GSA to discontinue DigitalGov Search service for local governments Feb. 28

**By Jacob Terrell**  
associate legislative director

The General Service Administration (GSA) recently announced plans to make significant changes to the scope of its DigitalGov Search service, including an end to program services to state, local and trib-

al governments.

GSA's DigitalGov Search service, formerly known as USASearch, powers the search function on many federal, state, local and tribal government websites and is designed to help visitors of government websites quickly find information by typing keywords into

a search bar. The DigitalGov Search service has been provided free of charge to government entities since it was launched in 2008.

In a message sent to local government agencies currently using the DigitalGov Search service, GSA officials note that as of Feb. 28, GSA will restrict

the service to federal government agencies only, and all non-federal agency user accounts will be deactivated. GSA's announcement came as a surprise to some non-federal users of the service, as the Feb. 28 suspension of service leaves

*See GSA STOPS page 4*



## ON THE MOVE

### NACo STAFF

#### ● Alicia Dorsey

has joined NACo as the association's finance director. She will be responsible for managing day-to-day financial activities, including developing and managing department budgets. Alicia is a certified public accountant with more than 15 years of experience. Before joining NACo, she served as CFO for Dorsey Accounting and Prop-



Dorsey



Bowden

erty Management, LLC, and as a principal finance analyst for the Federal Housing Finance Agency and senior auditor for KPMG, LLP.

#### ● Brian Bowden

associate legislative director, spoke on behalf of NACo at the New Mexico Association of Counties legislative conference, held in Santa Fe County, Jan. 17-19.

## BEHIND THE SEAL

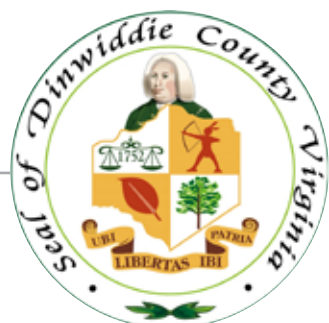
### DINWIDDIE COUNTY, VA.

Introduced prior to the 1960s

Lt. Gov. Robert Dinwiddie makes himself at home on the seal of the county bearing his name, because during his service to the colony from 1751 - 1758, governors Willem Anne van Keppel and John Campbell were largely absentee, making him the boots on the ground.

Stephanie Wray, executive assistant to the county administrator and clerk to the Board of Supervisors, assisted.

Would you like to see your county's seal featured? Contact Charlie Ban at [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org).



The crest includes the scales of justice to represent government,

the county's founding date of 1752,

a Native American archer to reflect the county's indigenous people

and a tobacco leaf and pine tree to represent local agriculture.

The Latin phrase translates to "Where there is freedom, there is my country."

### ANALYSIS CONTINUED

## Committee to be briefed on drones

From DRONES page 1

with it many new challenges.

Counties have been using drone technology for public safety and infrastructure inspection. Going where man cannot without danger is a vital resource local governments have been quick to embrace.

Instead of asking someone to enter a burning building to search for endangered citizens or asking a county engineer to strap on a harness and check out that bridge, drones can perform this task just as well with no risk of injury.

Up until 2014, approximately 430,000 drones were sold to U.S. consumers. But the market has taken off since then. In 2016, more than 1 million drones were purchased. Chances are, your neighbor or relative owns a drone.

The FAA, cognizant of the rapid expansion of this technology, issued a formal rule in June 2016 regarding drone operations, known as Part 107.

It detailed what drone pilots can or cannot do, such as stating the pilot must be able to see the drone at all times during flight (a visual line of sight), mandating flights can only take place during daylight and designating a maximum speed and altitude, among many others. While released in the name of safety, Part 107 does not answer all concerns posed by county government.

In August 2016, the FAA announced it was creating a Drone Advisory Committee. This committee would officially provide recommendations to the FAA for future regulations and rulemaking. With over 400 applicants, NACo

was successful in having one of its own, former Riley County, Kan. commissioner Robert Boyd, appointed to this committee. Its members — including the drone industry, drone technology, federal advocacy and other stakeholders — began meeting in October 2016.

Privacy, governance and federal pre-emption are issues that matter most to county government. Since its inception, the FAA has controlled the skies, from the blade of grass in one's backyard, to the heavens.

