

Counties celebrate Black History Month

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

February is the shortest month of the year, but that hasn't stopped counties across the nation from jam-packing their calendars with Black History Month observances and celebrations.

From New Castle County, Del. to Clark County, Nev., counties have issued proclamations, hosted lectures, sponsored concerts and film festivals, among other activities, to highlight African-American history.

Some have been countywide celebrations; in other cases, county elected leaders have played key roles in marking the

See **BLACK HISTORY** page 5



Cindy Bobbit, chair of the Grant County, Okla. Board of Commissioners, testifies Feb. 8 before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the challenges facing rural counties in building and maintaining infrastructure. Photo by Hugh Clark

NACo's County Economies 2016: widespread recovery, slower growth

By Emilia Istrate
managing director
Counties Futures Lab

More than two-thirds of county economies recovered on at least three indicators by 2016, according to *County Economies 2016: Widespread Recovery, Slower Growth*, a report from NACo's new Counties Futures Lab that analyzes economic recovery patterns across the 3,069 counties in 2016.

A majority of county economies experienced unemployment rate recovery by 2016, and almost eight in 10 returned to pre-recession economic output (GDP) levels.

The report identifies last year's growth and recovery

patterns by examining annual changes in four indices: jobs, unemployment rate, economic output and median home prices. It also explores average wage dynamics in 2016 and the economic recovery patterns of counties that voted Democratic in 2008 and 2012 presidential election yet switched to Republican in 2016.

County economic conditions can constrain and challenge county governments, residents and businesses or, conversely, provide opportunity. The focus of the report is on the county economy, not the county government. County economies are the building blocks of regional economies (metropolitan areas and micrometropolitan areas), states and the

nation.

More than one in four county economies recovered on all four indicators analyzed, nearly double the rate of the previous year. Most of these county economies are in Kentucky, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin.

Large county economies — in counties with more than 500,000 residents — have the highest rate of full recovery (41 percent). In contrast, more than three-quarters of small county economies, in counties with fewer than 50,000 residents, still did not reach their pre-recession peaks across all four indicators by 2016.

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Counties go after pharma companies

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

The human and financial tolls of the national opioid drug epidemic are prompting counties to sue pharmaceutical companies for supplying large quantities of the drugs and selling them through deceptive marketing campaigns.

On Feb. 2, Erie County, N.Y. filed suit against 11 pharmaceutical companies and four individuals for what it said were their roles in contributing to the crisis. Broome County has

See **PHARMA SUITS** page 10

Study shows wage growth slower in most counties in 2016

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Economic growth was widespread in 2016, but slower than in 2015. While the recovery keeps track of how a county economy is doing after its latest downturn, growth shows how things changed between 2015 and 2016.

An overwhelming majority of county economies saw positive growth across all indicators in 2016, but overall, economic growth occurred at a slower pace than in 2015. Job growth accelerated in only 11 percent of county economies,

and home prices increased faster in only 6 percent of county economies in 2016 than in the previous year.

Wages also grew slower in the majority of county economies in 2016. In states such as Alabama, Nebraska and New Mexico, more than three-quarters of county economies saw wages growing at a slower pace in 2016 than in 2015.

Economic recovery patterns at the local level are essential in understanding how Americans feel about the national economy.

As a presidential election year, 2016 saw about 200 counties that voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in both 2008 and 2012 vote Republican in 2016 (the report refers to these as "swing Republican" counties). The majority are in the Midwest, in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. These swing counties are disproportionately mid-sized — with populations between 50,000 and 500,000 residents — and have economies specializing most often in agriculture, forestry and manufacturing.

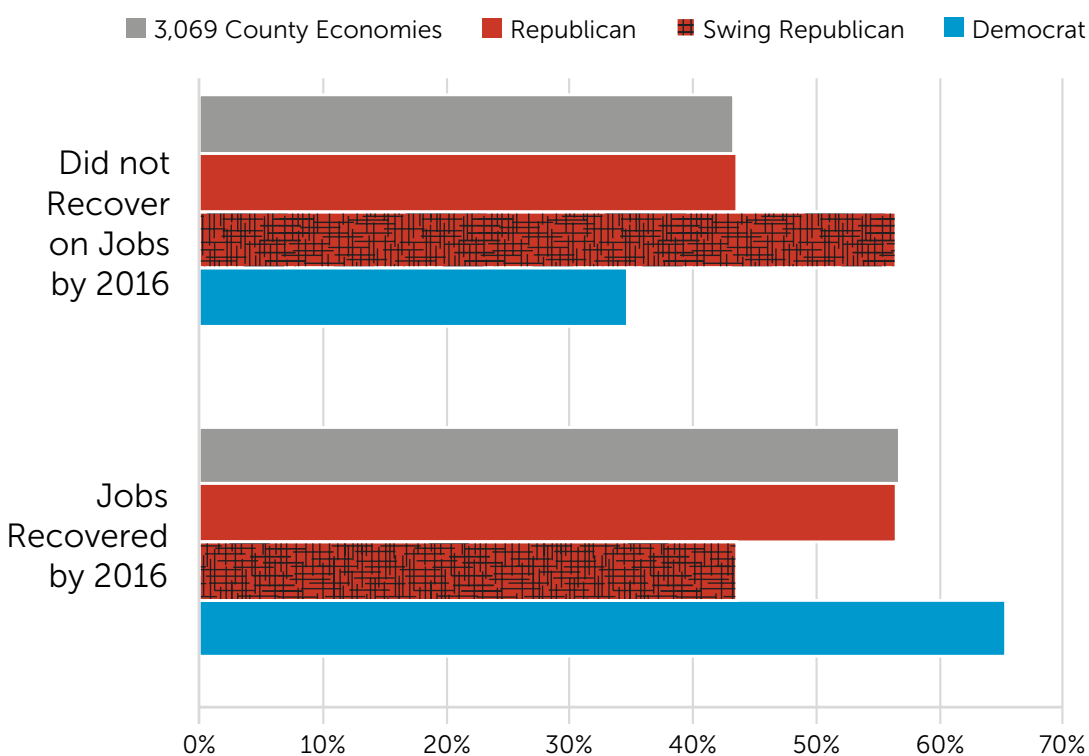
What differentiates the economic recovery of the swing Republican counties from others is the lower rate of job recovery. The majority of them (56 percent) did not reach their pre-recession job peaks by 2016, while nationally only 43 percent of county economies fit that pattern (see chart).

These swing Republican counties had longer and deeper job recessions than county economies overall. Many of them are counties in which industry left during the recession and has not fully returned.

County Economies 2016 is a

The Majority of Swing Counties that Voted Republican in 2016 Presidential Election Are More Likely to Have Weak Job Recoveries

County Electoral Results in 2008, 2012 and 2016 and Job Recovery Status by 2016



Source: NACo Analysis of Woods and Poole Economics, Inc., 2016 data; The Guardian, 2008 and 2012 U.S. election data; Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, 2016 data


reminder that local economic conditions often vary from the national economy's narrative. The data reveal that the economic recovery accelerated in

2016 on unemployment rates and is taking hold across large swaths of the country.

However, continued economic growth in 2016 most often oc-

curred at a slower pace than in the previous year. Wage growth also slowed last year in a majority of county economies, affecting counties of all sizes.

The opportunities and challenges in county economies across the country show the continued need for a strong local-state-federal partnership in providing economic opportunity.

You can find the analysis, companion interactive maps and individualized county profiles at www.naco.org/countyeconomies. To access them, go to NACo's County Explorer interactive map www.naco.org/countyexplorer. 



SNAP/STATS

COUNTIES WITH LOWEST CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATES

County	State	Rate
Douglas County	..... Colo.	.....3.3%
Loudon County	..... Va.	.....4%
Los Alamos County	..... N.M.	.....4.1%
Hunterdon County	..... N.J.	.....4.6%
Carver County	..... Minn.	.....4.7%

Source: NACo Analysis
Census Bureau Small Area Income
& Poverty Estimates 2015

LEARN MORE

County Economies 2016 is the first release of the newly created NACo Counties Futures Lab. The lab brings together leading national experts to examine and forecast the trends, innovations and promises of county government with an eye toward positioning America's county leaders for success. Focusing primarily on pressing

county governance and management issues — and grounded in analytics, data and knowledge-sharing — the lab delivers research studies, reports and other actionable intelligence to a variety of venues in collaboration with corporate, academic and philanthropic thought leaders to promote the county government of the future.

House moves to kill election-security agency

The House of Representatives' Committee on House Administration voted 6-3 along party lines to advance the Election Assistance Commission Termination Act (H.R. 634).

H.R. 634 would eliminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), an independent, bipartisan agency created to help states secure their voting systems and the only agency responsible for making sure voting machines cannot be hacked.

After the 2000 presidential election, EAC was directed to convey federal help to states to update and improve their voting systems. In recent years, EAC's top responsibilities have been to ensure elections are accessible to all individuals, develop and promote election best practices and allocate funds for elections technologies. While H.R. 634 aims to eliminate the EAC, it does not propose new agencies to take care of its responsibilities.

