

Conference hits high notes for attendees

By **Beverly Schlotterbeck**
executive editor

With a new administration and Congress just months old, NACo's 2017 Legislative Conference was the perfect place to be if you were in search of opportunities to leverage county influence on Capitol Hill and at the White House.

Hundreds of NACo members met with their congressional delegations over the course of the five-day conference, which began Feb. 24, and conference committee meetings and workshops were buzzing with speculation about the new administration's direction.

During their talks at the

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President Donald Trump gets ready to sign an executive order to withdraw and revamp EPA's controversial WOTUS rule. Looking on to his immediate right is NACo President Bryan Desloge and to his left, Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wy.) AP/Photo by Andrew Harnick

Trump's WOTUS order sends EPA back to drawing board

Surrounded by county leaders from across the country, President Donald Trump signed an executive order, Feb. 28, to revamp the Obama administration's controversial "Waters of the U.S." rule, or WOTUS, under the Clean Water Act and directed the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to come up with a new definition.

Under the order, the EPA and the Corps are to restart and rewrite the rule to enable more

common-sense local implementation. Since the rule was originally proposed, NACo consistently requested the agencies withdraw and revise the rule to include state and local government concerns.

"We are encouraged by the president's action and look forward to a renewed dialogue with the EPA and the Corps to develop more workable rules at the local level," said NACo President Bryan Desloge. "Since counties play a critical role in implementing and en-

forcing federal water policies, it is crucial that the agencies work with us to develop rules and regulations that work at the local level.

"Our nation's counties support clean water, and we support common-sense environmental regulations," Desloge said. "Counties are on the front lines of preserving local resources, strengthening public safety and fostering economic growth, which all contribute to vibrant communities across the country.

"Throughout the rule-making process, we repeatedly called for collaborative inter-governmental engagement, greater certainty and a pragmatic rule to advance clean water goals without hindering counties' vast public safety and infrastructure responsibilities."

Since the proposal was unveiled in 2014, NACo has testified before congressional bodies four times and steadfastly advocated for more collabora-

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Warner says current capitalist system not working for everyone



Rep. Rob Bishop addresses the general session at the conference. Photo by David Hathcox

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conference's general sessions, Sens. Mark Warner (D-Va.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) brought conference attendees up to speed on the views from Capitol Hill.

Warner told the Opening General Session that the current capitalist system in America wasn't working for enough people.

"At the macro level, I can give you numbers," about a strong economy, he said. "All of those numbers, statistics and data points don't mean squat if you lost a factory in town. We need a Capitalism 2.0."

Bishop said the trend of regulatory authority returning to Congress in House Speaker Paul Ryan's Better Way plan would ultimately mean more responsive federal policy making.

Meanwhile, Klobuchar, Hennepin County, Minn.'s former county attorney, warned county leaders to be very concerned about federal proposals that will inevitably, "land in the counties' laps," such as looming changes to the Affordable Care Act.

Political insider Jim VanderHei, co-founder of both Axios and Politico, spoke to NACo members about political changes brought by President Donald Trump and advised local governments what to expect from the White House over the next four years.

"Keep expecting volatility, then just be delighted when normal stuff happens," VanderHei told the crowd during the NACo opening general session Feb 27.

Presidential historian and author Michael Beschloss spoke about the lessons he's learned writing presidential

histories. He noted that historically lawmakers were much more likely to make friendships across the political parties than they are today.

In addition to dozens of workshops, conference attendees also had their choice of several special sessions that focused on compelling issues for county governments. The Town Hall on the Opioid Epidemic drew a standing-room-only crowd and personal testimony from attendees about how the epidemic has touched their communities and their lives.

NACo and its new technology arm, the Public Technology Institute, sponsored a symposium and a summit that explored the challenges and benefits of emerging innovative technologies.

Disaster resilience and homelessness also came in for special treatment at two lun-

cheons with panel discussions devoted to those topics.

In conjunction with the conference, NACo hosted a congressional briefing, Feb. 28, on Capitol Hill targeting Medicaid and the role of counties in local health systems.

NACo's Board of Directors adopted more than a dozen interim policy positions recommended by NACo's steering committees. The Board also approved two new member benefits provided by IBITS, the nonprofit Institute for Building Technology and Safety: web-based software to manage, automate and track community development processes and a pilot program exploring the use of remote-sensing building inspections. **CN**

Charlie Ban, senior writer, also contributed to this report.

White House invites NACo members to ceremony

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tion and greater clarity.

The White House invited 12 county officials to the signing ceremony, including members of NACo's executive team. Representative from the Home Builders Association and the Farm Bureau were also present.

Counties own and manage public safety infrastructure including 45 percent of the nation's road miles and associated ditches, 40 percent of bridges, as well as flood control channels, drainage conveyances and culverts used to prevent flooding, all impacted by the rule. **CN**



SNAP/STATS

TOP 5 COUNTY EXPORTERS IN 2015 with populations less than 50,000

Iberville Parish, La.....	\$2.1 billion
St. John the Baptist Parish, La.	\$1.9 billion
St. James Parish, La.....	\$1.5 billion
Calhoun County, Texas	\$1.3 billion
St. Bernard Parish, La.....	\$1.1 billion

Source: blah blah blah

Arts and Culture Awards applications now open

The Arts and Culture Commission recently announced it is now accepting applications for the 2017 Arts and Culture Award.

The award provides an opportunity for NACo members to showcase county programs and initiatives that demonstrate how the arts can be used to enrich American cultural and intellectual life, promote lifelong learning and protect the nation's heritage.

The deadline to apply is April 17, and the 2017 Arts and Culture Award recipient will be announced this July at the Arts and Culture Commission Awards Dinner at the NACo Annual Conference in Franklin County, Ohio.

"The arts are much more than just a performance at your local theater. As a therapy tool, they have a powerful ability to aid in intervention and prevention to improve the mental health of veterans, the elderly and incarcerated youth," said Commissioner Kay Cashion, Arts and Culture Commission chair.

The award program is a friendly competition to recognize an innovative, county-led arts and culture program or project that is creative in its approach to integrating the arts with broader county



strategies. The best programs and projects are transferable, engage the community as a whole and have a demonstrable impact on the community.

Recent winners include Mobile County, Ala. for its efforts to preserve the Mobile Symphony Orchestra's strings programs in the county's public schools (2014), Monterey County, Calif. for its Arts as Intervention and Healing program for incarcerated youth in the Monterey County Probation Department (2015) and Hennepin County for its robust arts and culture programming within its library system (2016).

When former NACo President Betty Lou Ward established the Arts and Culture Commission in 1998, she stated, "in an age of limited resources, the arts are sometimes viewed as unnecessary and inconsequential. But from economic development to juvenile justice to education, the statistical evidence illustrates that attention to and participation in the arts makes a difference." **CN**

New report tracks cost, governance of counties' 911

By Andrew Hartsig
research manager

A new research report on emergency 911 released by the Counties Futures Lab examines the role counties play in the operation of public safety answer points (PSAPs), or emergency call centers, and the difficulties they are facing in light of decreasing 911 funding and advances in telecommunications technology.

The report includes an analysis of which level of government operates PSAPs within a state, how these PSAPs are funded and, if applicable, how funds collected by a state specifically for 911 flow to counties.

Counties in the 48 states with county governments and the District of Columbia operate, manage and fund their own PSAPs, often mandated by the state. PSAPs, which are the centers that connect to callers when they dial 911, provide a vital link between the public and public safety officials during emergency situations. However, the cost of operating these call centers is high, costing 40 states and the District of Columbia \$3.4 billion in 2015.

Funding for 911 comes from a variety of sources, including monthly fees that are set by the state and paid on consumers' telephone bills. Yet this rate



may vary by phone type within a state. As consumers shift their telecommunication preferences from wired to wireless phones, some states have seen a decrease in dedicated 911 funding as existing statutes have not been updated to account for these shifts. Subsequently, it is not uncommon for the revenue from 911 fees to fall short of the cost of running a PSAP. For example, in North Dakota, counties pay for a third of operations out of their general funds.

Most often, states collect 911 fees and remit the revenues to local governments. However, in 2015, \$220.3 million in 911 fees was diverted by states throughout the country for purposes other than maintaining and upgrading PSAPs. As counties receive less in dedicated 911 rev-

enues due to both states withholding funds and shifts in telecommunication preferences, they must turn to general fund money.

Concurrently, technological changes in the telecommunication industry have dramatically changed how consumers communicate. As such, PSAPs nationwide are adapting to Next Generation 911 (NG911), which allows for the use of text to 911

capabilities. NG911 also allows operators to identify where a caller is located and improve response times for first responders.

But upgrading PSAPs to NG911 is expensive. A number of states cite funding as a primary barrier to NG911 modernization. In New York alone, upgrades are estimated to cost \$2.2 billion. In 2015, \$165 million was spent on NG911 implementation.

Counties are major players in emergency management, operating and funding PSAPs across the country. But counties are facing a decline in dedicated revenues for 911 and the high cost of upgrading their systems to Next Generation 911. **CN**

Check out the full study here: <http://www.naco.org/911>

NACo seeks input about your brownfields redevelopment projects

NACo has been approached by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee on brownfields reauthorization issues. The subcommittee wants to understand the role of counties in brownfields redevelopment, showcase innovative county brownfields projects or highlight challenges to brownfields redevelopment.