While this has held true for manned aircraft, local governments have had some control

Since its inception, the FAA has controlled the skies, from the blade of grass in one's backyard, to the heavens.

in terms of ordinances and laws controlling certain aspects of flights. For example, while local government cannot claim jurisdiction of aircraft flight, it can control where that aircraft takes off from and can control the times of day when takeoff and landing are permitted.

No-fly zones, while federally regulated, have been requested by local governments for sensitive infrastructure and special events. The same principle should apply to drone flight, where the ease of access is much simpler since anyone can walk into a store and buy a drone.

County governments, while proponents of drone technology, are on the front line of responding to UAS issues, being responsible for certain enforcement.

While not specifically mandated by the FAA, law enforcement must attend to laws being broken, whether they be with a car, bike or drone. Airports must rely on law enforcement to ensure drones do not veer into takeoff and landing approaches and protected airspace.

Local police must take the call when privacy is invaded. It is for these and many other reasons that local governments must be actively involved with federal stakeholders as these laws formulate.

As part of the NACo Transportation and Infrastructure Policy Steering Committee's goals for 2017, Committee Chairman Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin County, Minn., has planned a robust educational program for members to familiarize themselves with drone technology.

At the 2017 NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., committee members will hear from the FAA and other private stakeholders to gain a clearer understanding of what drones can do, and how they can best use today's technology and policy to better protect their constituents.

Steering committee meetings are open to all conference attendees.

While everyone agrees drones are here to stay, local government's role will continue to be of the utmost importance in policy implementation. Through education and collaboration with federal stakeholders, an environment that protects the public while allowing UAS enthusiasts to safely control their craft, can be reached. **EN**

## IN OUR OPINION

# ACA repeal could stymie efforts to end the opioid epidemic

By Joan Garner, chair  
Health Steering  
Committee

Expanding access to treatment for individuals struggling with addiction is a central theme in *A Prescription for Action*, the joint report recently published by NACo and the National League of Cities.

The report points out that although nearly the same number of individuals in the country suffer from diabetes (29 million) and addiction (21 million), roughly 75 percent of individuals suffering from diabetes receive treatment, but only about 12 percent of those struggling with addiction are being treated.

And that amount might drop. Federal policy changes un-

derway in the first weeks of the 115th Congress point to potentially significant decreases in the availability of addiction treatments.

In both the House and Senate, lawmakers approved resolutions during the second week of January that set the stage for a repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

If these repeal efforts prove successful — as is expected — individuals throughout the country who rely on ACA exchanges for health coverage could lose access to addiction treatments.

Additionally, in the 31 states that have expanded Medicaid under ACA guidelines, individuals newly-eligible for Medicaid could once again find themselves unable to secure

health coverage.

A recent study published by the Harvard Medical School and New York University helps to quantify the potential impact of repealing the ACA on efforts to stem the tide of the opioid epidemic.

According to the study, several states that have been particularly hard-hit by opioids have relied on the ACA and Medicaid expansion to fund addiction treatments.

In Ohio, for example, which experienced more than 3,000 drug overdose deaths in 2015 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), nearly 30,000 individuals struggling with addiction accessed health coverage through ACA exchanges. Additionally, more than 150,000 individuals with

mental illness and substance use disorder conditions gained access to Medicaid coverage through Ohio's expansion under ACA.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R) recently credited Medicaid expansion in helping his state fight the opioid epidemic, stating that "Medicaid money is helping to rehab people."

In nearby Kentucky, the story is similar. In 2015, 67 of the state's 120 counties had more than 20 overdose deaths per 100,000 residents, according to the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky (FHK).

In a recently released study, the foundation found that treatment services for substance use increased by 740 percent for Medicaid expansion beneficiaries between the

beginning of 2014 and mid-2016 — from about 1,500 individuals to about 11,000. While the report points out that rising rates of opioid abuse in Kentucky have likely also contributed to this dramatic rise in treatments, the positive impact of Medicaid expansion seems unmistakable.

As Congress moves towards a repeal of the ACA and defunding of Medicaid expansion, the nation's efforts to curb rates of opioid abuse and overdose — especially in several particularly hard-hit states — could lose momentum. If lawmakers are able to implement a replacement program that facilitates similar rates of access to health coverage for the general pop-

See **ADDICTION** page 4

## BRIGHT IDEAS | FRANKLIN COUNTY, Ohio

# Capital County Has 'Corny' Way of Stopping Snow Drifts

**PROBLEM:** Preventing snow from drifting onto rural roads, causing hazards and re-plowing.

**SOLUTION:** Have farmers leave rows of cornstalks along those roads to serve as natural snow fences.

By Charles Taylor  
senior staff writer

Franklin County, Ohio is better known as the home of the state capital, Columbus, than it is for agriculture. And with 1.25 million residents, the county certainly qualifies as urban.