In response to the vote, several voting rights organizations have expressed concerns to the committee about the

security of the United States' election system and public confidence in the general election system. These concerns have been heightened due to possible foreign interference in the recent U.S. presidential election.

H.R. 634 will now move to the full House for a vote.

County officials are traditionally responsible for overseeing the allocation of voting machines, managing polling locations and ensuring the integrity and efficiency of the voting process in partnership with federal, state and other local election officials. Counties take deliberate steps to ensure the security of voting systems, from ensuring that voting machines are not connected to the internet or to each other to establishing a specific chain of custody for voting records.

Before the 2016 presidential election, NACo released a new fact sheet on the role counties play in administering and ensuring the integrity of America's election process. It can be viewed online at www.naco.org/vote. **CN**

Amazon Business, new U.S. Communities vendor

U.S. Communities, NACo's cooperative purchasing program, has launched a new contract giving county users access to a variety of quality products available on the Amazon Business online marketplace.

With this new launch, county purchasing teams can use Amazon Business to buy business items within the 10 categories listed below:

- office supplies
- animal supplies, equipment and food
- audio visual and electronics
- books
- home and kitchen
- clothing
- musical instruments
- higher education scientific equipment and lab supplies
- classroom, school, art supplies and materials, and
- hard-to-find items such as 3D printers or commercial espresso machines.

Setup is quick and easy: Interested agencies simply need to register for U.S. Communities — if not already registered — sign up for an Amazon Business account and enroll to use the con-

tract with the click of a button.

Amazon Business was awarded this exclusive multi-year contract through a competitive solicitation process and detailed evaluation conducted by Prince William County, Va. public schools. This lead public agency worked to put together a contract that fills a void previously unfulfilled for counties — specifically, a purchasing option that supports local businesses and delivers office supplies as well as one of the most in-demand products for local agencies, pet food.

The contract has many additional features. Through the U.S. Communities program, Amazon Business will provide public agencies with an avenue to not only concentrate miscellaneous spend, but also to consolidate purchasing data and produce reports on it. In addition to the products available on the marketplace, Amazon Business will offer tools to help purchasers such as multi-user accounts; approval workflows, which customize order approvals or set spending limits,

for example; payment methods; reporting and analytics that track and monitor spending with dynamic charts and data tables; spend controls; and tax-exempt purchasing.

Amazon Business strives to support local business development by continuing to expand their sourcing from local businesses. As part of this, counties will be able to filter products to view those derived from local, minority-owned and women-owned businesses.

U.S. Communities is a free procurement option for public agencies nationwide. Counties can bypass the competitive bid process and piggyback on contracts already in place by other public agencies, saving time and money. The program offers a variety of goods and services from approximately 40 high-quality brands. **CN**

Interested in learning more? Contact Sharon Russell, russell@naco.org, or Kelly Boggs, kboggs@naco.org, or visit www.uscommunities.org.

Congress considers repeal of 'Cadillac tax'

By Brian Bowden
associate legislative director

Two bipartisan bills have been introduced to repeal the tax on employer-sponsored health coverage, commonly referred to as the "cadillac tax."

In the House, Reps. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) and Joe Courtney (D-Conn.) introduced the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2017 (H.R. 173). It currently has 80 co-sponsors.

In the Senate, Sens. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) introduced similar legislation, S. 58, which shares the same name as its House companion. S. 58 currently has one Democratic co-sponsor and one Republican co-sponsor.

When the ACA was enacted in March 2010, one of the provisions included in the law was an excise tax on employer-sponsored health coverage, referred to as the "Cadillac tax," which would impose a 40 percent tax on employer-sponsored health care coverage that exceeds thresholds established in the law (\$10,800 for individual coverage and \$29,100 for family coverage).

The Cadillac tax could negatively impact counties by forcing them to raise insurance deductibles or significantly reduce health care benefits.

Although NACo was successful in working with Congress to delay the tax for two years, it is still set to take effect in 2020. In addition to the delay, the mea-

NACo policy
opposes the taxation
of health insurance
and supports all
legislative efforts
to repeal the
Cadillac tax

sure included a provision to make the excise tax deductible for employers.

Further, during the 114th Congress, 311 members of the House and 39 senators co-sponsored ultimately unsuccessful legislation to repeal the excise tax.

Counties employ over 3.6 million employees who serve more than 308 million residents and are generally not

able to compete with private sector wages and salaries. Health care coverage is often the primary benefit used to attract and maintain a quality workforce.

Even though the excise tax does not take effect until 2020, given the limited capacity to raise revenue, county governments must begin preparing to change their plans to avoid hitting the tax now.

NACo policy opposes the taxation of health insurance and supports all legislative efforts to repeal the Cadillac tax on employer-sponsored health coverage.

NACo and partners have engaged in intense advocacy efforts through the Alliance to Fight the 40, a broad-based co-

alition comprising public and private sector employer organizations, unions, health care companies, businesses and other stakeholders that support repealing the Cadillac tax.

Through meetings with congressional staff, NACo has renewed its efforts to repeal the Cadillac tax as Congress considers health care reforms.

NACo encourages its members to contact their representatives and senators about becoming a co-sponsor of either H.R. 173 or S. 58 to protect health benefits for their dedicated county employees. **CN**

For more information, please contact Brian Bowden at bbowden@naco.org or 202.942.4275

Miami-Dade County is taking Wi-Fi, well...everywhere

By Charles Taylor
Senior staff writer

Imagine downloading a huge file to your smartphone via Wi-Fi while riding on a county transit bus, and once you get off the download continues — still over free broadband Wi-Fi and not using megabytes of your cellular data plan — without a hitch.

Soon, Miami-Dade County residents and tourists won't have to imagine it. The county recently inked a public-private partnership that eventually will bring free onboard Wi-Fi to more than 1,000 buses and trains, along with hundreds of interactive fixed kiosks.

"It's like a canopy of technol-

ogy — like a network of services that we're going to be providing," said Rosie Perez, director of transportation services for the county's IT department.

Over the next three months, the county's partner, CIVIQ Smartscapes, will begin the deployment at no cost to the county. The vendor is investing \$20 million in the project and will generate revenue from advertising on the kiosks that will be shared with the county.

Currently, about 200 buses are equipped with mobile Wi-Fi, Perez said, but it's unreliable technology.

"Part of the agreement is that they will replace all of our devices with new technology devices aboard our buses, trains

and mover vehicles as well as the stations," she said.

"They will also help reduce the cost we currently pay on those cellular charges because they're going to assume those costs — meaning that will be a savings for us and an avoidance in the future, because we don't have wireless capability on all of our buses."

Up to 300 stationary "digital waypoint" kiosks will provide free Wi-Fi to an area within a 150-foot line of sight of the hotspots, according to county documents.

"These new devices and services are much more than a new way to access the internet," said Alice Bravo, Miami-Dade's director of public

works. "Greater connectivity in the transit system means increased efficiency, less downtime and overall better experiences for our passengers."

Perhaps more importantly to the county, this new hardware will provide a channel for greater citizen engagement, county officials said. The waypoints include touchscreens that can deliver messages from the county, alerts, bus and train arrival times, and more. They also include speakers, and cameras that can be used for communication or security.

Among the specifications for the kiosks are that their structures will be aluminum, "vandal resistant" and resistant to water and ultraviolet light.

They'll also include "ruggedized" USB charging stations with quick-charge technology.

Perez said an initial prototype kiosk will be installed at the county government center, and she expects the devices' features to evolve.

"Let's say — and this is more futuristic — let's say you want to pay your taxes, eventually we'll be able to provide those type of services ... through this electronic medium."

George Burciaga, CIVIQ Smartscapes' managing director for government development and innovation, said, "We'll have county applications on the screens that will give them information about services, wayfinding, maps and services to help direct citizens and tourists across the county." The company calls it a "smart city" solution that "connects devices, people and services to deliver citizen engagement and improved city services."

If the concept sounds familiar, the company and other technology partners are responsible for LinkNYC in New York City, a communications network that replaces payphones with kiosks with free high-speed Wi-Fi, fast USB charging, domestic calling and direct access to 911 and 311.

CIVIQ recently announced that Chicago will launch a pilot of the technology and hardware.

"Connecting smart devices, services and people will allow cities to react to human occurrences in real time, while becoming more efficient and sustainable," Burciaga has said.

It's part of a broader trend. "We're seeing cities all across the world moving into a phase of becoming smarter," he told *County News*. "It's happening everywhere. The biggest tech firms in the world are all working towards smart-city-based initiatives." **CN**



Rendering courtesy of CIVIQ Smartscapes

African-American legacies explored from coast to coast this month

From **BLACK HISTORY** page 1

occasion.

Fulton County, Ga. Commissioner Marvin Arrington began hosting a black history film festival before taking office in 2015 and has continued and expanded the event since then. It now includes an essay contest and a student film competition. The focus is unsung heroes.