In the past several decades, local governments have grappled with how to clean up for-

mer industrial or commercial sites that may have environmental contamination. Called brownfields, these sites are often old sites of factories, warehouses, dry cleaners, hospitals, landfills or other facilities that used hazardous chemicals, but are now abandoned.

Brownfields can be found in both urban and rural areas. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there are over 450,000 existing brownfield sites in the United States. While local governments have

successfully redeveloped brownfield sites, a number of challenges exist to transition these areas into vibrant community spaces.

NACo would like feedback on the following questions:

- What role does your county take in brownfields redevelopment? If your county takes an active role, how many brownfields redevelopment projects are in the pipeline?

- Brownfields often have the stereotype of being in populous urban areas, however,

brownfields are found in rural areas. How does your county track the sites in your area?

- Has your county been the recipient of a brownfields clean-up grant? If so, could you give a brief synopsis of the project, including the county role in the effort and any relevant web links?

- Has your county completed an innovative, non-traditional brownfield project? For example, some local governments have repurposed brownfield sites as renewable

energy facilities to power local government buildings. What types of challenges has your county faced during brownfield redevelopment projects? Has your county been concerned about liability issues surrounding brownfields redevelopment? **CN**

Please send comments to Julie Ufner, associate legislative director for environment, energy and land use, at jufner@naco.org no later than Monday, March 20.

Tele-behavioral health care reaches rural residents

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

Mary Carpenter once had her doubts. She wasn't "yip-pee-skippy" about behavioral health telemedicine, despite its promise to address mental health needs in Minnesota's rural Arrowhead region.

"I'm a psychologist and have been working in the field for 30-plus years, and so the thought of doing it over a TV screen was like 'yeah, right,'" said Carpenter, CEO of Range Mental Health Center in Virginia, Minn. in St. Louis County.

"But my younger therapists in the field were very excited and saying let's try it, because there are people that don't have transportation that we'll never touch. So we started slow and it's gradually taking off."

Under a joint powers agreement, Carlton, Cook, Lake, Koochiching and St. Louis counties — collectively as the Arrowhead Health Alliance — worked with state agencies to create the Arrowhead Telepresence Coalition (ATC). County commissioners comprise the joint powers board. It provides behavioral health care through remote diagnosis and treatment of patients using internet video and audio.

The largely rural Arrowhead region makes up 23 percent of the state's land but only 6 percent of its population. "So what we needed to do early on was to find more innovative ways to deliver services," said Dave Lee, a psychologist and director of Carlton County Public Health and Human Services. The region takes its moniker from its pointed shape on the map, wedged between Canada and Lake Superior. Duluth is its most populous city.

Rural Minnesota faces a critical shortage of mental health providers; seven counties in



Stacy Englund (on tablet screen), an outpatient therapist at Range Mental Health Center in St. Louis County, Minn., works remotely with a client. Photo courtesy of Arrowhead Health Alliance

the Arrowhead region have been designated as mental health professional shortage areas, according to ATC.

"In taking the lead for the region," Lee said, "I didn't see any other way to start to solve some of these access problems without having tele-mental health capabilities." Carlton county did a successful "mini-pilot" before the initiative launched regionwide.

The equipment costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 for each telepresence unit. They were purchased with a \$112,000 grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.

"Right now the coalition is providing the license and the equipment both for the school and our center, and so we don't have a cost," Carpenter said. "There's no other cost than having our therapists available."

The state's department of human services (DHS) had been using telemedicine technology in hospitals and clinics throughout the state, but it was within state government, but not with community partners, according to Roger Root, telepresence lead for DHS. "So

Arrowhead is the first pioneering community partner to be doing this with us," he said in a video presentation about the program.

While multi-county collaboration in Minnesota is more the norm than the exception, Minnesota Association of Counties (AMC) Executive Director Julie Ring, said, "This is an exceptional example because of the number of counties, tribes and state agencies involved."

In all, the Arrowhead Telepresence Coalition serves seven counties (including Aitkin and Itasca), three tribes, community-based mental health providers, crisis response providers, medical providers, jails and schools in collaboration with two state departments: DHS and Minnesota IT.

The coalition has received local government innovation awards from AMC and the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

In the Arrowhead region, it can take hours to get a child to a mental health appointment, Carpenter said. "We have one of our schools — it's about 20 miles from the Ca-

nadian border — we have kids up in that school that usually would travel an hour south to be able to see their therapist," she explained. "And then they see them for their clinical hour, then they would have an hour back."

"Now a child can go down a hallway, see that therapist for one hour and return to class. Parents don't have to disrupt their day."

Carpenter said that children, mostly middle-school-age, seem to "engage" more quickly via telepresence.

"Our outcomes are improving with teenagers, and that was surprising to me," she said, "because I didn't think this was going to work."

"But teens — their mode of communication is through electronics and doing FaceTime, and so they engage quicker, and they tend to get to the heart of their issues much faster with having the screen as the barrier and not having to go into someone's office and have that physical presence."

At the Carlton County Jail, inmates with behavioral health issues have also benefited from

the telepresence initiative. "We have a lot of undiagnosed, untreated people in jail," Lee said.

Jail Administrator Paul Coughlin said tele-behavioral health services are saving time and money in the roughly three years it's been available at the jail. "Prior to that we would have an inmate that would present with a mental health need and have to go to the ER," Coughlin said in a video. "Once they were at the ER, they would more times than not be transferred to a hospital in Duluth where the psychiatry services were."

"Since telehealth, we're allowed to save a lot of money. We did not have to pay the psychiatrist just to travel here, paying them travel time and then their report writing time," Coughlin added. "We are able now to hold that meeting online through the telepresence, so it's very cost effective for us."

Lee sees "more potential" in telehealth providing care on either side of the jailhouse door. "Both on the incarcerated side but also on the community side. So there's less of a chance of getting lost in the shuffle once being discharged from jail."

For the medically insured, states have played a major role in the spread of telemedicine, according to Latoya Thomas, director for the state policy resource center at the American Telemedicine Association. "One of the things they have done is to recognize that they've got the ability to enable state-regulated health insurers to not deny services that are already covered by that plan just because they weren't done in person."

"And what we've seen over the past four years, 31 states and the District of Columbia have adopted what we call telemedicine parity laws." **CN**

Executive Order on Immigration Places Counties in Lose-Lose Situation

By Matt Chase
executive director

On Jan. 25, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order titled "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States." The order aims to "ensure the public safety of the American people in communities across the United States as well as to ensure that our Nation's immigration laws are

faithfully executed."

While this and other executive orders signed by President Trump have been the subject of much national attention and political debate, county leaders are faced with practical implications that the executive order could have on local governments and their law enforcement agencies. Counties across the country are assessing the order and how its provisions

align with existing federal statutes and court precedents. In doing so, counties are aiming to avoid a potentially difficult situation in which they are forced to choose between two deeply undesirable outcomes: running afoul of recent federal court rulings in a manner that invites litigation and legal liability, or losing access to significant federal funds needed to serve local communities.

As we work to assess serious constitutional, legal and practical concerns with this order from a county operations perspective, we stand ready to partner with administration officials, including leaders at the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to pursue our shared priority of ensuring the safety of local communities across the nation. In-depth dialogues be-

tween federal and local officials can help to highlight workable solutions that serve this shared responsibility without placing local governments in a lose-lose situation.

In assessing this executive order, NACo is focused on constitutional principles that have been affirmed by federal courts — outlined below — rather than underlying questions of federal or local immigration policy.

- **The federal government cannot compel states or their political subdivisions, such as counties, to enforce federal laws,** according to U.S. Supreme Court rulings on the 10th Amendment and its division of powers between the federal government and states.

- **Federal withholding of funds from otherwise eligible state and local entities could also violate the 10th Amendment** if such withholding effectively coerces adoption of federal policies by those entities, or if withheld funds are unrelated to the federal policies in question.

- **Counties have no legal obligation to honor immigration detainers, and when they choose to honor these requests, they risk violating the Fourth Amendment's protections** against "unreasonable searches and seizures," which apply to foreign nationals in the United States.

With these constitutional principles in mind, NACo has analyzed the "Executive Order on Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States," and looks forward to dialogues between federal and local officials that can help to facilitate effective and practical implementation of the administration's executive order in a manner that serves our shared responsibility of keeping America safe. **CN**



Our new tool helps participants see their score, and how they can improve it.

Nationwide's new online tool starts with four questions that individual Participants can easily answer to deliver a preliminary Retirement Readiness score, displayed on an eye-catching meter to help them gauge where they are. Then, they can input personal information that will help them fine-tune their score, and download or print a Retirement Readiness Report – created specifically for them.