But the county's farming community — corn growers in particular — are saving the entire county about \$110,000 money each winter by participating in a Cornstalks for Snow Fence Program.

The county engineer's office pays farmers in rural parts of the



**Cornstalk snow fencing in Franklin County, Ohio holds back drifting snow from a rural roadway. Participating farmers get paid to leave the stalks up.** Photo courtesy of the Franklin County Engineer's Office

county to leave a row of cornstalks — 1.5 feet to 2 feet tall — parallel to rural roads in snow-drift-prone areas.

"I think it's kind of unique in that it's such an urban county," said County Engineer Dean C. Ringle.

The program saves money on erecting "traditional" plastic snow fencing in winter and taking it down in spring.

The method is common in big corn-growing states such as Iowa. That's where Ringle's office got the idea.

"One of my guys had read an article about cornstalks being left up in the state of Iowa for snow control," he recalled recently, "and we started thinking about, gee, why couldn't we do that?"

Under the program, the

county pays corn farmers \$50 per acre to leave stalks along routes with a history snow drifting into the roadway. This year's county cornstalk-fence budget is \$30,000.

The 36 farmers who have left about 20 miles of cornstalks in place this year are receiving 23 cents per foot. That leaves 5.7 miles of plastic snow fencing for Ringle's crews erect, costing about \$1.50 per foot, he said. Franklin County farmers produced 2.7 million bushels of corn for grain in 2014 - 2015, according to the USDA's Agricultural Statistics Service. For context, Iowa's smallest corn-growing county, Lucas, produced 5.1 million bushels of corn in 2015; it's largest, Kossuth, produced 62 million bushels.

At least one Franklin County farmer says he's not in it for the money. "Heavens no," Scott Dever told a local newspaper last

See **SNOW FENCE** page 5





## SNAP/STATS

### LONGEST U.S. RIVERS

River	Miles	Origin
Missouri River	2,341 miles	begins in Gallatin County, Mont.
Mississippi	2,202 miles	begins in Clearwater County, Minn.
Yukon River	1,979 miles	begins in Canada
Rio Grande River	1,759 miles	begins in San Juan County, Colo.
Colorado River	1,450 miles	begins in Grand County, Colo.

Source: American Rivers; Charlie Ban, senior writer, and Bev Schlotterbeck, executive editor

## Hospitalization for addictions fell in W.Va.

From ADDICTION page 3

ulation and the Medicaid “expansion population,” without significant disruptions to coverage, the adverse impacts of an ACA repeal on individuals struggling with opioid addiction could be largely mitigated. Without an effective replacement, these adverse impacts seem hard to overstate.

In West Virginia — which is perhaps the epicenter of the opioid epidemic — it is estimated that the share of hospitalizations for addiction or mental health disorders in which the patient was uninsured decreased from 23 percent to 5 percent as a result of Medicaid expansion.

Recently, Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W. Va.) stated that “half of the people in treatment would lose coverage made possible through the Affordable Care Act,” and that “West Virginians cannot afford to have this critical funding ripped from them without a replacement ready.” **CN**

## NACo asks feds to extend GSA search engine

From GSA STOPS page 1

limited time for agencies to budget for and procure a new vendor to provide similar services.

NACo has reached out to GSA’s Office of Intergovernmental Affairs regarding the changes, but has not been provided with direct feedback as to why the service has been discontinued. NACo will continue its efforts to seek an extension of the service, which will allow county governments enough time to seek alternate service providers. **CN**

### LET NACo KNOW

If your county has used this service in the past or is being directly impacted by the recent changes, please contact Jacob Terrell, NACo associate legislative director for telecommunications and technology, at [jterrell@naco.org](mailto:jterrell@naco.org) or 202.942.4236 to share your thoughts.

# Flag disposal box program expands nationwide

From FLAGS page 1

out flags,” said David Zimmerman, Board chairman, Tazewell County, Ill. “This new NACo benefit allows our citizens to conveniently and respectfully recycle their flags while helping enhance our county’s reputation as a positive resource for people’s needs.”