"We all know about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks," he said, "but we do not know the stories of the Mary Jacksons and Katherine Johnsons," referring to the protagonists in the recent film *Hidden Figures* — about the contributions of African-American women to the U.S. space program in the 1960s.

"It's so important, I think, for us to hear those stories and for young people to be exposed to them," he continued. "Because a lot of these young people don't know if they can make it. They don't know if they can have a chance or make a difference, and sometimes just seeing an example or being exposed to someone who did something before you is enough of an impetus to spur action from that person."

This is the third year that New Castle County has celebrated Black History Month with a "Salute to Black Greek Life," focusing on the contributions of the nine historically black sororities and fraternities, known collectively as the "Divine Nine."

For Marcus Henry, general manager of the county's Department of Community Services, the reason is simple: "Because black history is American history. African Americans are an integral part of our history, and it's important to celebrate that."

"I think it's important that we always contextualize what we're trying to do here," he added. "Not to be too political, with what's happening in the world today, we need to celebrate as much as we can our diversity, and there's strength



Sisters of Zeta Phi Beta sorority strike a pose displaying their cat hand sign at a New Castle County, Del. Black History Month Celebration.

Photo courtesy of New Castle County, Del.

in our diversity, so in New Castle County we want to celebrate that."

Clark County, Nev. kicked off the month Feb. 1 in the commission's board room with a panel discussion titled "West Las Vegas: Daring to Dream."

It highlighted a historic area northwest of the Vegas Strip that during de facto segregation in the 1920s developed into an alternate casino and entertainment hub for blacks. The panel also took a forward look at the African-American community today as it relates to the gaming industry, education, employment and law enforcement relationships.

The following week, Commissioner Lawrence Weekly hosted "An Evening of African American Culture," featuring music, art and dance in downtown Las Vegas, the county seat.

"Being the only African American on my board, and

the only person of color, I make it my business to highlight the contributions of not only African Americans, but I make sure that Hispanic Heritage month is recognized," he said. "I make sure that we do something ... for Asian American Heritage Month."

Elsewhere across the nation, counties featured information on their websites and social media promoting educational and entertainment events, many at county libraries and community centers, occurring during the month.

Mecklenburg County, N.C. shared some lesser-known facts, such as the county seal's having been designed by an African-American man.

It also noted that the county's Romare Bearden Park honors the late artist, born in Charlotte in 1911, whose works were exhibited throughout the United States and Europe. "His collages, watercolors, oils,

photomontages and prints are imbued with visual metaphors from his past in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Pittsburgh and Harlem and from a variety of historical, literary and musical sources," according to beardenfoundation.org.

In addition to celebrating black history, some county officials are being honored for making history of their own. Detroit-area radio station WWJ profiled Wayne County Commissioner Alisha Bell, a NACo Board member, as part of its Black History Month series. Bell is serving her eighth term on the County Board, and the station acknowledged her as having been, in 2002, the youngest African-American woman elected to a county commission in the United States.

Her biggest role model? Her mother, the late Edna Bell, a former Wayne County commissioner.

In Manatee County, Fla.,

commissioners issued a proclamation at their Feb. 7 meeting, noting that "Black History Month has become a symbolic time period in which the appreciation and celebration of African Americans begins every year and continues all year..."

Also on the seventh, Santa Barbara County, Calif. hosted a black history program that included a performance of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, often called the black national anthem. A reception followed at which attendees were encouraged to wear African garb.

Carter G. Woodson, a Buckingham County, Va.-born, Harvard-educated scholar and historian is widely acknowledged in the United States as the "father of black history," spearheaded Black History Month's precursor, "Negro History Week" in 1926. It was expanded to a month-long observance in 1976. **CN**

LEADERSHIP EDGE

By Chris Hendrickson and
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Traffic21 Institute
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Automated and connected vehicles are increasingly common on U.S. roads. In Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University's autonomous and connected research vehicle communicates with nearby traffic signals via dedicated short range communications, or DSRC, to learn about current and planned green-signal phases for driving decisions. (figure 1). Connected vehicles can communicate with other DSRC-equipped vehicles, infrastructure and smartphones. A fleet of autonomous UBER vehicles offers hands-off-the-wheel rides for passengers in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. Many other automated and connected research vehicles are out on the road. While human drivers are still behind the steering wheels of all of these vehicles right now, local governments need to plan for the transition to driverless and connected vehicles in the future.

Local governments face numerous challenges and opportunities with the introduction of this new technology. Here, we discuss three phases of this transition: 1) partial automation and connectivity of vehicles; 2) highly automated vehicles; and 3) driverless vehicles. As the technology is introduced, all three of these types of vehicles can be expected to be on the road at the same time. We will highlight some of the challenges and opportunities.

Partial Automation and Connectivity. We are already in this phase of the transition. Many new vehicles offer a variety of "driver assist" features, including automatic braking to avoid forward collisions and automated parking. Fortunately, even the first generation of these technologies has led to

Challenges and Opportunities of Connected and Automated Vehicles for Local Governments



Figure 1: A Carnegie Mellon autonomous vehicle driving itself on a Western Pennsylvania road



Figure 2: Highly automated vehicles could park themselves, eliminating the need for buffer space.

crash reductions and local governments should benefit from these safer roads. In the meantime, we expect system performance to improve and cost to decline, although we hope that users' driving attention doesn't also decline when using these vehicles.

Adaptive cruise controls, which automatically adjusts vehicle speed to maintain a safe distance from vehicles ahead, can also smooth and improve traffic flows.

One challenge for local governments is to start providing connectivity on their infra-

structure and vehicles. For example, as new or rehabilitated traffic signals are installed, DSRC capability might be inexpensively added to help improve roadway performance as connected vehicles increase.

Highly Automated and Connected Vehicles. These vehicles incorporate sufficient capability to drive themselves, although drivers are expected to be ready to take over if the driving situation requires human attention. We are already seeing such vehicles become commercially available, such as the Tesla vehicles.

Local governments may see increased amounts of travel as driving becomes less onerous and working on other tasks is possible. Vehicles should be safer yet, and traffic violations (with the resulting revenues for traffic tickets) along with insurance charges should decline.

Parking lots often can be redesigned for greater efficiency. As shown in Figure 2, current parking spaces allow room for doors to be opened and often have vehicles at different angles. Highly automated vehicles can park closely together, resulting in roughly a 20 percent increase in capacity for a parking lot.

Progressive local governments could introduce adaptive and connected traffic signals to substantially improve traffic flow. Priority could be given to high-occupancy vehicles (such as buses) or specific types of vehicles (such as emergency vehicles or large trucks). Communicating desired routes from vehicles will enable traffic signals to better accommodate flows and reduce delays.

Driverless and Connected Vehicles. While these vehicles seem like a futuristic dream, driverless vehicles are already

appearing, in the form of low-speed, driverless shuttle vehicles and demonstration vehicles on test tracks.

Commuters and shoppers who paid for nearby parking will not do so with driverless vehicles available. They will either use shared-use vehicles (such as UBER, Lyft and other mobility services) or send their private, driverless vehicle away to a free parking space. Local government revenue from parking would decline as will the burden of building and maintaining parking lots. Land use implications depend upon individual decisions and local policies. With less difficult driving, sprawl may become more prevalent and overall vehicle travel could increase. On the other hand, lower parking needs and vehicle ownership may make dense development more attractive.

Private vehicle ownership could also decline, as mobility services and public transit would be less expensive without driver expenses. For long trips, rental vehicles can be used. Driverless, private mobility services and public

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House resolution disapproves BLM Planning 2.0 rule; next stop, the Senate

On Feb. 8, the House of Representatives passed H.J. Res. 44, disapproving of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Planning 2.0 rule, by a vote of 234-186. The legislation begins the process of rolling-back Planning 2.0 under procedures outlined in the Congressional Review Act (CRA).

Legislation disapproving Planning 2.0 is supported by over 60 groups representing a broad cross-section of public lands stakeholders. On Jan. 26, NACo joined with 23 state associations of counties, national, regional and state level organizations representing public lands stakeholders in sending a letter urging disapproval of the

Planning 2.0 Rule.

In December of 2016, the BLM released its final Resource Management Planning rule, or Planning 2.0. Throughout the rulemaking process, counties expressed concern that the rule, as written, could dilute county input into land management decisions and hinder local government consultation and collaboration with the BLM.

As co-regulators and inter-governmental partners in the BLM's land use management mission, counties have a significant interest in providing BLM with the most meaningful information and analysis possible to help craft BLM reg-

ulations and land use and resource management plans.

BLM's Planning 2.0 rule was published on Dec. 13, 2016 and went into effect on Jan. 11. Planning 2.0 establishes the processes under which the BLM will develop its Resource Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs set parameters to define approved uses and actions across over 245 million acres of surface land and over 700 million acres of subsurface minerals currently under BLM management. The land use planning decisions made under Planning 2.0 could have a significant impact on local economies and BLM lands alike.

CRA procedures empower

Congress to advance legislation rolling back federal rules like Planning 2.0, providing another opportunity for BLM, counties and public lands stakeholders to work together to improve planning regulations and ensure robust coordination with local governments. CRA legislation must pass both chambers of Congress and be signed by the president. Following passage in the House, H.J. Res. 44 is now pending further consideration in the Senate.