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To read NACo's comprehensive analysis, please visit: <http://www.naco.org/InteriorEO>

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DESCHUTES COUNTY / SUNRIVER, OREGON



Board adopts new policy on issues ranging from affordable housing to foreign sand



Broward County, Fla. Commissioner Chip LaMarca engages in discussion during the NACo Board meeting as Oakland County, Mich. Commissioner Shelley Taub listens.
Photo by David Hathcox

NACo's Board of Directors adopted the following resolutions as interim policy at their 2017 Legislative Conference meeting. They will be considered for final adoption by the membership as a whole at the Annual Business Meeting, July 24 in Franklin County (Columbus), Ohio.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Preserve Rural Development Programs in the Farm Bill

ISSUE: Support for program structure and funding for programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to find opportunities to streamline the grant and loan application process while preserving the program structure and funding authorizations for individual Rural Development Programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

FY 2018 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

ISSUE: Support FY 2018 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to support the following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs in the FY 2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Develop-

ment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than \$3.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than \$1.2 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); \$2.6 billion for Homeless Housing Assistance grants, including at least \$270 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Section 8 project-based and tenant-based contracts and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

Affordable Housing

ISSUE: Support an increase in the supply of affordable housing through the expansion of tools such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to increase the allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) by 50 percent and enact a permanent 4 percent credit rate floor for acquisition and bond-financed projects, allowing the program to create and preserve more affordable homes in the United States. Additionally, Congress is urged to provide enhancements and increased funding levels to all programs aimed at

increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Amend the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Legislation

ISSUE: Current U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) regulations require metropolitan city allocations of ESG funds to revert to the state when they fall under a certain threshold, thus preventing local communities from implementing programs to prevent and end homelessness.

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 8



NACo wants 50 percent boost in low-income housing tax credits, added support for CDBG and HOME

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ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports an amendment to the current law to allow metropolitan city ESG funds that fall below the threshold to be remitted to the urban county in which the municipality is located, rather than the state. Additionally, NACo supports legislation that allows Metropolitan Cities and Urban Counties to form consortia for purposes of receiving and administering ESG funds.

Support Reauthorization and Appropriations for the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration

ISSUE: Appropriations and reauthorization legislation for the U.S. Department of Com-

merce's Economic Development Administration (EDA).

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to support reauthorization and appropriations for the U.S. Department of Commerce's EDA to keep communities strong and economically viable at a time when our nation needs it the most.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

Support Liquid Natural Gas Export Facilities Nationally

ISSUE: Increasing liquid natural gas (LNG) infrastructure nationally.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports development of liquid natural gas infrastructure and export facilities.

Support Codification of EPA's Integrated Planning Framework and Related Demonstration Projects



Dinwiddie County, Va. Supervisor Harrison Moody enjoys Grant Veeder's limerick. Photo by David Hathcox

ISSUE: Clean Water Act (CWA) compliance for sewer districts across the country is too costly.

ADOPTED POLICY: The Na-

tional Association of Counties urges the passage of legislation that codifies the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2012 Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Planning Approach Framework (Integrated Planning Framework), under which sewer districts can seek more efficient and affordable solutions to CWA compliance, and creates demonstration projects under which local communities will be allowed more flexibility in their efforts to comply with the regulatory requirements of the CWA.

Support Affordable Beach Renourishment Projects

ISSUE: Allowing local governments to purchase sand from countries outside of the

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COUNTIES' FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES



PROTECT THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF MUNICIPAL BONDS

75% of our nation's public infrastructure projects are completed using bond financing.

PROTECT THE FEDERAL-STATE-LOCAL PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDICAID

Counties own or support 961 hospitals, 883 nursing homes, 750 behavioral health authorities and 1,944 local health departments.

PROMOTE COUNTY SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES AND RESOLVE THE SOLVENCY OF THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Counties own 46% of all public road miles, 38% of U.S. bridges and a third of the public transportation systems and airports.

WORK FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE DEFINITION OF "WATERS OF THE U.S."

More than 70% of counties invest in storm sewer systems, sewage disposal, solid waste management and water utilities.

SUPPORT COUNTY AUTHORITY TO COLLECT EXISTING SALES TAX

Level the playing field between online and Main Street businesses and collect \$26.1 billion of existing sales tax that goes uncollected — potential investments in essential local services.

SUPPORT POLICIES TO PROMOTE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

11.6 million individuals, many with mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders, cycle in and out of more than 3,000 local jails each year.

SUPPORT THE PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT) AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS (SRS) PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE LOCAL COSTS OF FEDERAL LANDS

62.8% of counties have federal land within their boundaries. PILT and SRS support county services like search and rescue, fire protection, education and transportation.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT ASSIST COUNTIES IN FIGHTING POVERTY

Counties provide the local safety net and are mandated to provide indigent care as well as administering federal anti-poverty programs in several states.



Federal Policies Matter to Counties. Counties Matter to America.

www.naco.org/leg2017



Allow purchase of foreign sand to renourish beaches, don't terminate U.S. Election Assistance Commission

From **RESOLUTIONS** page 8

U.S. to replenish shorelines due to beach erosion.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports enabling the Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers to allow counties to acquire sand by purchase, exchange or otherwise from non-domestic sources for the purpose of beach renourishment.

FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Support the Reauthorization of the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act

ISSUE: Tax protections of incentives for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel expired in 2010 and must be reauthorized.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to reauthorize the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA), which would waive federal income taxes on nominal recruitment and retention incentives provided by local jurisdictions to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel.

Support the U.S. Election Assistance Commission

ISSUE: H.R. 634 has been proposed to terminate the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, which provides assistance to state and local jurisdictions with the administration of federal election laws and programs. The legislation would transfer certain functions of the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo opposes the termination of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. NACo recognizes the importance of rigorous testing

of voting equipment and appreciates the efficiencies and cost savings of voluntary federal certification. NACo appreciates the important role that the EAC plays in coordinating collaborative efforts among local, state and federal government officials in addressing issues from the accessibility of polling places to the cybersecurity of voting equipment and voter registration databases.

NACo urges the Department of Homeland Security, in light of its recent designation of election systems as critical infrastructure, to work in partnership with the EAC and its trusted and supportive relationships with election officials rather than creating new and duplicative programs to impose federal policy.

HEALTH

The Importance of the ACA and Medicaid Expansion

ISSUE: Covering over 70 million individuals, Medicaid is the country's largest program providing health coverage and health care services to the nation's low-income population. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allowed states to expand their Medicaid programs, which provide billions of federal dollars to counties for indigent health care services, behavioral health services, preventative care, public health and coordinated care.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports maintaining the Medicaid program as a means tested entitlement and further supports provisions in current law that allow for expanded program eligibility and coverage standards. NACo urges Congress and the administration not to repeal the Medicaid expansion. Maintaining the current eligibility and coverage under the current program is a fundamental principle if Congress considers a concurrent, comprehensive and sustain-



Black Hawk County, Iowa Recorder Grant Veeder reads one of his limericks. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

able replacement bill.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Urge Congress to Maintain County Child Welfare Flexibility and Funding

ISSUE: The 115th Congress may enact legislation changing federal financing of child welfare services. In January 2017, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (H.R. 253) was reintroduced. Identical to last year's measure (H.R. 5456), the bill would deny Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance eligibility to many children who are eligible under current federal and state laws, and effective in Fiscal

Year (FY) 2020, provides new federal entitlement funding for optional foster care prevention services. It would also impose new federal requirements relating to congregate (group home) care that would reduce federal IV-E reimbursement and shift costs to states and counties. The FFPSA also assumes that federal IV-E waivers would expire on September 30, 2019. Waivers give counties and states flexibility to test innovative approaches to child welfare service delivery and financing. Under waivers, states design and demonstrate a wide range of approaches to reforming child welfare and improving outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being. Finally, Congress is

also considering entitlement reform, including block granting health and human services programs such as Title IV-E foster care, which would shift costs to states and counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to amend the Family First Prevention Services Act so that it would not shift increased costs to states and counties by denying Title IV-E eligibility to children who would remain eligible for state or county-funded foster care and adoption assistance. In doing so, Congress should also provide states and counties with sufficient flexibility to serve and protect abused and

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Reauthorize SNAP program along with Farm Bill, maintain needs-testing standard for Medicaid

From RESOLUTIONS page 9

neglected children as done currently under some state laws.

NACo further urges that the bill’s proscriptive provisions intended to reduce the use of congregate care be amended so that states and counties already proceeding with similar efforts may continue to do so.

Additionally, Congress should extend federal IV-E waiver authority through September 30, 2024 unless comprehensive child welfare finance reform that reflects NACo’s priorities is passed and implemented before that time.

Finally, NACo opposes any congressional effort to block grant IV-E foster care financing.

Support Two-Generation Efforts to Reduce Poverty

ISSUE: Poverty is a national problem and requires a national solution. In order to combat the harmful impacts of intergenerational poverty, federal, state and local partners should promote new methods of addressing these issues.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties encourages the federal gov-

ernment to pursue policies that support and enable state and local jurisdictions to coordinate a two-generation approach to combat poverty. Federal efforts to reform public assistance must recognize that poverty is influenced by national economic factors that are not within the control of local or state governments, and that local and state governments are best positioned to help their citizens when federal programs are flexible and support all generations within a family.

Stop Sexual Abuse in Families

ISSUE: Sexual Abuse in Families

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties strongly supports starting the dialog and pursuing types of education to assist counties, states and the federal government in helping prevent child sexual abuse (CSA) in families.