For some counties, the program has seen more excitement than expected.

“When I was first approached about this program, I wondered what the response to it would be,” said Commissioner Stan Ponstein, Kent County, Mich. “But since the box was put up last month we have had 75 flags retired!”

The introduction of the flag retirement box in Kent Coun-



Allegheny County, Pa. Sheriff William P. Mullen shows off NACo’s flag disposal box.

ty attracted press coverage all through the region, providing a great opportunity to educate the public about the proper

care for the U.S. flag. Other counties saw this flag disposal program as a good starting point for flag etiquette education and a useful community service.

The flag disposal boxes are provided free of charge to NACo member counties thanks to generous national sponsorship from Nationwide Insurance & Lamar Advertising. Koppers and Allegheny Construction Group provided local sponsorship for the pilot as well. **CN**

For more information or to request your own U.S. Flag disposal boxes, please visit [www.naco.org/flag](http://www.naco.org/flag)

NEW IN DECEMBER FROM NACo’s

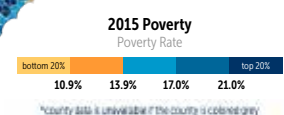
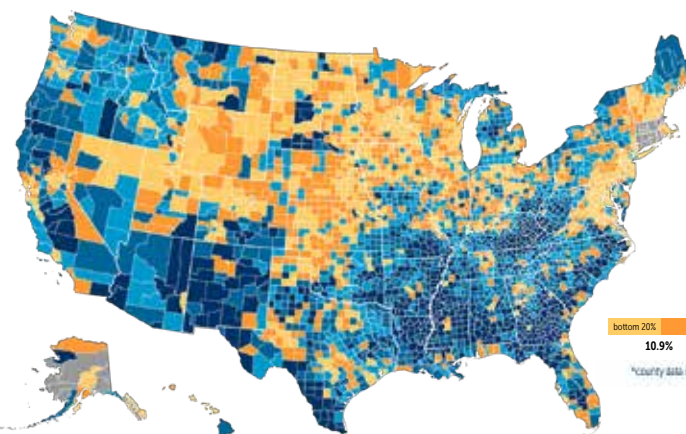
# COUNTY EXPLORER

**39%** of counties had more than a quarter of children living in poverty in 2015.

**5 MILLION**  
**\$66.6 BILLION**

jobs were supported by international exports in small and medium-sized counties in 2015.

provided to county residents through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2015.



Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 5-year Estimates, 2015

[www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer](http://www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer)

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## Hay bales, silage bags used for snow fence in some states

From SNOW FENCE page 3

month. “We would rather (plow the stalks under after harvest), but if it helps the county, we’ll do it. The most we’ve ever gotten is \$350 or \$400.”

Snow drifting onto rural roads has impacts that can ripple throughout the county, Ringle said. City folks also use country roads.

“We have to plow our roads a little bit more because we’ve just got more density; we’ve just got more traffic using the roads — even if they’re the countryside roads,” he explained.

Elsewhere, Minnesota’s state Department of Transportation also has a “living” snow fence program, which includes corn-stalk fences, hay bales and silage bags.

Benefits, according to MnDOT officials include:

- reducing the use of pub-

lic money by limiting plowing time and heavy vehicle usage

- preventing big snow drifts and icy roads that can lead to stranded motorists

- serving as visual clues to help drivers find their way, and
- improving driver visibility and reducing vehicle crashes.

“We look at it as not just a convenience; we look at it from a safety standpoint,” Ringle said. “Because if it’s night and you’re driving at a regular rate of speed — because the roads are clear — and you hit a pocket of snow that’s actually pretty dangerous.”

Just as Franklin County borrowed the idea from elsewhere, Ringle said, “Imitation is the best form of flattery, so if others pick up on it and use it, then I think that’s the best thing that could happen.” **CN**

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## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### LINDA HIGGINS

Health Steering Committee  
Commissioner  
Hennepin County, Minn.

**Number of years active in NACo:** 4

**Years in Public Service:** 20 years. 16 years as Minnesota state senator and four years as county commissioner

**Occupation:** County commissioner

**Education:** Mankato (Minnesota) State College, bachelor’s degree in education, 1972

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** First campaign for state senate, 1996. Walked about six hours a day, wore out three pairs of shoes, lost 30 pounds.