NACo has been engaged throughout the Planning 2.0 process to ensure local government involvement is at the forefront of BLM resource manage-

ment planning and that local governments were given the time necessary to analyze the implications of the substantive regulatory changes presented in the Planning 2.0 rule.

After securing an extension of the initial comment period, NACo submitted comments to BLM on the proposed rule. NACo has also hosted numerous webinars and forums with BLM staff and county officials to provide other opportunities for the county voice to be heard and will continue to work with counties and the BLM to ensure local government engagement is at the forefront of BLM resource management planning. **CN**

IN MEMORY OF CHARLOTTE WILLIAMS NACo PRESIDENT 1978-1979



NACo's first African-American Board president, Charlotte Williams, died Jan. 14 in her home county, Genesee, Mich. She was 88. Williams led NACo in 1978-1979 during the term of President Jimmy Carter.

"For her time, she was a real pioneer in promoting women in politics and African Americans in NACo," said Tim McGuire, retired Michigan Association of Counties executive.

Williams ran for NACo office when McGuire's father, Barry, was MAC executive director and Tim was a MAC staffer.

"She was a lovely, lovely person," McGuire continued. "She didn't have a chip on her shoulder. She was a really, really sharp lady."

Williams was also the first elected black female commissioner on the Genesee County Board in 1965, where she served for 15 years.

GASB issues guidance on fiduciary activities

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) has issued guidance for state and local governments regarding what constitutes fiduciary activities for financial reporting purposes, how fiduciary activities should be reported, and when liabilities to beneficiaries should be recognized.

Governments currently are required to report fiduciary activities in fiduciary fund financial statements. Existing standards are not explicit, however, about what constitutes a fiduciary activity for financial reporting purposes. Consequently, there is diversity in practice with regard to identifying and reporting fiduciary activities.

GASB Statement No. 84, Fiduciary Activities, establishes criteria for identifying fiduciary activities of all state and local governments. The criteria generally focus on:

- Whether a government is controlling the assets of the fiduciary activity, and
- the beneficiaries with whom a fiduciary relationship exists.

• Separate criteria are included to identify fiduciary component units and post-employment benefit arrangements that are fiduciary activities.

An activity meeting the criteria in Statement 84 should be reported in a fiduciary fund in the basic financial statements. Governments with activities meeting the criteria should present a statement of fiduciary net position and a statement of changes in fiduciary net position.

Statement 84 describes four types of fiduciary funds that should be reported, if applicable. The statement clarifies the definitions of the three existing fiduciary funds associated with trusts that meet specific criteria:

- pension (and other employee benefit) trust funds
- investment trust funds
- private-purpose trust funds, and
- custodial funds.

Activities now reported in agency funds will be classified as custodial funds when Statement 84 is implemented. The statement is available on the GASB website, www.gasb.org. **CN**

New York shared-services proposal gets cool reception from counties

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) plans to cut down on duplicative services provided by New York's nearly 1,600 local governments, but the way he wants to do it will chafe along the way.

His 2018 budget proposal directs county chief elected officials to draw up agreements for their governments to consolidate services with cities, towns and villages and put them up to a public vote in November. But many county officials and

the state association of counties say it's a violation of home rule and the wrong catalyst for that kind of cooperation.

"Obviously there are too many levels of government in terms of towns, villages, cities, counties," said Jay Gsell, Genesee County's manager. "But imposing that, versus letting people come to those conclusions themselves, isn't the way to do it."

Continuing a goal of his since his days as attorney general, Cuomo aims to cut down on high property taxes resulting from counties and other

municipalities providing the same or similar services. This is the first time he has mandated any service consolidation. In 2015, the state required governments seeking property tax rebates to submit local government efficiency plans, which over three years added up to nearly \$882 million in savings.

"You definitely see the effect high property taxes have," said Orleans County Executive Chuck Nesbit. "You see the erosion of tax bases when people flee over a border to different towns or counties; you see housing stock deteriorating

when people abandon properties because of an outsized tax burden."

Nesbit heard from the governor and his aides on the proposal during the New York State Association of Counties' (NYSAC) legislative conference in January, shortly after the plan was announced.

"He describes it as a way to empower counties more, but I don't get that from how the language is written," Nesbit said.

Cuomo instructs chief executives to form plans that are due to county legislatures by Aug. 1, which kicks off a 45-day clock to finalize wording. If voters don't approve the measures in November, new plans are due by the following January.

"It's intrusive into home rule powers," said Steve Acquario, NYSAC's executive director. "We're all for sharing services and consolidation, we don't need the state to tell us to do that."

NYSAC members passed a resolution opposing the proposal as drafted. The state Legislature is still working on the budget, so exact wording and parameters are still up in the air.

"By challenging local governments to create a plan to streamline government bureaucracy for voter approval, this innovative and powerful initiative will empower communities and lead to real, recurring property tax savings," Cuomo said.

Cuomo has often cited a total of 10,500 local governments, which includes nearly 9,000 state-created special districts, many more than the 1,598 counties, cities, towns and villages.

Nesbit said he saw potential for countywide code enforcement, tax collection and real estate assessment, but said

there was limited room for cuts.

"I'd say the low-hanging fruit is pretty well picked over," he said. "We're talking about fundamental change of how we do business."

That kind of fundamental change came in Ulster County after voters approved a county charter in 2006.

"We've been restructured, relative to the rest of the state's counties, for the last eight years," said County Executive Mike Hein. "We're dealing with a very different scenario than most."

The county's property taxes are less than they were in 2010, an aberration in New York.

"We just look at different ways of delivering services," he said. "Just because the state funds health and public health separately doesn't mean you have to run two different county departments."

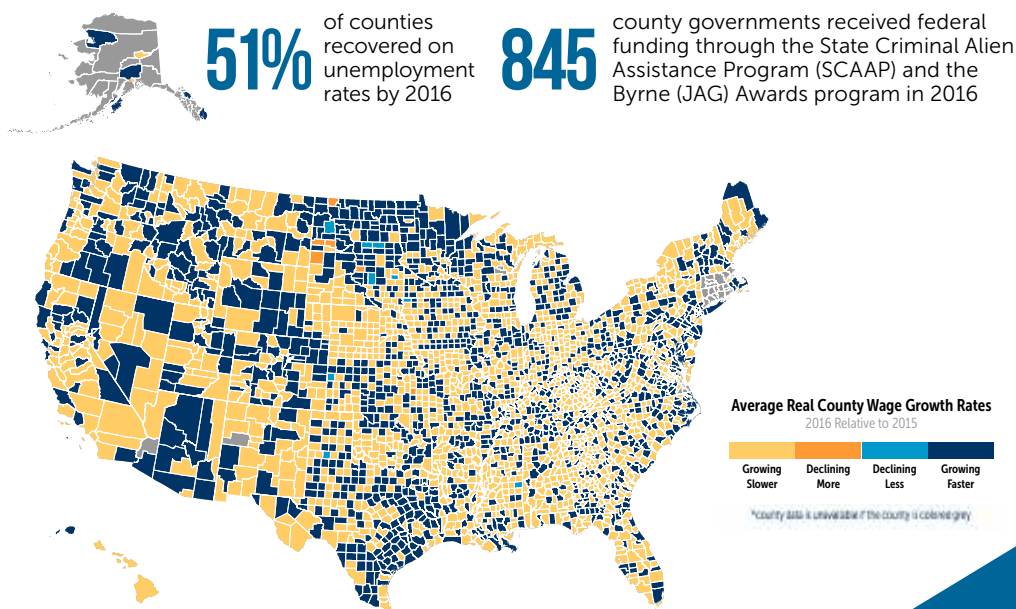
He pointed to the consolidation in progress between the county's bus system and that of the town of Kingston as an example of inefficient duplicative services.

"Kingston has a smaller bus system, and when their expenses escalate, they can't bring in the most modern technology, they can't use the best routing software and they don't have efficient ridership," he said.

"People aren't using the system and it can go into a death spiral. We can bring the county's system into the town and cut costs and increase service."

Acquario points out that school districts, which account for 60-65 percent of the total property tax bill, aren't included in the plan, and nearly all county services fulfill state mandates. He also added that nearly all county expenditures are needed to fulfill state ser

See NEW YORK page 9



Source: NACo Analysis of Woods and Poole Economics, Inc., 2016 data

www.NACo.org/CountyExplorer

apdu
ASSOCIATION of PUBLIC DATA USERS

2016 DATA VIZ AWARD WINNER

FCC halts efforts to cap inmate phone call rates in county jails

By Jacob Terrell
associate legislative director

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has halted its efforts to cap the rates that inmates pay when placing phone calls from jails and prisons.

In 2015, the FCC had implemented rules that capped the rates paid by inmates to between 14 cents and 22 cents per minute. This rule was later challenged in the U.S. Court of Appeals by prison phone companies who claimed the FCC did not have the authority to cap prices for inmate calls.