Clarify and Expand NACo Policy on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

ISSUE: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is critical to struggling families and has proven to be one of the most countercyclical federal programs because benefits can reach families quickly during economic downturns as well as natural disasters. Counties should be considered an integral partner as Congress begins reauthorization of SNAP.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports moving a SNAP reauthorization in conjunction with a reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

NACo supports the current SNAP entitlement program and funding structure, including maintaining the 50 percent federal administrative match for states, given that counties contribute to the administra-

tive costs of the SNAP program in many county-administered states. SNAP should not be block granted, since such a policy change would place additional strain on both recipients and state and local governments. As the introductory statement says, SNAP is indeed a very responsive countercyclical program, as evidenced by the large increases in SNAP participants during the great recession in the late 2000’s and early 2010’s. Block granting would seriously undermine that responsiveness, leaving struggling families with less access to food and further weakening the economy since SNAP families redeem their benefits quickly and locally. Moreover, counties would see shifts in costs to support those households if the already low benefit is reduced under a block grant.

NACo encourages Congress to increase the options available to state and local administrative bodies in streamlining applications and administrative processes. Local social services departments see many individuals and families that are eligible for multiple programs, but requirements are often slightly different for each program, generating significant work for staff and applicants alike. All states should be allowed to seamlessly enroll Supplemental Security Income (SSI) participants in the SNAP program. In general, as additional programs are streamlined, barriers to entry for participants should be reduced, and Congress and states should not make the most restrictive elements of each program the qualifications required for approval.

Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) should work to reduce “churn” — the rolling of recipients on and off of the program — in the SNAP program, which can be a burden for recipients and administrators alike. Administration and application pro-

cesses should be simplified to allow individuals reapplying for benefits to enter a streamlined process, reducing the time between application and receiving benefits while also reducing administrative costs.

Proper nutrition is crucial to high-quality early childhood development goals and ensures children are mentally and physically prepared to learn when entering school. SNAP benefits for families should be at an adequate level so that all children have healthy diets.

NACo opposes arbitrary and counterproductive work and participation requirements and supports a strong county role in mutually negotiated outcome measures in which states are judged by their progress toward achieving agreed upon goals. NACo supports greater flexibility in the SNAP work requirements in order to allow counties and states to meet the individual needs of their caseloads.

NACo supports enabling individuals to find and secure long-term employment and encourages Congress to acknowledge the reality that for time-limited assistance to be successful, it must be accompanied by adequate federal and state funding for a wide range of supportive services. The SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program should receive more realistic funding levels from the federal government to ensure states and counties have the proper resources to assist individuals in finding work and remaining employed, including increasing the reimbursement rate, since SNAP E&T is an employment program. SNAP E&T should also be further integrated with existing workforce programs at the federal, state and local level, including local workforce development boards.

In addition to the increased reimbursement rates for em-

See RESOLUTIONS page 11

WORD SEARCH

CHRISTIAN COUNTY, Mo.
LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'BEHIND THE SEAL.'
Created By: Charles Taylor

E A K X G R G I I J I S K S A N W P N V
A C O U R T H O U S E S Q U A R E S O T
N Q C K N N H G N K E K U I R L S Z S Z
Y B U K I O Y X A Z K V T I N J L E G U
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K X Z Y X I E F G L P T U T H H M U W T
S M E Z D J C J I R S K F M D R W J I U

- BRANSON** Entertainment mecca 30 miles to the south
- COURTHOUSE SQUARE** Historic District in Ozark
- FINLEY CREEK** Runs through county
- GREENE AND TANNEY** Two of the counties from which formed
- INDIANA** Many early settlers hailed from here and Ohio
- JASON BOURNE** Fictional Robert Ludlum character's "birthplace" is Nixa
- LAWRENCE** County to the west
- NIXA** County's largest city, pop. 20,200

- OZARK** County seat, pop. 18,600
- SEVENTH** Missouri congressional district
- SOUTHWEST** Located in this region of state
- SPRINGFIELD** Metro area of which county is a part
- SUCKER DAY** Annual festival in Nixa celebrates sucker fish
- WILLIAM CHRISTIAN** County's namesake, Revolutionary War soldier
- WINTER'S BONE** Film was shot in Christian and neighboring Taney counties



No arbitrary work and participation requirements, yes to longer time limits for ABAWDs for SNAP

From **RESOLUTIONS** page 10

ployment programs, NACo supports lengthening the time limit for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) and making the work requirements more flexible. Often, rapid attachment employment programs are short term, and individuals who find work do not remain employed because they have not developed the required skills. Allowing for increased training and an extended time limit would make employment goals more realistic. Additionally, NACo supports a tax incentive for employers who hire ABAWD SNAP participants for 20 hours or more each month, which could be increased based on the number of ABAWD participants hired. NACo also supports allowing counties in county-administered states to apply for a waiver for the ABAWD time limits if the state does not apply for a

state-wide or partial waiver.

Lifetime disqualification from the SNAP program can have a lasting effect not just on the individual, but also on his or her family. NACo supports additional flexibility in disqualification determinations for states and local governments. NACo also supports lifting the lifetime ban on individuals with felony drug convictions in all states.

Recipients of federal benefits programs often face a financial “cliff” as they gain employment — the boundary line at which point individuals or families lose benefits given their rise in income. NACo urges Congress to consider gradual phase outs of certain programs, including SNAP, to ease the transition from benefits to income, especially for families.

NACo urges Congress and the FNS to pursue solutions that address the specific obstacles rural communities face

in ensuring access to food and healthy eating habits in rural areas, which often lack access to healthy food options. States with large rural populations and rural counties should be afforded additional flexibility in the administration of the SNAP program to help combat these challenges.

Among federal benefits programs, SNAP is already a leader in innovation and simplification of benefits, including the use of SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. The federal government should continue to play a leading role in developing technology that makes program administration more seamless. By pioneering advances at the federal level, the program would be streamlined in states and local jurisdictions across the country.

NACo supports the goals of maintaining low levels of fraud and error rates within the SNAP program. Counties

believe that a federal commitment to streamlining the program, increased technological advances and additional flexibility to eliminate systemic program issues (including program churn) will help achieve this goal.

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Improve Pretrial Justice Process

ISSUE: Confinement of county and regional pretrial detainees who do not present an unmanageable risk of failure to appear or a threat to public safety, but do lack the financial means to secure release.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges the Department of Justice to continue efforts to advise state, county and municipal courts to acknowledge that the principles of due process and equal protection require

that courts not employ bail and bond practices that cause indigent defendants to remain incarcerated even for a few days solely because they cannot afford to pay for their release.

Support the Reauthorization of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, Including the Safer Grant Program

ISSUE: Department of Homeland Security grant programs that support local fire departments.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to reauthorize the Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, including the SAFER grant program, so that local fire departments can continue to receive federal support for their efforts to provide all-hazards response to their communities.

See **RESOLUTIONS** page 12



Orange County, N.C. Commissioner Renee Price, chair, Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee, presents her committee's policy recommendations. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



DOJ: advise local governments on bail for indigents, reauthorize Assistance to Firefighters Grant program

From RESOLUTIONS page 11

PUBLIC LANDS

Support Bureau of Land Management Foundation Act or Successor Legislation

ISSUE: The Bureau of Land Management has limited congressionally appropriated resources, hindering its ability to fulfill its mission, which in turn may negatively impact public lands counties across the nation in several ways.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports a Bureau of Land Management Foundation Act successor bill in the 115th Congress establishing a foundation which can help support the activities of BLM.

Repair and Maintain the Public Land Survey System

ISSUE: The Public Land Survey System (PLSS) is in a varying degree of deterioration nationwide due to the lack of resources provided to counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to provide additional funding to counties to support the existing Public Land Survey System. NACo further urges the federal government to enforce existing guidelines and rules for the PLSS.

Support the Outdoor Recreation Act

ISSUE: Outdoor recreation on public lands is a key economic driver for public lands gateway communities. Recently enacted federal legislation (the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016) calls for measuring the economic impacts of outdoor recreation as part of the United States Gross Domestic Product. Once the federal government fully understands the economic impacts of outdoor recreation, land management agencies and local governments, along with proponents



Maimi-Dade County, Fla. Commissioner Sally Heyman, chair, Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee, presents her committee's policy recommendations to the Board. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

of public lands conservation and stewardship, multiple use, restoration and access, will have necessary data to measure the impact of the recreation economy and the key role that sustainable recreation needs to play in the management decisions of public lands agencies.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties supports the enacted Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016 and the effort to measure the outdoor recreation economy's contribution to the U.S. economy. NACo recommends that federal land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service, work with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis to record the economic impact of outdoor recreation on public lands, and that these agencies invest in the maintenance of recreation infrastructure on which the outdoor recreation industry relies.

Secure Rural Schools; Approval of Members for Resource Advisory Committee

ISSUE: The amount of time it takes to approve citizens as members of Resource Advisory Committees under the Secure Rural Schools Act results prevents projects from getting accomplished in a timely manner, frustration of people who have volunteered to participate, and a potential for loss of funding that goes unobligated. NACo's 2017 Resolution should encourage alternative and innovative approaches that are not limited to the explicit proposals offered.