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** Reporter-columnist Molly Ivins, Texas



Gov. Ann Richards, Former First Lady Michelle Obama

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** Backpacked and trekked in Peru for two months in 1977.

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Read murder mysteries or political thrillers. Hang out at our cabin in Northern Minnesota.

**Every morning I read:** *Minne-*

**You’d be surprised to learn that I:**  
Rode my bicycle 100 miles in one day. Once.



*apolis Star Tribune, MinnPost, Facebook, Twitter and email.*

**My pet peeve is:** Bad grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**My motto is:** Don’t do anything that would embarrass your parents.

**The last book I read was:** I’m ALWAYS reading a book.

**My favorite music is** Motown.

**My favorite U.S. president is:** Barack Obama.

**My county is a NACo member because:** Hennepin County understands the interactions of counties and state and federal governments and appreciates the work NACo does to ensure counties are heard and appreciated.

## 2017 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

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- Understanding the Role of Mega-regions in Economic Development and Transportation
- How to Create Stories to Move Lawmakers’ Hearts, Minds and VOTES
- Understanding and Shaping the Federal Regulatory Process
- More than Manners: Counties Advancing Civility at the Local Level
- Clearing the Way for Big Taxpayer Savings: Considering the Role of Cooperative Purchasing in Procurement



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# Traveling in My Own Solar System

As of a month ago, on the south-facing roof of our house, I see new and shiny solar photovoltaic panels. After a great deal of research and consideration, I contracted to have a 10-kilowatt energy system installed at our house. Of course the most up-to-date technology is an important consideration in exploring the creation of a personal solar system. However, equally important, is the customer service and sense of caring conveyed by whichever company — or government agency for that matter — with which you choose to do business. On all of these counts, the vendor I selected scored very well indeed.

The company followed through with their commitments. They were as excited as I was to help me explore the solar system. They made sure I understood all that was going to happen. They also arrived with an affiliated green bank to arrange for low interest financing such that there were no out-of-pocket start-up costs. My only regret is that I did not receive an autographed photo of Elon Musk.

Now that I am a solar system owner, and someone who can look back to more than four decades of work as a local government human resources director and county chief administrative officer, I respectfully offer some thoughts for my fellow public administrators (and mommies, daddies and neighbors).

Always be on the lookout for ways to innovate and be more self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency means a reduced reliance on others for maintaining and improving the quality of your life and the life of your family,

community, nation and planet.

As my two beautiful daughters were growing up in the public schools, it was our mission as parents to be involved in their education. Their education was far too important to be abandoned to some school board to make long-range decisions which profoundly affect their lives. The same is true for city and county governments, not to mention the state and federal agencies. Getting involved as a citizen can change the dynamic for a parent and for a community.

As a result, and after ongoing discussions with the kids, we were able to identify passions in them which we could harness with the help of a network of friends and colleagues. For example when future Doctor Daughter Rachel demonstrated an extremely strong curiosity in science and medicine. It was not long before she was the proud owner of her own microscope and got to

meet various medical and science professionals whose friendship we cherished.

Later, she approached the county medical examiner at the time, Joshua Perper, M.D., and asked if she could be an intern with him. Ironically, years later as Dr. Rachel arrived in North Carolina to begin her family practice medicine career, she was contacted by the county sheriff to come to the scene of a double homicide.

Quizzically, Dr. Rachel said something like "What?" The sheriff explained that the newest physician in town also got to serve, on a rotating basis, as the county coroner. Thanks to her work with Dr. Perper she met those responsibilities with confidence and speed that, hopefully, helped the sheriff's department catch the bad guy (the really bad guy). It was a willingness to partner with others and be skeptical but open-minded in embracing humanity as well as science technology that helps us all advance.

You can't make great and long-lasting progress in public service and in private life without help. It is important to recognize and appreciate that. My amazing robotic astronomy equipment comes with a price — great complexity. Despite all the learning and practicing I get to do in trying to master these technological wonders, there have been times when something goes wrong and alarm lights and sounds warn me of impending doom. I simply don't know what to do — other than to call friends and neighbors. They are persons more adept and expert than I am. They almost universally jump at the chance to respond and share their knowledge.

In public service no matter how smart we think we are as elected or appointed officials,

no matter how many votes we think we have in support of our ideas, and no matter how much we think the public likes us, we have to create our own "Army" to give us diverse and timely advice to be successful. We also have to thank our soldiers regularly. The arrogance to suggest that we know more than others (when we don't) or that we don't need advice (when we do) is highly dangerous.