However, as the FCC's lawyers were in the process of defending the commission's position, two of the three sitting Democrat commissioners on the five-person commission vacated their seats leaving a new Republican majority that did not support the rate caps.

Since the new majority has been in place, a letter was sent to the U.S. Court of Appeals stating that the FCC would no longer defend its previous

position defending the implementation of rate caps for phone calls placed by inmates.

The case, though, is not over. Although the FCC is sitting on the sidelines, the court case has continued in a hearing earlier this month at the D.C. Court of Appeals.

A portion of the profits made by companies that provide phone services in jails are returned to the jail as "commissions." As a result, this revenue can directly impact county jail operating budgets.

According to the National Sheriffs' Association, whose members operate approximately 80 percent of the nation's jails, jails incur significant costs in providing phone services to inmates due to factors ranging from taking security measures to ensure that phone calls aren't used to engage in criminal activities to recording and storing phone calls to be provided to the courts. **CN**

For additional information, contact Terrell at 202.942.4236 or jterrell@naco.org.

From NEW YORK page 8

vice mandates.

Nesbit said that these elements, plus counties' outsized contribution to Medicaid, make it troublesome to compare New York to other states. Hein goes one step further.

"If you're a business, and nobody's trying to be more like you, you're doing something wrong," he said. "You don't see other states trying to make their governments like be like New York."

Hein acknowledged that the progress Ulster County has made in restructuring its government would be too traumatic for every county — it was on its way to bankruptcy when the government changed, creating the crisis that drove dramatic change.

The New York Conference

of Mayors and Municipal Officials rejected Cuomo's plan and instead called on the state to increase municipal aid for the first time in nine years.

In Washington County, the village of Argyle has done about as much service sharing as it can.

"We've turned over a lot of our functions to the town or county," said Mayor Wes Clark. "It's made for a pretty efficient village operation, our functionality. A lot of what we do is maintain the water department, but if we didn't exist there would have to be a water board."

He noted that the village had contemplated dissolution in 1982 and 1993, but each time the conclusion that there wouldn't be much savings.

"It would be a wash," Clark said. **CN**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ACA: Step in right direction for healthier counties

Dear Editor:

In the face of a new administration, there may be many things to take issue with regardless of what side of the aisle you reside on. For the National Organization of Black County Officials (NOBCO), a major concern is what will happen to health care and access to health care. Healthy citizens in healthy counties are a conversation worthy of discussion.

In partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NOBCO is working to address HIV/AIDS and has made strides in increasing awareness through outreach and education largely as a result of increased access to health care for more citizens. This infectious disease without a cure does not discriminate but comes with high levels of stigma and rejection.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) opened the door for many without health care to take new interest in personal health and wellbeing. ACA is a step in the right direction towards healthier counties. Infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS take a greater toll on our communities than we may choose to acknowledge. They impact other quality-of-life areas such as housing, employment and overall county fiscal stability.

Our hope is to see health care and access to care be improved and expanded beyond its current capacity. NACo's Health Steering Committee and Healthy Counties Advisory Board continue to address — from a policy perspective — the desires of counties across America towards healthier counties. NOBCO is committed in our pursuit of improving health and health disparities that impact some of the most vulnerable populations that our members represent: African Americans, LGBTs and other minorities.

Commissioner Joan Garner of Fulton County, Ga., chair of NACo's Health Steering Committee and NOBCO board member, is a strong advocate and proponent of the work being done to bring awareness and increased outreach about HIV to the broader community. Commissioner Garner shared, "Our rate of HIV in Fulton County is complex,

I believe that effective outreach starts with meeting people where they are.
— Joan Garner

and is also driven by a range of socioeconomic factors and social determinants of health. For example, the population of people in Fulton County who are homeless or have housing instability overlaps our population with HIV. In the homeless community, in particular, we have seen an overlap of persons with co-occurring HIV and tuberculosis, which has created a ripple effect of public health resource needs.

"Unfortunately, the rates of HIV are also driven by other kinds of inequities in our culture that persist, even today. In the black community, many gay men are still battling stigma. Unfortunately, stigma can perpetuate riskier behaviors that are linked to higher rates of HIV infection. One way to

prevent new infections is to address that stigma head on. We should work harder to address the social injustices and discriminatory practices that drive those who may be black, gay and HIV positive out of our health care systems. I believe that effective outreach starts with meeting people where they are. Let's get involved in our communities, make our efforts visible, and take advantage of every opportunity to make a difference."

Feb. 7 was National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. NOBCO participated in various events from radio interviews to Twitter chats to Thunderclaps to bring awareness to the issue. We participate in all the HIV/AIDS Awareness Days throughout the year; this is a disease that cuts into all communities.

Our commitment is to share progress and the need to continue working to end the spread of this infectious disease without a cure today. Although the rates of infection are still uncomfortably high, progress to stem the tide is being made.

Many wonder about the changes the administration will establish for health and health care as it pertains to HIV over the next four years. We all are waiting with baited breath.

Sincerely,

Dr. Helen Holton
executive director
National Organization of
Black County Officials
a NACo-affiliated association

**75% OF U.S.
COUNTIES
NOW NACo
MEMBERS**

*Welcome New
Member Counties*

Sedgwick County, Kan.
Bay County, Mich.
Holmes County, Ohio
Licking County, Ohio
Washington County, Tenn.

Companies need to be held accountable, Erie County, N.Y. exec says

From PHARMA SUITS page 1

since joined in that suit. Suffolk County sued in August.

"We need to hold the drug companies accountable for their role in this wholly pre-

ventable crisis," said County Executive Mark Poloncarz. "It doesn't matter if it's drug dealers or pharmaceutical companies, because they're both part of this. People are dying without even switching to heroin, which

means these medications can be fatal. They misled doctors to think these drugs were not as addictive as they are — you can get hooked in two weeks."

Erie County is suing to recoup various costs incurred while responding to the addiction epidemic, including hospital admissions for overdoses, the cost of supplying the overdose-reversing drug naloxone and training 500 first responders and 1,000 civilians how to use it.

"The costs add up," Poloncarz said. "We haven't specified (the amount of) damages yet."

Poloncarz is a member of the joint NACo-National League of Cities Opioid Task Force, which recently released its report "A Prescription for Action," available at opioidaction.org. The city of Huntington, W.Va. has filed a similar suit — Mayor Stephen Williams is also on the task force.

Erie and Broome counties are suing Purdue, Cephalon, Janssen and Endo pharmaceutical. Erie County saw 324 people die of opioid overdoses in 2016, and Poloncarz said 53 have died six weeks in to 2017.

"Despite our totals, you see even higher per capita death rates in smaller counties," he said.

McDowell County, W.Va. is one such county, and it filed suit even earlier, in December 2016.

"I saw a story on the news about drug companies targeting depressed areas," said Sheriff Martin West. "I called the (state) attorney general and told them I thought it was criminal, but they said we had to go with civil (action)."

West presented the case to the Board of Commissioners, which sued less than a week before the state of West Virginia reached a \$36 million settlement in a 2012 suit against two prescription drug distributors — Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen — for sending excessively large shipments of painkillers into the Mountain State.

The *Charleston Gazette-Mail*

found that drug wholesalers shipped 780 million hydrocodone and oxycodone pills to West Virginia over six years. Over the same period, 1,728 people statewide died of opioid overdoses. A single pharmacy in the Mingo County town of Kermit, with a population of 392, was supplied with 9 million pills over two years.

"About nine out of every 10 calls we handle are overdoses," West said. "If you listen to the scanners, somebody's overdosing everywhere now, up and down these hollows. It's a pretty bad situation."

The demands of caring for an addicted population are adding up for counties. For McDowell County, it means less time for investigative work when sheriff's deputies are stuck answering service calls for overdoses.

Commissioner Gordon Lambert said he had wanted to sue years ago, but other commissioners were hesitant.

"We're looking to see coal mining come back, but we have to make sure our workers are going to be ready, and they aren't if they're addicted to this stuff," he said.

Nearby Kanawha and Cabell counties, in southern West Virginia, are suing, too, and Lewis County is considering it, according to Vivian Parsons, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of West Virginia.

Cabell County's administrator, Beth Thompson, said the county's jail bill is now \$300,000 a month, up from \$200,000 a month a year ago.

"Our first responders are tied up. Every overdose we respond to means someone else might not get the help they need in an emergency."

Mercer County, W.Va. is being courted by several attorneys to represent them in a similar lawsuit. Commissioner Greg Puckett, also a task force member, said the county would choose a law firm by the middle of March.

"They understood the issues we see here," he said. "We're looking for a firm that can com-

prehensively cover our needs.

"We look at the impact in a very comprehensive way. It's not just about the overdoses, it's not just about the addiction rate we see in the jail system, the number of cases. It is about that, but it's also about the impact in our substance abuse treatment centers, the impact on our children who are indirectly affected because their parents aren't present and their grandparents have to raise them."

Foster care, other social services and the prevention programs Mercer County has in place are also affected, he said.