ADOPTED POLICY: In 2016, NACo urged Congress to amend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act to exempt Resource Advisory Committees from adherence to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and to allow the Chief of the Forest Service to delegate appointment of citizens to Resource Advisory Committees to the appropriate Regional

Forester, or Forest Supervisor. Additionally, NACo should advocate for other innovative solutions, such as thresholds on populations or budget amounts, exemptions for certain entities or quorum requirements in certain circumstances, a reduction in the size of RACs, and extension of the terms, or some combination to permanently address the inability of some RACs to meet due to lack of a quorum.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

Clarify that NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Policies and Practices Apply to "Small Cell" and "DAS" Technologies and to Oppose Efforts to Preempt County Rights at the Federal or State Level

ISSUE: The National Association of Counties must clarify that its Telecommunications and Technology policies and practices apply to new small cell technologies or shared

wireless infrastructure technologies such as distributed antennae systems (DAS), as there are proceedings at the FCC, legislation being considered in Congress and legislative and regulatory actions at the state level that seek to preempt local authority over the siting of small cell and DAS technologies.

ADOPTED POLICY: The American County Platform and Resolutions, specifically those subsections listed below, shall be read to apply to all wireless technologies regardless of their size and where within a county those technologies are deployed, including rights-of-way.

NACo has developed powerful and effective policy positions in the Telecommunications and Technology area as reflected in the NACo American County Platform and Resolutions 2016-17, specifically the Telecommunications and Technology policies and practices outlined in:

- Subsection A (Encourag-

See RESOLUTIONS page 13



More direct funding for maintaining local roads; fully fund Essential Air Service; guarantee SCASDP funding

ing Competition and Development of New Technologies),

- Subsection B (Opposing Preemption of Local Authority), and

- Subsection E (Preserving the County Role in Wireless Communications Facilities Siting)

There are numerous proceedings at the FCC, legislation being considered in Congress and legislative and regulatory actions at the state level that seek to preempt local authority over the siting of small cell and DAS technologies and drastically reduce, if not eliminate, the rent, in-kind benefits and public private partnerships that counties may now charge for the use of public assets such as rights of way and above ground infrastructure. NACo's voice is needed now more than ever in calling on the FCC and Congress to make data driven decisions that respect local rights and preserve local choice.

County governments have long supported and will continue to work with industry

and other stakeholders to support the deployment of next generation wireline and wireless networks and the smart technologies they make possible and the meaningful role they may play in addressing challenges such as: congested transportation, air quality, environmental sustainability, enhanced public safety communications and Internet of Things connectivity.

TRANSPORTATION

Fully Fund Federally Mandated Local Airport Security

ISSUE: Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 44903(c) and 49 C.F.R. Part 1542, airport operators are required to establish an air transportation security program that provides a law enforcement presence and capability at the airport that is adequate to ensure the safety of commercial airports. This program is part of the cooperative effort between Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and airports to support

deployment of sufficient law enforcement officers by airports to ensure passenger safety and counter risks to transportation security. Local Airport Authorities are receiving insufficient funding from the TSA to cover the cost of locally employed law enforcement officers for airport security.

ADOPTED POLICY: Increase the federal funding allocated for the Transportation Security Administration Law Enforcement Reimbursement Program so that the maximum reimbursement rate may be increased to cover the local airport's actual cost of (non-TSA) law enforcement officers employed by the local airport to fulfill federally mandated airport security requirements.

Support Direct Funding to Local Governments for the Improvement and Maintenance of Local Roads in America within the Proposed Infrastructure Spending Bill

ISSUE: Include direct fund-

ing for roads infrastructure by local governments to address America's rapidly deteriorating transportation network and create jobs.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges the president and Congress, through the proposed infrastructure spending bill, to create dedicated funding allocated directly to local governments for the improvement and maintenance of local infrastructure in America.

Support Federal Pilot Program for the Remote Air Traffic Control Tower Program

ISSUE: The growth in domestic and international commercial flights, at a time when federal funding for aviation related programs has seen only slight incremental growth, has put a strain on high-cost local airport facility investments such as air traffic control towers and related equipment.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to establish in the next Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization or extension of the current FAA authorization law, a pilot program within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) FAA that, in consultation with airline operators and general aviation users, oversees the installation and operation of remote air traffic control towers.

Continue Funding of Essential Air Service and the Small Community Air Service Development Program

ISSUE: Many communities in areas that lack access to large or medium-sized aviation hubs rely on smaller airports that receive funding through both the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP), which provides dollars to address air service and airfare issues, and the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program,

which is a program that regularly finds itself under consideration by Congress for significant funding cuts or elimination.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges Congress to continue to fully fund the Essential Air Service (EAS) program that provides dollars to airlines that serve small communities.

NACo also urges Congress to continue guaranteed funding of the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) that helps small communities address air service and airfare issues.

Support a Federal Infrastructure Package with Robust Dedicated Funding, Innovative Incentives for Private Investment and Promotion of County-Friendly Financing Tools such as Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds

ISSUE: Critical infrastructure in the United States has fallen into a perpetual state of disrepair. The funding and financing solutions have failed to ensure that our nation's roads, bridges, ports, airports, mass transit and rail systems, transportation alternatives and water infrastructure are able to keep pace with the demands of a growing population and technological advances.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties urges the president and Congress to support a long-term infrastructure package to capitalize sustainable, dedicated funding sources (Highway Trust Fund, Airport and Airway Trust Fund, Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, etc.), promote an environment for public-private partnerships where appropriate and to promote the preservation of tax-free status for municipal bonds, among other instruments, to ensure America's infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of a growing economy and nation. **CN**



Boone County, Ky. Judge Executive Gary Moore, chair, Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee, reports on his committee's policy recommendations. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

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CAPITAL LOOP

SENATE LEADERS ASKED TO CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS OF HEALTH CARE REFORMS ON MEDICAID

On Feb. 15, NACo sent a letter to U.S. Senate Finance Committee minority leadership in response to their request for input on health care recommendations

continued effort to cut down on the number of regulations and their impact on the economy.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ADVANCES BILL TO ELIMINATE CLEAN WATER ACT PESTICIDE PERMITS

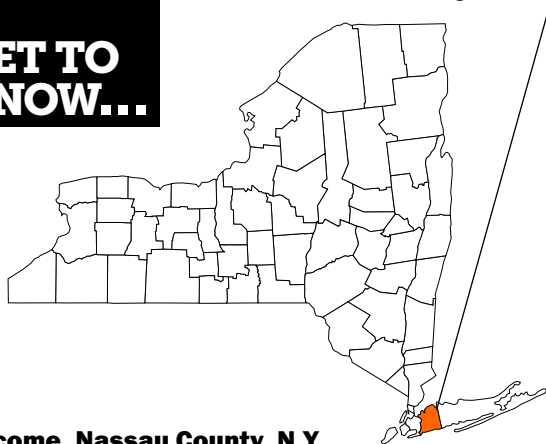
On Feb. 16, the House Committee on Agriculture voted to advance the Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2017 via voice vote. H.R. 953 would ease federal regulatory requirements for pesticides applications in or near a "water of the U.S." The measure is relevant for counties who use pesticides for mosquito abatement and/or herbicides for roadside maintenance efforts.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ADVANCES THREE BILLS ADDRESSING FEDERAL RULEMAKING

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee has advanced three bills to address federal rulemaking as part of Republican lawmakers'

New NACo★
Member
GET TO KNOW...

Nassau County, N.Y.



Welcome, Nassau County, N.Y.

Nassau County gets its name from the former name for Long Island, Nassau, after the Dutch Prince William of Nassau. Ranked as one of the highest income counties in the United States, **Nassau County's mansions and opulence may have been the inspiration for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.** President Theodore Roosevelt was a famous resident of the "Gold Coast," spending his summers at Sagamore Hill, now a national historic site.



BRIGHT IDEAS | WAKE COUNTY, N.C.

County 'Yelps' Restaurant Inspection Scores

PROBLEM: Few people were visiting the county's website to get restaurant inspection data that could be helpful.

SOLUTION: Make the information available through Yelp, the popular review website and smartphone app.

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

Yelp is fueled by opinions. People use the website and app to rate all sorts of things — from the temperature of their dinner entrée to whether the plumber showed up on time.

At times, it's been criticized for users posting fake reviews. But in Wake County, N.C., all those opinions — at least where restaurants are concerned — are bolstered with some indisputable facts: health inspection data.

The county automatically pushes its restaurant inspection scores daily to Yelp. For each of more than 2,600 restaurants in the county, their health inspection scores appear right next to customers' one-through-five-star reviews.

"I heard about something like this at an innovation conference," said Bill Greeves, the county's chief information and innovation officer. "We contacted Yelp, and no county had done it yet, so we said, 'That's a little bit of a challenge; let's give that a try.'"

The restaurant inspection data was already publicly available through the county's website, but it was "extremely buried and hard to get to," Greeves said.

"It wasn't being used very heavily, particularly not by the public," he added, "so what we thought would make sense was



A Wake County, N.C. environmental health specialist inspects restaurant kitchen fixtures. Photo courtesy of Wake County, N.C.

to get that data over to Yelp ... and it just seemed like a good match."

Via Yelp, you can find information by inspection date and type of violation, which can range from "In-use utensils: not properly stored" to "Food not properly stored to prevent contamination."

The IT department worked with environmental services, which does the inspections. At no cost except four to six weeks of a staff database administrator's time, the data was translated into a format compatible with Yelp's database "language," according to Bill Scanlon, the IT department's open data coordinator.

In 2015, the initiative received an Excellence in Communications Award for Biggest Impact with Small Budget from the North Carolina Association of Government Information Officers.

"One of things that I love about the story is that not only was the level of effort on our side not staggering," said Scanlon, "the benefit for the consumers and for the citizens is tremendous."