The final thought that I hope readers will consider and act upon can happen regularly in your life just by wanting to make it happen.

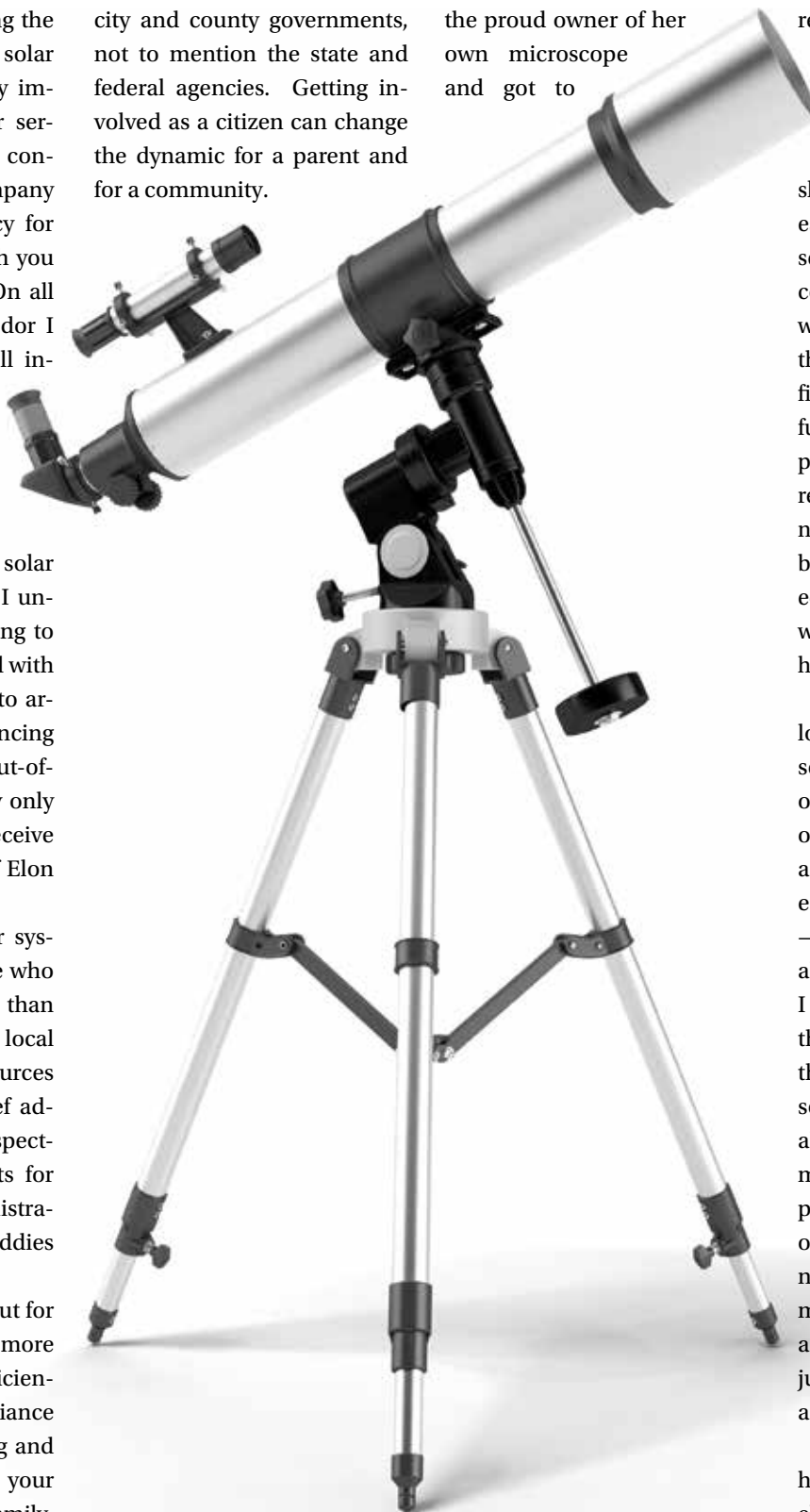
Three nights ago three children visited the observatory and not only got to see wonderful sky things, but also got to take their own photographs of the moon, just like the main character in my children's book, *Evie and the Magic Telescope*. I hope they will not only proudly share those photos at school, but will look at the photos regularly and appreciate all that the world offers — all that the universe has in store for us.