"If you add up all of those impacts, we're talking about millions and millions of dollars because we've been flooded with these pills for years," Puckett said.

The consequences affect Mercer County's economic growth potential, too.

"We can't recruit businesses because we don't have a drug-free workforce for them to hire," he said.

Erie and Broome counties, along with others in New York, also foot the bill for Medicaid, and they have four years' worth of prescription records detailing the quantity of legally acquired painkillers their residents were given.

"They marketed it as a wonder drug, but these drug companies knew it was addictive fairly early on outside of a hospital setting," Poloncarz said.

In 2014, Orange and Santa Clara counties in California sued Janssen, Purdue, Cephalon, Endo and Actavis, as did Chicago, though the California counties' lawsuit was halted by a judge in 2015.

Chicago's suit was dismissed in the same year, though drug company Pfizer, which sells fewer painkillers than others in the industry, agreed to a written code of conduct regarding opioid marketing. **CN**

The NACo-NLC Opioid Task Force's report "A Prescription for Action," is available at www.opioidaction.org.

CAPITAL LOOP

115th Congress considers repeal of 'Cadillac tax'

The tax on employer-sponsored health coverage, which takes effect in 2020, would impose a 40 percent tax on coverage that exceeds thresholds established by the Affordable Care Act.

House passes resolution disapproving BLM's Planning 2.0 rule

NACo expressed concern that the federal Bureau of Land Management's Planning 2.0 rule, as written, could dilute county input into land management decisions and hinder local government consultation and collaboration with the agency.

House moves to eliminate federal agency that protects election security

The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act would eliminate an independent, bipartisan agency tasked with helping states secure voting systems and making sure voting machines cannot be hacked.

Bill introduced to stop EPA Risk Management Program rule update

The revisions to the rule contain several significant changes, including modifying third-party compliance audits, coordination with emergency response agencies and information-sharing with the public.

OMB releases guidance on Trump order to reduce federal regulations

The White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs issued clarifying guidance for federal agencies on President Trump's executive order requiring that two regulations be removed for each new regulation issued.

NACo advocates for county transportation priorities at infrastructure hearing

NACo Central Region Representative Cindy Bobbitt, chair of the Grant County, Okla. Board of Commissioners, testified before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. She emphasized counties' vast transportation infrastructure responsibilities, noting that county infrastructure plays a critical role in moving freight and other goods to market.

Trump administration pushes for Dakota Access Pipeline

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers granted the final easement permit needed to complete construction on the 1,172-mile Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), allowing construction to begin immediately. The decision came just two weeks after President Trump released a January presidential order that instructed all federal agencies involved with the DAPL project to accelerate the review process. A court challenge is pending.

BRIGHT IDEAS

PALM BEACH COUNTY, Fla.

IT Interns Offset Baby Boomer Exodus

PROBLEM: An exodus of baby boomers from the workforce is heightening the need for new IT talent in local government.

SOLUTION: Keep the college-to-work pipeline open by offering an IT Student Intern Program.

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

One challenge for counties couldn't be clearer than was outlined in a recent whitepaper from the IT consultancy Catalyst: Only 6 percent of millennial college graduates say they want to work in government.

"This causes serious competition for talent in high-demand technology roles in the public sector," the report stated.

Palm Beach County, Fla. is well positioned to compete for tech talent thanks to its IT Student Intern Program. Since 2014, 46 college students pursuing IT-related degrees have worked for the county's Information Systems Services (ISS) Department. Of those, 13 have been hired into full-time jobs, according to Steve Bordelon, ISS director.

"We are getting senior in the ranks, and this has been a way to bring in an infusion of younger employees who have different approaches and some more modern technologies, frankly," said Bordelon, a 20-year veteran in his job. "The average tenure was over 17 years several years ago, so we have many, many employees who have 20 or more years."

The interns are recruited from several local colleges. Depending on their interests and skills, the students are typically assigned to work in applications development, quality assurance, desktop support, networks and producing training videos. They also participate in work and training activities, meetings, joint application development sessions and social activities such holiday parties.

Bordelon's department is a "full-service shop" that supports about 30 lines of business — from an airport and libraries, to the bus system and parks. In addition to shoring up the county's IT workforce, the program has been a money saver, according to John Hipps, ISS manager.

"Because we can hire the students into our projects which results in lower project costs,

we don't have to hire so many contractors," he said. "We get immediate assistance from the students in terms of supporting our projects at a minimum cost."

In one example of the program's positive economic impact, ISS interns were used instead of "expensive contractors" to implement a new Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system, saving the county an estimated \$200,000, Bordelon said.

"We actually processed a downward contract amendment. We had in our contract with the vendor ... a line item for installing all of our equipment — and there was preliminary programming and staging of each handset — and we used student interns," he added.

Student IT interns earn \$10-\$12 per hour, with no county benefits, and are able to work flexible schedules around their classes when feasible. Their work is limited to 1,000 hours within a 12-month period. In some cases, they can also earn college credit, Bordelon said.

The county's total 2015 budget for 13 ISS interns' salaries was \$89,700. "That's less than we would pay for fully-loaded benefits for one permanent employee," he said.

Among the program's non-monetary benefits, the student interns energize the workforce, Hipps said. "They're opening and questioning — 'Well, hey, can we do it this way, can we do it that way? And some of them have new skill sets that bring positive energy to our organization."

And if they're hired into full-time jobs, the learning exchange continues. "It helps us older people too," Hipps said, "It's a two-way street. We help them and they help us."

"They bring in some new ideas on technologies and how to do

things, and it kind of stirs the pot a little bit, and that's good for us because we need to be exposed to these different ideas."

Bordelon's advice for creating a similar program: "Tap into the expertise and enthusiasm that often is right at your doorstep at universities. Build relationships with college IT faculty, Hipps added. He credits colleges' proactively promoting the program for the steady stream of interns. **EN**

Bright Ideas features noteworthy and award-winning county programs.



Caitlin Johnson, a student at Palm Beach Atlantic University, is one of Palm Beach County's IT interns. Photo courtesy of Palm Beach County, Fla.

WORD SEARCH

CLARK COUNTY, Ohio

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'BEHIND THE SEAL'

Created By: Charles Taylor

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BUCK CREEK STATE PARK 4,016-acre recreational area

CHAMPAIGN County to the north

C.J. BROWN RESERVOIR Created by impoundment of Buck Creek

CRYSTAL LAKES Census-designated place

GEORGE ROGERS CLARK County's namesake, Revolutionary War hero

MAD RIVER Flows through county

MASONIC TEMPLE On National Register of Historic Places

MIAMI County to the west

NAVISTAR Largest local employer

NEW CARLISLE City, pop. 5,800

NEWS-SUN Local daily newspaper

NORTHBRIDGE Census-designated place

SPRINGFIELD County seat

WESTCOTT HOUSE Historic home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright

WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY Private, four-year liberal arts college

New NACo ★
Member

GET TO KNOW...

Licking County, Ohio



Welcome, Licking County, Ohio

Licking County is **named for the salt licks that originally covered the banks of the rivers in the area.** Once covered by glaciers, Licking County is now a hotbed for high school sports, with a team from the county winning a state title in baseball every season since 2002. **The county is also home to one of the more unusual landmarks in the country, the Longaberger Basket building,** a seven-story tall replica of the company's signature picnic basket.



Photo by Adam Schweigert

NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH (NCGM)

NCGM is an excellent opportunity to show residents that counties matter. This year's theme is **Brilliant Ideas at Work.** NACo encourages counties, parishes and boroughs to use this opportunity to highlight programs and services that advance public health

and well-being, protect public safety and foster economic strength and resiliency. For a sample proclamation, customizable poster, complete NCGM toolkit and other resources, visit www.naco.org/NCGM.



PROFILES IN SERVICE

RODNEY ELLIS

Board member
Commissioner
Harris County, Texas

Number of years active in NACo: 1; elected county commissioner in 2016

Years in Public Service:

Served in the Texas Senate for 25 years; served three terms on the Houston City Council, former chief of staff to the late U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland of Houston.

Occupation: Attorney

Education: Bachelor's degree from Texas Southern University; master's degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs; and a law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. Also studied at Xavier University in New Orleans and the London School of Economics.

The hardest thing I've ever

done: Know when to protect your children and when to let them go ahead and make a mistake. You always want the best for them.

Three people (living or dead)

I'd invite to dinner: I would love to sit down just one more time with my mentor and dear friend, the late Congressman Mickey Leland, and I know he would be honored to meet President Obama and his wife Michelle.

A dream I have is to: Help establish a criminal justice system that treats all people fairly, regardless of their color or



income. I'm working on reforms in Harris County that will move us closer to that goal.

You'd be surprised to learn

that I: Can't sit still. I'd rather be getting something done, learning something new or talking to my constituents.

The most adventurous thing

I've ever done is: Ride more than 1,000 miles in the Bike Across Texas event. It was a long, hard, beautiful ride!

I'm most proud of: My four children. They are strong, kind, interesting people.

Every morning I read:

My hometown newspaper, the *Houston Chronicle*, my emails, twitter, Facebook and *The New York Times*.