The Yelp health inspection data page is a two-way street, in addition to providing information to the public, it has an email link that can be used to

lodge a health complaint about a restaurant or report that data on the site might be inaccurate or outdated.

"This partnership is a perfect example of how open data in government can be leveraged to create a better experience for consumers while promoting the public good," Scanlon said.

"I think what most people appreciate is you don't have to change how you use Yelp to get access to this information."

He said their work helped to establish a data standard for restaurant inspection data.

"That made it easier for other counties or cities to ... normalize their data — to eliminate their jargon and such to put it into the Yelp standard. I do know that a lot of the local municipalities followed our example," Greeves said.

He and Scanlon foresee future opportunities to engage with the local "civic tech community." Wake County, in the heart of North Carolina's Research Triangle, has a deep vein of tech volunteerism.

"We're looking at other kinds of similar things with other sets of data that we collect for other purposes now." **CN**

Bright Ideas features noteworthy and award-winning county programs.

LEADERSHIP EDGE

What the suburbanization of poverty means for U.S. counties

Elizabeth Kneebone
and Cecile Murray

Metropolitan Policy Program
Brookings

The recent election cycle and the parsing of its largely unpredicted outcome helped bring attention to the economic struggles facing a wide swath of communities across the country — from President Trump's repeated invocations of the disastrous plight of "inner cities" to the post-election commentaries on the role of economically distressed rural communities in electing Trump to the presidency.

As of 2015, 43.1 million people — or 13.5 percent of the country — lived below the federal poverty line. While that number marks an improvement over 2014, it is still 5.8 million more compared to

2007's pre-recession count and 11.5 million more than in 2000. The election-cycle narrative captured the economic anxiety many Americans continue to feel several years into an economic recovery that has yet to bring poverty back to pre-recession levels.

But it largely missed the fact

that the communities bearing the brunt of growing poverty over the 2000s were not just urban or rural. The nation's suburbs accounted for roughly half (48 percent) of the uptick in the poor population between 2000 and 2015, making suburbia home to the not only the fastest-growing poor pop-

SOME DEFINITIONS

Urban counties are counties in the 100 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) that contain a primary city (population of 100,000 or more), or at least half the population of a primary city, and have an urbanization rate of 95 percent or more.

Suburban counties are all other counties in the 100 largest metro areas and are further categorized by their urbanization rates as follows: *High Density* (95 percent or more), *Mature* (between 75 and 95 percent), *Emerging* (between 25 and 75 percent), and *Exurban* (less than 25 percent).

Small Metro counties fall in an MSA outside the top 100
Rural counties are those that are not part of an MSA.

ulation in the country but also the largest. By 2015, the suburban poor population outnumbered the poor in big cities by more than 3 million and the rural poor population by more than 8 million people.

That is not to say that urban and rural communities did not experience rising poverty. The majority of the nation's counties — 62 percent — registered significant increases in poverty in the 2000s (see map). Sorting counties into different categories — urban, suburban, small metro and rural — makes it clear that growing poverty was a challenge felt across the geographic spectrum (see chart, page 17).

Yet taken together, suburban counties experienced by far the steepest uptick in the poor population between 2000 and 2015, with an increase of

64 percent. While older, more urbanized suburbs saw some of the sharpest increases, growing poverty also reached beyond "inner-ring" suburbs to lower-density and exurban counties.

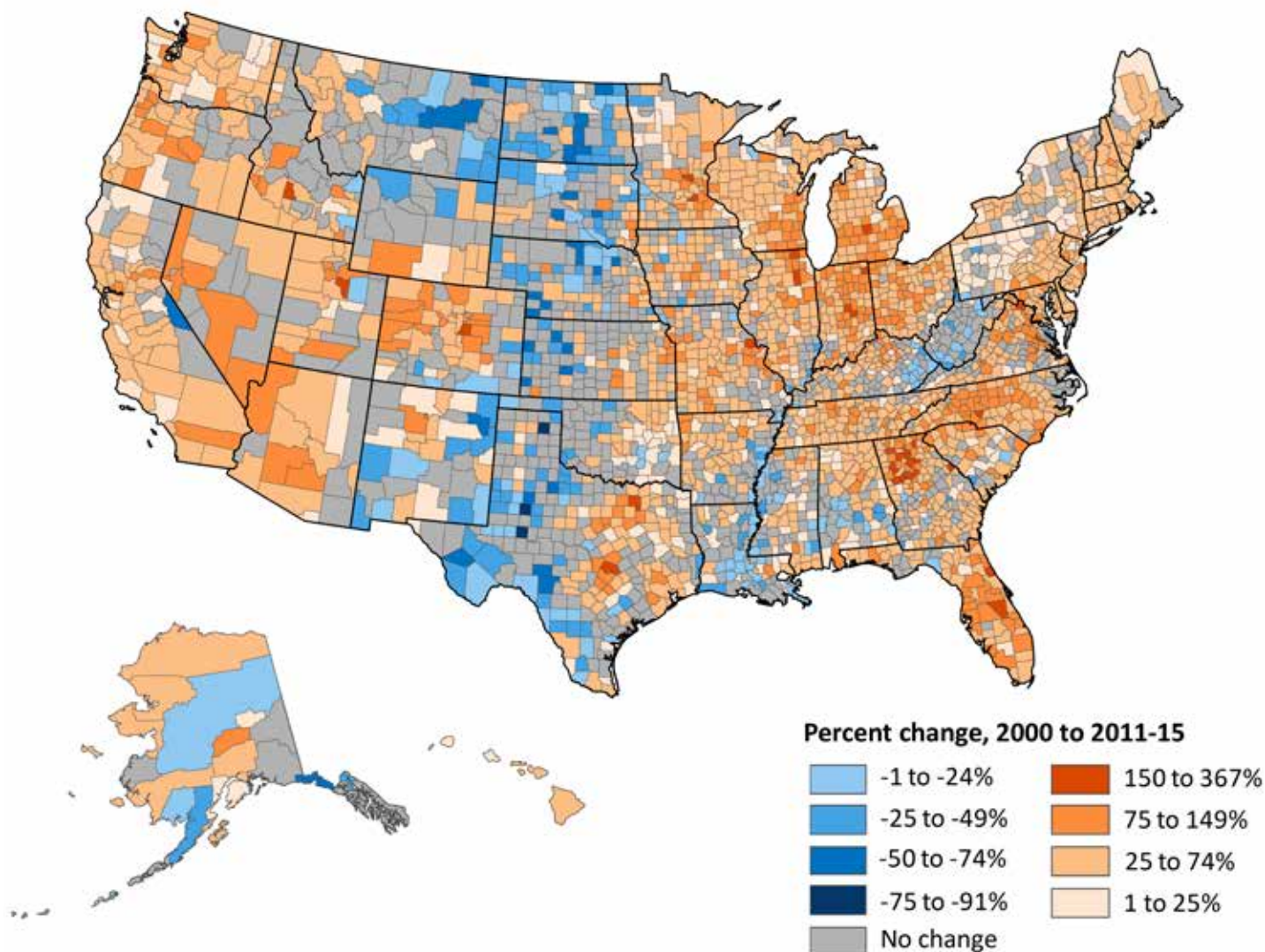
As much as feelings of economic anxiety may have contributed to Trump's win, poverty's growth over the 2000s cut across party lines. On one hand, the pace of growth in the poor population tended to be faster in counties won by Trump. But the 489 counties won by Hillary Clinton were home to most of the nation's poor population (56 percent). Those counties also tended to have somewhat higher poverty rates on average compared to the 2,613 counties that Trump carried. The exception was in suburban counties, which posted slightly higher poverty rates in areas that went for Trump.

These numbers underscore the fact the 2000s saw the challenges of poverty become more widely shared as communities across the country were buffeted by a combination of forces that not only drove poverty up but also expanded its geographic reach.

The last decade was bookended by two economic downturns that played a significant role in the rapid rise of poverty in the 2000s, as did longer-running structural economic changes, like the growth of low-wage work and erosion of middle-class jobs. But the changing geography of poverty has also been shaped by other factors, including the continued shift of jobs away from downtowns, regional housing market trends and the changing location of affordable housing, and shifting immigration patterns.