The concept of inspiring the next generation and involving them in creating the future is a way to continue success for all of us.

It crashes directly, however, into arrogant behavior. What a tragedy it would be if the winner in this clash of the titans turned out to be arrogance over reason, and anger over compassion.

Can we learn a lot about how our careers and our lives can be enriched by looking out at the roof of a house or by looking out on a clear night at the incredible Orion Nebula? The answer is a profound "Yes."

Use the tools of friendship, innovation and a willingness to joyfully explore. These tools help make much better public policy and are much more fun as well. **CN**





# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## ARIZONA

Major League Baseball's **Arizona Diamondbacks** are **suing MARICOPA COUNTY** to break their lease at the county-owned Chase Field. For several months, the team and the county have clashed over repairs and renovations to the ballpark.

The team is contracted to play there through 2028.

## CALIFORNIA

● **LOS ANGELES COUNTY's** Board of Supervisors will contribute \$1 million this year and \$2 million next year to a **legal aid fund to help immigrants** facing deportation charges, the *Los Angeles Daily News* reported.

The L.A. Justice Fund, which including the city's contribution, will raise \$10 million, is a partnership between Los Angeles city and county, California Community Foundation, Weingart Foundation and the California Endowment.

The county's \$3 million contribution is subject to matching donations, and private philanthropic organizations are expected to chip in \$5 million. The money will not be used to aid immigrants with serious criminal histories, but rather, military families, refugees and unaccompanied minors, for example.

## COLORADO

**ARAPAHOE** and **DOUGLAS counties** and the city of Aurora are in the process of creating a **joint police-sheriff's crime lab**.

Douglas County will cover most of the upfront construction costs (\$23 million) for the building. Aurora (\$15 million) and Arapahoe County (\$30 million) will pay the shared costs of equipment, IT infrastructure, and current and fu-

ture staffing.

The lab should be up and running in the summer of 2018.

## ILLINOIS

● **Shoplifting** cases will remain misdemeanors in **COOK COUNTY**, unless the thief steals \$1,000 or more in merchandise — or has 10 prior felony convictions, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

Illinois has long had one of the lowest thresholds in the Midwest for filing felony shoplifting charges. Previously, shoplifters in Cook County could, in certain cases, be charged with a felony for stealing goods valued at \$300. In neighboring states, Wisconsin has a felony retail theft threshold of \$2,500 loss; it's \$1,000 in Michigan and \$750 in Indiana.

Critics of Cook County's low threshold say it resulted in too many nonviolent offenders being jailed — for months or even years — at taxpayers' expense.

Under new standards, prosecutors can still approve felony charges if they believe the circumstances warrant them.



● **DUPAGE COUNTY** Division of Transportation (DOT) has launched a new **web-based application** (app) that will enable residents to report potholes, signal outages and



● Thanks to grant funding, **SAN DIEGO COUNTY's** Health and Human Services Agency will provide **200 free child car seats** for low-income parents.

A \$155,000 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety will pay for the car seats and for child safety workshops through September of this year. It's part of the county's Keep 'Em Safe program.

A new California law requires that children under the age of 2 be fastened into rear-facing child safety seats — unless the child weighs at least 40 pounds or is 40 inches tall. Photo by San Diego County News Center

other road maintenance or safety issues.

The app allows users send a photo detailing the problem and the precise location of the issue on a map. Users can also look at other existing maintenance or safety issues in their area and add information to those reports. The DOT and Geographic Information Systems Department collaborated on the project.

## KENTUCKY

The people have spoken: **MONROE COUNTY** will stay dry. In a special local option

election Jan. 10, the vote to **legalize sales of alcohol** came up 690 votes short — 1,211 votes in favor versus 1,901 votes against.

County Magistrate Roger Deckard told the *Glasgow Daily Times* that had the measure

passed, money from license fees would have benefited the county's general fund.

## MARYLAND

● **BALTIMORE COUNTY** officials are considering how they might **regulate solar farms** in rural parts of the county. This comes at a time when farmers are becoming interested in switching from crops to solar panels, according to *The Baltimore Sun*.

County Councilman

See NEWS FROM page 8





## NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

From NEWS FROM page 7

Wade Kach proposed a measure that would limit solar installations in rural areas to the lesser of 20 acres or 50 percent of the property.