My favorite meal is: I try to stick to a plant-based diet, but I love Texas barbecue.

My pet peeve is: Dogs that chase me on my bike.

My motto is: Work hard to advance the cause of equality and justice for all — and have some fun doing it.

The last book I read was:

Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time by Jeff Speck.

My favorite movie is: Did I mention it's hard for me to sit still?! However, I really liked two recent movies, *Hidden Figures* and *LBJ*.

My favorite music is: Anything by John Legend.

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

My county is a NACo member because: With nearly 5 million residents, it is vital for Harris County to work with NACo and its members on pursuing transformational county solutions and educating the public about the importance of county government. I appreciate the hard work NACo does to bring county officials together to advocate on national policy and other important matters.

My favorite way to relax is to:

Bike ride. It helps me unwind and allows me to see the world from a different vantage point. I've learned so much by riding around this sprawling urban county. It's always an adventure!



Driverless vehicles in county fleets could plow snow, sweep streets

From **CONNECTED** page 6

transportation agencies will compete for some existing and new trips, while greater access and efficiency of shared-use mobility could bring more people from their homes to public transit hubs. Requirements for parking could similarly decline.

Driverless vehicles would also enable many individuals with mobility limitations such

as the blind or the elderly to travel as desired.

Finally, many local government services could take advantage of driverless vehicle technology, such as driverless street-sweeping, snow plowing, parking enforcement, for example.

Local governments also need to plan for the impacts of driverless vehicles displacing many jobs in the trucking, taxi and transit industries. Al-

though many trucking companies have challenges now in recruiting drivers, the overall loss of driving jobs will be real and painful to many.

Conclusions. Initial automated and connected vehicles are already appearing in service, so local governments should be preparing for their effects. We have outlined only some of the benefits and costs here, and the scale of the impacts often depends on local government

policies and actions.

Benefits could include declines in crashes, smoother traffic flows, less demand for expensive parking and lower costs for transit and mobility services. For local governments, a number of traditional revenue sources could decline, such as parking and traffic violation revenues. Local government services can also be designed to take advantage of the new technologies. While

the overall local economy is likely to be boosted by driverless cars, there will be specific economic impacts such as driver employment that can be planned for and addressed. **CN**

Chris Hendrickson is director of the Traffic21 Institute and Constantin Samaras is assistant professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University.

MONEYMATTERS

Wondering When to Come to Market? Check Out EMMA's Free Calendar Tools

By **Lynnette Kelly**
Municipal Securities
Rulemaking Board

Timing is everything, an adage that can apply to issuing municipal bonds to finance public projects. When state and local governments are planning to tap the capital markets, there are many factors to consider, such as what other transactions are expected to compete for investor attention around the same time and major economic data reports that can influence financial markets.

The Electronic Municipal Market Access (EMMA) website, emma.msrb.org, offers two free tools to assist issuers and their advisors as they consider the timing for issuing municipal bonds.

EMMA's New Issue Calendar enables issuers to see the breadth and depth of new bond issues scheduled to come to market in the weeks ahead. This dynamic tool allows users to filter by state, tax status and whether the issue is bank qualified. The calendar also provides final pricing information for bond issues, giving issuers the ability to identify, monitor and compare yields and prices of similar issues that have recently sold.

For a look at the upcoming economic reports and events that may have an impact on the municipal bond market, consult EMMA's Economic Calendar. Both the economic calendar and the new issue calendar are available to issuers and other market participants in the Tools and Resources area of the EMMA website.

The EMMA website is operated by the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB). The MSRB's mission includes promoting a fair and efficient municipal securities market. EMMA serves as the official repository for information on virtually all municipal bonds, providing free access to official disclosures, trade data and other information about the municipal securities market.

EMMA can be a valuable source of information for local governments as they make the decision to borrow, assemble their deal team and plan their transaction. Read more about the new issue calendar, economic calendar and many other tools and resources for municipal securities issuers available on EMMA. Access additional resources for issuers in the MSRB's Education Center at msrb.org. **CN**

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

● **Cheryl Burnett** is NACo's new County Solutions and Innovations Department director. Burnett previously served as the communications director and deputy staff director for Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe. Within the policy arena, she focused on child sex trafficking, pay for success models and performance-based management. Cheryl also worked for the City of Beverly Hills as public relations manager.

She will oversee the following practice areas: health, human services and justice; community and economic resiliency; technology innovation, and corporate relations and sponsorships.

● **Jeff Morningstar**, has joined NACo as its new information technology (IT) director. He will oversee all IT functions including network administration,



Burnett



Morningstar



Sedigh



Bowden

database management, Help Desk, and system application support. He will serve as the liaison to NACo's Information Technology and Geospatial Information System (GIS) committees. Before joining NACo, Jeff was the director of IT at the American Federation of Teachers. Prior to that, he was the director of IT at Legal Services Corporation.

● **Hadi Sedigh**, associate legislative director for justice, participated in the Vera Institute of Justice's roundtable titled "Reimagining Prison" on Feb. 8 in Washington, D.C.

● **Brian Bowden**, associate legislative director for health, served as a panelist discussing the future of Medicaid under

the Trump Administration at the 28th Rural Health Policy Institute sponsored by the National Rural Health Association Feb. 7.

● **Jack Peterson**, associate legislative director for human services, presented a legislative update at the County Commissioners Association of West Virginia conference in Kanawha County, Feb. 12-13.

● **Matt Chase**, executive director, was a featured speaker at the Association of Minnesota Counties Legislative Conference Feb. 15-17 in Ramsey County.

● **Linda Langston**, strategic relations director, represented NACo at the National Academy of Science Roundtable meeting Feb. 15-17.

IN THE NEWS

● Testimony by Grant County, Okla. Commissioner **Cindy Bobbitt** before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Feb. 8, was highlighted in the story "Senate Panel Told P3s Won't Work for Rural Areas, Tax-Exempts Are Key," published by *The Bond Buyer* Feb. 8.

● NACo's associate legislative director for justice and public safety, **Hadi Sedigh**, was interviewed by the *Albuquerque Journal* for the story "Jails face detainer request muddle," published online Feb. 10.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



ARIZONA

By a 3-2 vote, the **PIMA COUNTY** Board of Supervisors **decided to appeal** a Superior Court judge's ruling invalidating a lease between the county and space technology firm, World View.

The Phoenix-based Goldwater Institute sued the county last year, claiming the deal violated state law.

Goldwater contends the county violated the state's gift clause, failed to follow state procurement rules and failed to follow state law on leasing public property. The county denies these claims. Next stop for the case: the Arizona Court of Appeals.

CALIFORNIA

• A Superior Court judge put the kibosh on the state's plan to place a **violent sexual predator** in **PLACER COUNTY** after officials and residents argued that doing so would endanger children in the area.

The offender, Dariel Shazier, has two prior convictions of molesting teenage boys, in which he used alcohol and then forcibly assaulted them, *The Sacramento Bee* reported.

Placer County Detective Scott Alford told the court that children live throughout the area where Shazier was to have been housed, and that many others visit the area because of youth activities.

"Mr. Shazier will hear the boys play when he's sitting in the room," Alford said. "It will be too much temptation for him."

• A **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** ordinance aims to enable broader **access to affordable housing**. It bars landlords from rejecting prospective tenants solely because they receive a housing subsidy.

The new ordinance also prohibits landlords from including statements such as "No Section 8 Accepted" in ads for rental housing. The ordinance will take effect in January 2018.

Thirteen states and dozens of local jurisdictions nationwide have already passed similar ordinances, county officials said. Such ordinances have been shown by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to increase the use of housing assistance funds by up to 11 percent.

DELAWARE

NEW CASTLE COUNTY's new executive, Matthew Meyer, has signed three ordinances designed to **boost economic growth and strengthen neighborhoods**.

The first measure provides principles for site design and project amenities during the review of new land development plans.

Another ordinance empowers neighborhoods to establish Neighborhood Preservation Overlay Districts. This will allow communities, by a two-thirds vote, to set standards including building height restrictions, setbacks, open space and streetscape elements.

Under the third measure, the county may designate Economic Empowerment Districts to encourage business development.

MARYLAND

• **FREDERICK COUNTY** would set aside more money from its recordation **tax to**

preserve agricultural land and acquire parks, under legislation requested by the county executive. It would not increase or impose new taxes.

The bill would reduce to 58 percent the amount of money from the county's recordation tax that goes into the general fund. Currently, the figure is about 68 percent, *The Frederick News-Post* reported.

A public hearing on the issue is scheduled for later this month.

• Despite sponsors' removing the words "sanctuary county" from a bill, **HOWARD COUNTY** Executive Allan Kittleman says he'll **veto the measure designed to protect immigrants**. It passed the County Council three votes to two.

"If the sponsors had reached out to key stakeholders prior to filing the legislation," said Kittleman, "they would have learned that it was unnecessary," *The Baltimore Sun* reported.

The bill would have prohibited police officers and most government employees from asking residents about their immigration status.