While suburbs are a diverse mix of places, much more so than popular stereotypes

Percent Change in the Poor Population, 2000 to 2011-15



Fragmentation in suburban areas, program delivery adds challenges

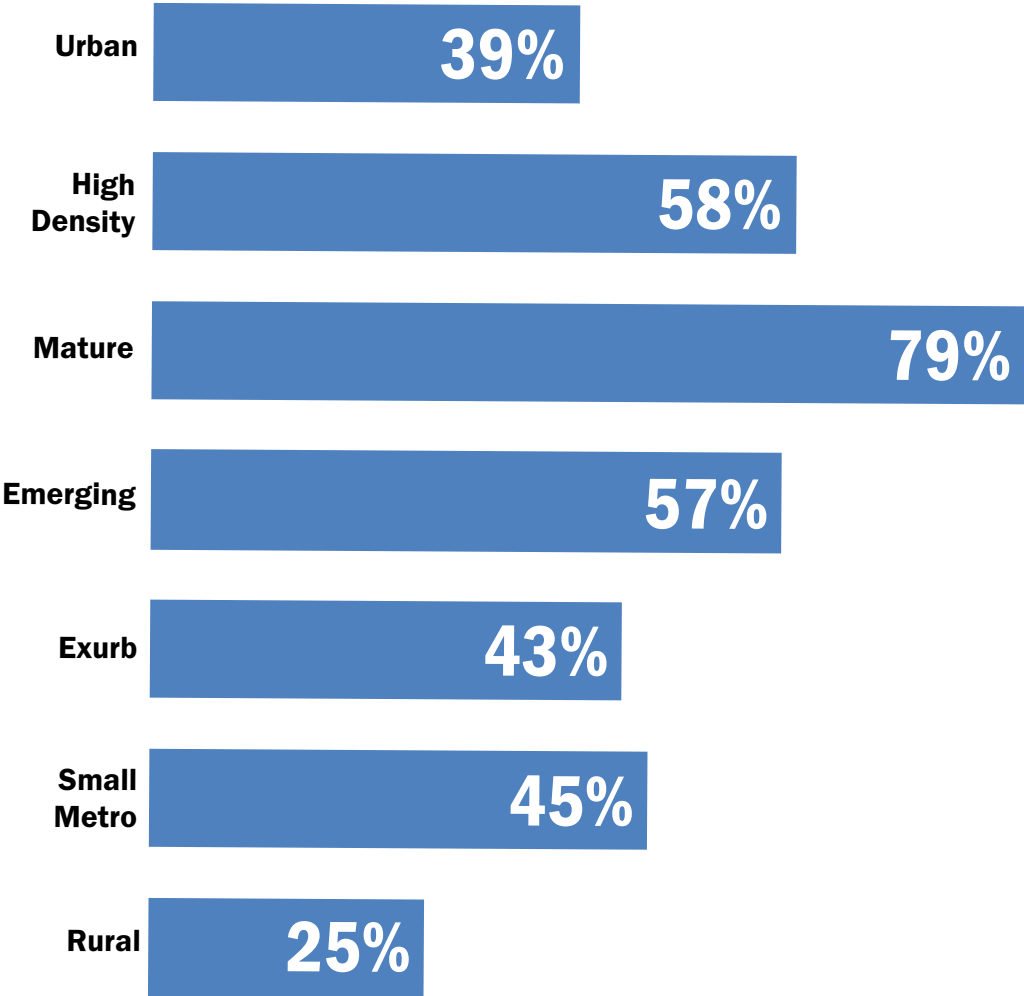
From POVERTY page 16

would suggest, many face common challenges when it comes to addressing the recent rapid growth of poverty. The suburban safety net tends to be less extensive and spread thinner than in cities, and resources often haven't kept up with the pace of growing need. Public transit is often limited or simply not available, which can make it that much harder for residents to access services or to overcome the growing distance between where they live and where jobs are located. And the fragmented nature of both suburban jurisdictions and anti-poverty programs can complicate efforts to address shared challenges effectively. Even in the face of these

challenges, local and regional leaders are finding innovative ways to respond to the broader reach of poverty by crafting more scaled and collaborative solutions. Many counties across the country have taken leadership roles in these efforts, taking advantage of the scale at which they operate to help overcome the challenges outlined above. For example, in 2009 Montgomery County, Md., worked with local services providers, funders, and the community to create the Neighborhood Opportunity Network — a more streamlined and culturally competent service-delivery model built to respond more effectively to increasing poverty and rapid demographic change in the county.

In 2015, King County, Wash., rolled out ORCA Lift, a reduced-fare program to help make transit more affordable for low-income residents, the majority of whom live in Seattle's suburbs. Not only do these examples show the important role counties can play in better connecting residents to opportunity, innovative local and regional efforts like these can help inform an anti-poverty policy agenda at all levels of government that more effectively addresses the scale and reach of today's geography of poverty. **CN** *Kneebone is a fellow and Murray is a research assistant at the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.*

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE POOR POPULATION, BY COUNTY TYPE 2000 to 2011-15



PROFILES IN SERVICE

CHRIS COUDRIET
Health Steering Committee
Healthy Counties Advisory Board
County Manager
New Hanover County, N.C.



Number of years active in NACo: 15

Years in Public Service: 23

Occupation: Public administrator

Education: B.S., urban and regional planning; M.P.A., public management

The hardest thing I've ever done: Watch my then 10-year-old daughter go into emergency surgery to remove what was, ultimately, a benign cyst.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan

A dream I have is to: Retire a long time from now as New Hanover county manager.

You'd be surprised to learn that: I've lived on or very near the coast for my entire life and can't stomach eating seafood.

My favorite way to relax is to: Watch cooking shows.

I'm most proud of: My two children — a 16-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son.

Every morning I read: *The Wilmington Star News.*

My favorite meal is: Filet mignon, medium rare and red wine — with nothing else.

My pet peeve is: People who don't take responsibility for their actions or inaction.

My motto is: Great North State's motto, *Esse quam videri* — "To be, rather than to seem."

The last book I read was: *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J.D. Vance.

My favorite movie is: *The Usual Suspects.*

My favorite music is: Anything written and performed by Van Morrison.

My favorite U.S. president is: All of them.

My county is a NACo member because: "Counties Matter," and so does NACo.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:

Snorkel in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Key Largo, Fla.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ALABAMA

• A state senator has introduced a bill that would shift 70 percent of the costs of caring for **mentally ill county jail inmates** to the federal government under Medicaid, the Associated Press reported. Counties currently pay for inmates' behavioral health care.

The measure would also make it possible for county inmates to resume federal mental health care benefits immediately upon release. Currently, Medicaid coverage is terminated when a person enters a county jail.

• **BIBB COUNTY** is receiving a \$546,000 grant from the state to make infrastructure improvements for a **German auto parts** plant being built in the county.

The company, MollerTech, is building a \$46 million factory to manufacture interior parts for future Mercedes-Benz SUVs.

The Community Development Block Grant funding was made available through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

CALIFORNIA

• **ALAMEDA, CONTRA COSTA** and **SAN MATEO counties** will split **\$1.275 million from a settlement** with Bay Area Rapid Transit for BART's alleged environmental safety violations, *The Daily Californian* reported.

In their lawsuit, the counties claimed BART did not have an emergency response plan in place in case diesel fuel or petroleum leaked from storage tanks near its stations. The diesel tanks run generators at several BART stations.

• The shortage of beds for people suffering mental health crises will abate in **ORANGE COUNTY**, and children especially will benefit.

The Board of Supervisors recently approved a \$23.9 million, three-year contract with a nonprofit to operate a facility to temporarily house teenagers and adults, being held involuntarily, who experience **sudden psychiatric episodes**.

The 22-bed center is scheduled to open in December and will be the only psychiatric facility of its type in the county that serves teens. Three others are planned, according to the *Orange County Register*.

"This is a critical step forward in addressing the issue of children's mental health considering that 50 percent of mental health conditions begin by age 14," Supervisor Andrew Do said.

HAWAII

Eighty-three percent of the proceeds from Hawaii's hotel tax go to the state, while the other 17 percent is distributed among four counties: **HONOLULU CITY AND COUNTY**, and **MAUI, HAWAII** and **KAUAI counties**.

Now, some state lawmakers want to **eliminate the counties' share**.

House Bill 1586 would phase out the counties' share of the transient accommodations tax, leaving counties to make up the difference through property tax hikes.

The **HAWAII STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES** is supporting a different bill, H.B. 317, which calls for a 55 percent/45 percent distribution.



IDAHO

Two eastern Idaho counties are among the latest **targets of computer hackers**. In the more serious of the incidents, **BINGHAM COUNTY's** servers were hit with a ransomware attack last month. Hackers demanded \$25,000 to \$30,000, which the county refused to pay. It chose, instead, to rely on its backed-up data, EastIdahoNews.com reported.

"Every department in the county is affected in some way," said Bingham County Commissioner Whitney Manwaring. "Phone systems, computer systems, everything. Some departments are handwriting documents."

In **TETON COUNTY**, a hacker claimed responsibility for disrupting the county's website, replacing its homepage with an image of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a Turkish flag and the words "Hacked by Jacksparrow."

Officials said there's no evidence that the two incidents were linked.

MARYLAND

A nurse is challenging **HOWARD** and **BALTIMORE counties' stun-gun bans** on Second Amendment grounds. Leah Baran sued the counties in federal court after Taser International refused to

ship a stun gun to her Howard County home.

She said she needs the device to protect her from an ex-boyfriend who is currently serving a lengthy prison sentence. He has vowed, if released, to kill her, the *Baltimore Sun* reported.

MONTANA

LAKE COUNTY commissioners say the county can no longer afford to **prosecute felony crimes** committed on the Flathead Indian Reservation, and they want the state to pick up the nearly \$2 million a year tab.

Currently, the county and the reservation operate under a federal law that gives the county jurisdiction over felonies on the reservation within county borders, according to the Associated Press.

County commissioners have already passed a resolution of intent to withdraw from the federal law. Meanwhile, state Rep. Greg Hertz has sponsored a bill making the state responsible for the cost of prosecution.

OHIO

A state proposal to stop requiring governments to send notices via **certified mail** could save

CUYAHOGA COUNTY up to half a million dollars a year.

State law currently requires certified mail for 27 different functions, and the U.S. Postal Service certified mail rate ranges from \$4.61 to \$6.59 for a 1-ounce letter.