It would also specify how close panels can be to the property line, their height and how much landscaping and fencing would be required. The bill would not apply to rural residents with only enough panels to power their homes and farms.

Some solar companies are offering \$1,000 per acre per year to lease farmland to install panels.

● The groundwork is being laid in **HARFORD COUNTY** for a “phased-in transition” to develop an EMS system that would **supplement medical services** provided by private volunteer fire companies.

County Executive Barry Glassman said it’s a process that may take several years to complete, *The Baltimore Sun* reported.

He emphasized that county-operated ambulances would not compete with volunteer EMS units but would “provide an additional safety net” and surge capacity.

Glassman proposes creating a medical director’s position in the county’s Department of Emergency Services and a county EMS Standards Board to help with the transition.



### MISSOURI

A state appeals court upheld a lower court ruling that **ST. LOUIS COUNTY** has no au-



### OREGON

For the first time, the all-female the **Multnomah County, Ore.** Board of County Commissioners **will have people of color in the majority.** Three new members of the Board were sworn in Jan. 3, including (from second left to right) Sharon Meieran, Jessica Vega Pederson and Lori Stegmann. Chair Deborah Kafoury (left) and Commissioner Loretta Smith (right) join for a group photo. , the *Portland Tribune* reported.

Photo by Stephanie Yao Long

thority to impose **minimum law enforcement standards** on the 57 municipal police agencies within the county, according to the *Post-Dispatch*.

County officials had originally argued that public health statutes in the county’s charter could be used set standards for municipal police departments. Later, the county abandoned that position but continued to argue its right to impose the training requirements.

Twelve municipalities went to court within days of the ordinance’s passage in late 2015 to block its implementation.

### NEW YORK

**SUFFOLK COUNTY** Executive Steve Bellone is proposing a law that would sidestep a State Supreme Court ruling against **development on protected farmland.** It would allow farmers to build farm stands and other related structures on preserved land without permits, the *Riverhead News-Review* reported.

The county’s program, the first of its kind in 1974, offers property owners money in exchange for a legally binding agreement stating the land won’t be developed.

Justice Thomas Whelan’s decision was a response to a lawsuit the Long Island Pine Barrens Society brought against

the county. In the suit, the organization claimed development should not be allowed on preserved farms where public funds were used to purchase development rights.

### OHIO

The Cleveland police department has signed a contract with the **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** prosecutor’s office to reimburse the city up to \$500,000 to buy and install **cameras in 275 police cars.** That money comes from criminal forfeitures, *The Plain Dealer* reported.

County Prosecutor Timothy J. McGinty said, “The dash cams will result in a sharp increase in convictions.

“Police misconduct complaints will drop like a rock, and public confidence will rise dramatically.”

### TEXAS

● **BEXAR COUNTY** commissioners passed a resolution opposing the Texas Legislature’s efforts to **impose revenue or appraisal caps** on Texas counties and cities.

The resolution says caps “would diminish local control and tie the hands of county officials by limiting their ability to provide essential services to address the needs of their citizens,” among other “detrimental” factors, according to *The Rivard Report*. Twelve other Texas counties represented by the Alamo Area Council of Governments have signed the document.

● Two **DALLAS COUNTY** commissioners want to **scrap truancy courts** and instead send kids who skip school to justices of the peace, who generally handle small claims and evictions.

Dropping caseloads have reduced the need for the courts and a new state law will direct schools to view court as a last resort, so John Wiley Price and Mike Cantrell argue the county will be \$3.2 million a year better off by closing them, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

### VIRGINIA

After retroactively collecting \$50 **business licenses** from independent contractors over five years, and hiring two auditors to do so, **ALBEMARLE COUNTY** expects to bring in more than \$11.3 million in revenue, *Cville-Weekly* reported.

*News From Across the Nation 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.*

### SOUTH DAKOTA

While a state board works to find new homes for hundreds of **wild horses** from a troubled sanctuary, **DEWEY and ZIEBACH counties** have been paying to care for them.

Members of the South Dakota Animal Industry Board are seeking a court order to transfer horses surrendered by the nonprofit International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros, which straddles the counties, to the ownership of another suitable caretaker. The horses have been temporarily impounded — but are still under the society’s ownership — since October, the *Salina Journal* reported.