MINNESOTA

The **ST. LOUIS COUNTY** Board is considering a resolution calling on the Trump administration to **overturn a ban on copper mining** near a federal wilderness area in the county.

The resolution is part of a regional effort to support copper mining in the Superior National Forest after the Obama administration temporarily banned mining on 235,000 acres near the wilderness area, according to *The Duluth News Tribune*.

County Board Chairman Frank Jewell sees the resolution as something of a toothless tiger that will "have no impact" at the federal level. "We just should be voting on things that the county has responsibility for, and this clearly isn't one of them," he said.

NEW YORK

• Tobacco and pharmacies seem diametrically opposed, and now **ROCKLAND COUNTY**'s Legislature has codified it, **banning tobacco sales** there.

The CVS chain, which has pharmacies in the county, stopped selling tobacco in 2014. The New York State Department of Health will be responsible for enforcing the law.

PIX News reported that Rockland County is the first county in New York to ban tobacco sales in pharmacies; municipalities in Massachusetts, California and Minnesota already bans in place.

• A state appeals court sided with **WYOMING COUNTY** and dismissed a lawsuit by a woman who was bitten by a dog while working at its **animal shelter**.

The woman was working at the shelter as a dog walker about five years ago when she was bitten. She later filed a personal injury lawsuit claiming the county "may have been informed" that the dog had previously knocked over a child. The court ruled that wasn't enough to consider the dog vicious. The suit also claimed the dog may have bitten a child four months before biting the employee. The court ruled that Wyoming couldn't have known about the incident, *The Daily News* reported.

OKLAHOMA

• **ROGERS COUNTY** has been chosen to be the first recipient of a **new long-range transportation plan**. The Grand Gateway Regional Transportation Planning Organization is a state Department of Transportation program with the Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils to develop regional transportation planning process and regional public participation process in the non-metropolitan areas of the state. All of the information gathered during the planning process allows entities to correlate projects such as project progression, economic development, wear and tear on roads and more.

That will include freight routes on air, ground, waterways and rail system, the *Claremore Progress* reported.

• A **consolidation study** to look into merging **TULSA COUNTY** and city parks got off the ground with the allocation

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of \$18,000 from the County Commission. Private sources will provide much of the rest of the \$190,000 price tag for the study, the *Tulsa World* reported.

Sales tax revenue pays for most of the city's 143-park system. The county's parks are mostly financed through user fees and the county's general fund.

Tulsa County is the only county in the state with its own parks department.

PENNSYLVANIA

The \$2.2 million worth of improvements to ALLEGHENY

COUNTY's Deer Lakes Park were all paid for by a **fracking deal for the gas and oil under the park's** 1,180 acres. Texas-based Range Resources paid the county \$4.7 million when the deal was signed and agreed to donate \$3 million to a Parks Improvement Fund in installments, plus 18 percent in royalties once natural gas production started, according to *The Valley News Dispatch*. The lease will last as long as the well produces.

The improvements to Deer Lakes Park have included adding 24 benches around two of its three lakes, cleaning up the lake waters to make them more fishable, adding bathrooms, upgrading pavilions and making trail improvements.

UTAH

The Lead Safe Homes program, funded by a federal grant, will remediate lead hazards in homes built before 1978 in which children under

six years old live or visit frequently.

The program will fund blood testing for children, visual inspection and dust analysis, temporary relocation and paint removal and specialized cleaning. **CN**

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 cban@naco.org.



CHESTER COUNTY commissioners practiced CPR at their Feb. 14 meeting, where they also showed their support for American Heart Month with a proclamation.

Prior to the practical CPR training, the commissioners were taught that hands-only CPR training includes three steps: 1) call 9-1-1; 2) push hard and fast in the center of the chest to the beat of a tune that is 100-120 beats per minute, like the Bee Gees song *Stayin' Alive*; and 3), continue to give hands-only CPR until an emergency service provider can begin to care for the person.

Commission members also highlighted heart healthy programs and services provided by the county health department, and recognized the Department of Emergency Services for its role in saving lives, and training others to save lives.



CLARK COUNTY, OHIO

Clark County, near the state's western border, was formed from parts of Greene, Champaign and Madison counties on March 1, 1818. It was named in honor of George Rogers Clark, a general during the Revolutionary War who later became the seal's centerpiece.

The county flourished during the 1830s, with the completion of the National Road through Ohio, though most of the county remained rural.

The seal also pays tribute to resident Albert Belmont Graham, a country schoolmaster who founded the 4-H program.



At the seal center is a rendering of George Rogers Clark, a general during the Revolutionary War

The seal also pays tribute to resident Albert Belmont Graham, a country schoolmaster who founded the 4-H program.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Charlie Ban, senior staff writer: 202.942.4249 or cban@naco.org.

the HR DOCTOR

With Phil Rosenberg

Phil Rosenberg

May the force be with you — actually, may two forces be with you. These two forces are discussed in high school physics and experienced in daily life: the force of attraction such as gravity and the force of repulsion. Ride on a fast-moving merry-go-round and you will experience the latter force as the spinning merry-go-round pushes us outward.

The force of attraction produces the opposite effect. It is the force that tends to push us together toward a center point. An example may be experienced when we lose a battle with gravity and fall off a ladder. We are being pushed toward the center of our massive friend, the Earth. That could also happen in a crowd when we see a person so beautiful or handsome that we have to move closer to them.

We owe our existence, and that of the universe for that matter, to a balancing of these two forces. When they get out of whack in their relationships, very violent and destructive things happen. Stars blow up in huge super nova explosions. People blow up in terrible acts of violence. Societies are destroyed.

As it is with the merry-go-round, so it is with the rather messy business of life in a democracy. There are forces that tend to push the diverse elements of the country away from each other and disable their ability to work effectively and harmoniously: civil wars, murderous religious disputes, a leader's behavior, fear of crime, hatred of other people and racial unrest, for example.

One of the saddest victims of this kind of force is our ability to have reasoned discourse and reach compromise. If we

Please Pass the Glue

lose that ability to speak sincerely with one another, we risk being sideswiped in an accident without a seatbelt. Our society will be swept along a harmful direction.

If we don't focus on forces that can unite us; if we don't act as colleagues in a common cause, repulsive forces will overwhelm our institutions and turn friends and neighbors toward disassociation and suspicion about one another. This is not good for America, and it's certainly not good for us and our little children.

We search for the right medium to bring us back together. We search for a national version of Elmer's Glue strong enough and widespread enough to overcome the impacts. In other words, we had better be on the lookout for ideas, programs or beliefs which champion attractive force.

With that goal in mind, I respectfully offer several ideas for American Renewal programs. These are well within our capabilities to implement. All favor the forces of attraction. All involve actions by local governments with help, but not overt leadership, by our federal friends.

Because of that more local role, these can be implemented faster and more tailored for success than would be the case if they were mandated from Washington D.C., from a state capital, or cobbled together by a barely functional Congress.

These ideas represent key areas for federal funding — key areas for local government creativity and implementation. Perhaps the new administration will proclaim support for their kinds of initiatives as very important components of our nation's overall "infrastructure." Federal start-up, or "incubator" grants should be used to fund the efforts described below, and others as well.

- Community colleges can create and drive programs re-



mind every student about the value to our society of constructive engagement, civil discourse among people who disagree and creative social problem solving.

A recent example is the founding, at Broward College in South Florida, of the Center for Civic Engagement and Leadership, headed by retired County Commissioner John Hart.

- No one suffering because of mental illness should be left without care and support. This is at the root of much of our homeless, drug abuse, teen suicide and violence problems.

Wellness, in general, is a form of personal defense more valuable than taking karate lessons or carrying around a loaded handgun.

- A nurse-educator in every school — elementary through high school — to be in the classroom daily would help. Health includes more than drug-resistance education. It involves fighting and prevent-

ing the diseases of bullying, smoking, and not wearing a seat belt. Every kid, certainly every parent, should be active in practicing this form of self-defense.

Perhaps the local physician community can set aside time for health screening in the schools, including time with parents of kids identified by teachers as being especially in need of "self-defense" lessons.

I bet thousands of local hospitals, clinics, paramedics and private practitioners would join in the effort. We put police officers in schools, how about "paramedic-resource officers?"

Part of this renewal should involve strengthening the education of children with regard to solving problems between human beings constructively, without resorting to force and without resorting to bullying, direct or online harassment, thoughts of suicide or resorting to bringing dad's gun to school.

- Making sure every elected

and every appointed official — everyone in a position of strength and authority including police officers — is trained better than ever, evaluated more seriously than ever, and honored and compensated better than ever, in recognition of the "glue" their work provides in society.

After all, we demand more than ever before of our police officers. They are our mental health first responders as well as our domestic violence resolvers.

More responsibility will be coming their way in the future as society gets increasingly complicated.

Take these steps, well within our financial and institutional capabilities, mix well with ongoing public demonstrations of how problems were solved by people working together rather than by 140-word assaults, and we will have contributed mightily to rebalancing forces which ultimately will determine the future of America. **CN**