Shelley Davis, administrator of the Cuyahoga County Board of Revision, told the House state and local government committee that the certified mail requirement, established when electric typewriters were state of the art, is obsolete, *The Plain Dealer* reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

Similar to a recent change in protocol in New Jersey, **AL-**

LEGHENY COUNTY District Attorney Stephen Zappala plans to have assistant district attorneys **sign off on all felony arrests** before charges are filed.

The change will make the prosecutors, rather than police officers, determine the charges in all such cases. The change will create two new warrant offices for this work. Pittsburgh's municipal court will be staffed by an assistant district attorney 24 hours a day, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported. All Pittsburgh police officers planning to file felony complaints and warrants must have them reviewed by the assistant DA prior to filing criminal charges.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The attorney general's office says **BEAUFORT COUNTY** must pay the multimillion-dollar bill for **clearing Hurricane Matthew storm debris** from local waterways and marshlands, including damaged docks. Estimates peg the price tag at more than \$5 million.

An opinion written in January said "a coastal county, such as Beaufort County, possesses 'legal responsibility' with respect to debris cleanup in the tidelands areas," *The Island Packet* reported. While the attorney general's office doesn't determine FEMA eligibility, the opinion said, "We hope that state and local authorities are fully reimbursed for the cost imposed in responding to (the Hurricane Matthew) disaster."

Confusion over whether the water was the property of the county or the state departments of natural resources, health and environmental control necessitated the attorney general's ruling.

TEXAS

A Texas Supreme Court-backed system would make judicial records accessible to the public online as soon as this fall, and 95 counties don't like it.



From NEWS FROM page 18

BASTROP COUNTY is one of the most recent to come out in opposition, after the commission passed a resolution to that effect. Clerks say it will deny them control of their own records by placing them in the care of the state through the **re:SearchTX** system and robbing their offices of critical revenue since clerks currently charge \$1 per page for public records. Commissioners passed a resolution opposing the change, the *Austin American Statesman* reported.

WISCONSIN

Sensing that the hordes of Pokémon Go players could be the harbinger of more augmented reality games, **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** is asserting control over its parks being used as playing fields.

A new ordinance requires that game developers **get a permit** before including parkland in games, like any other business or group that wants to host park events. The fees will be on a sliding-scale from \$100-\$1,000, depending on how much of the park will be used and how

many people are expected to be there, the Associated Press reported.

Crowds playing the game in one of the county's parks in 2016 took parks officials by surprise. It led to traffic congestion, overflowing bathrooms and so much trash that the county had minimum-security inmates help clean up. **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.



VIRGINIA

Families take advantage of **stargazing opportunities** at **FAIRFAX COUNTY**'s Turner Farm Park. There they learned about constellations, visible planets, comets and other night-sky phenomena. The county park sits under some of the counties darkest skies, making it easier to explore the heavens away from urban light pollution. The Astronomy Family Fun event focused on Venus.

ON THE MOVE

NACo OFFICERS, COUNTY LEADERS

• **At the Oval Office:** NACo President **Bryan Desloge**; First Vice President **Roy Charles Brooks**; Second Vice President **Greg Cox**; Forsyth County, N.C. Commissioner **Gloria Whisenhunt**; Kent County, Mich. Commissioner **Diane Jones**; Pottawattamie County, Iowa Auditor **Melvyn Houser**; Chester County, Pa. Commissioner **Terence Farrell**; Berks County, Pa. Commissioner **Christian Leinbach**; Sussex County, Del. Councilmember **Robert Arlett**; El Paso County, Colo. Commissioner **Longinos Gonzalez**; and Mesa County, Colo. Commissioner **Rose Pugliese** were invited by the White House to attend the signing of the executive order withdrawing EPA's controversial "waters of the U.S." rule, Feb. 28.

On Capitol Hill:

Commissioner **Victoria Reinhardt**, Ramsey County, Minn. and Commissioner **Rose Pugliese**, Mesa County, Colo. were guests at President Donald Trump's address to the joint session of Congress, Feb. 28.

NACo STAFF

• **Sheridan Marfil** is the Financial Services Center's new digital marketing and communications manager. She will be responsible for expanding FSC's digital marketing strategy and web presence, and managing U.S. Communities marketing communications. Before joining NACo, Sheridan served as the director of

Digital Outreach at Subject Matter.

• New County Solutions and Innovations associate, **Pierre Joseph** will focus primarily on health-related topic areas aimed to educate county officials and fulfill the requirements of various grant agreements. Before joining NACo, Pierre served as student public service internship coordinator at the Center for Community Engagement. He interned for Sens. Elizabeth Warren and John Kerry.



Barton



Taylor



Marfil



Joseph

• **Mary Ann Barton** will serve as senior staff writer for *County News*. Before joining NACo, Mary Ann served as an editor at Patch.com, where she managed a team of editors and reported on news for a half-dozen sites.

• **Charles Taylor**, *County News* senior writer, has retired after 11 years with the publication. Taylor was lead writer on *County News*' popular Hot Topics series and covered a variety of issues with particular interest in transportation, smart growth, technology and health

and human services. He also served as NACo staff liaison to the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials.

• **Eryn Hurley**, legislative affairs department, has been promoted from legislative associate to associate legislative director for human services. Eryn began her career at NACo in 2015.

• **Austin Igleheart**, legislative affairs department, has been promoted from legislative assistant to legislative associate. Austin joined NACo in 2015.

**the HR
DOCTOR**
with Philpot
& Winkler

BEWARE

the Conscientious Employee

One Thursday, Margaret wakes up at 5 a.m. with a high fever. She has been fighting a cold for a few days now, feeling a little under the weather, but she has still been going to work. Now that she has a fever, she worries that she might be contagious and doesn't want to expose her co-workers or clients to an illness. She decides to call in sick.

Margaret is a valued employee. She has been with the county for six years and has a passion for serving others. She is great at customer service, both to her clients and her co-workers. Wanting her illness to create the least amount of impact on others, she logs into the county network and email, and checks her schedule for the day. Her calendar reveals plans for three meetings with external clients, her weekly meeting with her supervisor, a free webinar for continuing education, and a committee meeting regarding a software update and work time.

Margaret emails her supervisor to let her know she is ill, which is an approved method of calling in sick. She then emails a member of the software committee to let them know she cannot attend today, but looks forward to receiving the meeting minutes. She emails co-worker Val to request coverage of her client meetings, being certain to include the details of where to find needed files and the specifics of the meetings. Margaret follows up on several emails she intended to reply to today.

She updates her electronic timesheet to indicate eight hours of sick time/PTO for

today. She turns on her automatic "out of office" reply for her email and for her phone message. She logs off an hour later, takes some acetaminophen for her fever, and returns to bed thinking she might log in for the one o'clock webinar if she wakes up in time.

Margaret is a conscientious employee, and she is also a non-exempt employee. This is an important distinction that you need to know about.

Margaret has incorrectly coded her timesheet because she just worked from home, on the county network and county email system, for an hour. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), she must be paid for this time.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor website, "work not requested but suffered or permitted to be performed is work time that must be paid for by the employer. The reason is immaterial. The hours are work time and are compensable."

If Margaret does view the one o'clock webinar, she will work for another hour. If she checks her email later in the day when she is feeling slightly better, she will log an additional half hour of work time. Suddenly she has worked 2.5 hours and only used 5.5 hours of sick/PTO time.

The use of technology makes it easier and easier for employees to almost inadvertently perform work after hours and on weekends. Email notifications chime and many employees reflexively glance at their phones. Do they respond each time? Are they expected to? While checking emails here and there may not

seem like it takes much time, it can add up quickly. Importantly, it may also result in compensable overtime.

So what can supervisors and employers do? First, communicate to non-exempt employees how to properly recognize and record work time. Second, reconsider those after-hours inquiries of non-exempt employees, unless the information is urgent or time sensitive. Third, understand how your organization records time. For example, many electronic systems count time over seven minutes worked as a quarter of an hour.

Fourth, know your organization's policy permitting work outside of normal working hours and communicate your expectations to your employees. Some organizations require such time to be pre-approved by a supervisor, while other organizations may prohibit such work unless extreme circumstances exist.

Additionally, review your procedure about how to call in sick. Can employees call, text or email to report their absence? When must they do so and to whom do they speak? Speaking to a supervisor gives a single point of contact to someone who can delegate the missing employee's duties. Consider the example above: What if co-worker Val is also out for the day and is unable to cover Margaret's client meet-

ings, or what if there is a staff member who can better assist with coverage?

Determine if your computer calendar program has the ability to give permissions for other employees to view details or view limited details so that co-workers can more easily cover for someone who is out. Cross train employees so that they are easily able to cover for one another. Have desk manuals for each position so that if an employee is out and a unique situation comes up, there is a reference guide with instructions.

Consistency is important. Margaret had a fever, took an over-the-counter medication, and only communicated internally with staff. But another employee may have a more serious illness, take a prescription medication that could cause drowsiness and contact external customers. Should that employee be working from home under those conditions? How would a supervisor determine the difference without asking HIPAA-protected questions?

It is better practice to have a consistent policy that prohibits work while employees are ill. Consistent policy and procedure allows employees to take time to recover, protects the organization and ensures that customers receive high levels of customer service. That makes everyone feel better. **CN**

