

PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES GENERAL SESSION



President Donald J. Trump tells NACo members the White House “will always be your ally” in his address March 3 at the 2020 NACo Legislative Conference at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. See story on Page 2 and more coverage of the conference inside. Photo by Denny Henry

County-installed hotspots bring broadband to rural areas

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

In the parking lots of a fire station and the county administration building in Goochland County, Va., county residents can now sit in their cars and check the latest trending

hashtags or catch up on the news.

The county installed external and internal hotspots in early February at certain county facilities as part of a larger broadband internet initiative to bring

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Coronavirus challenges county public health departments

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Responding to the novel coronavirus outbreak has been like shoring up the foundation of a house built on sand.

The World Health Organization has reported almost 125,000 cases in 118 countries as of March 11. Within those numbers, the United States totaled 36 deaths among 1,215 confirmed cases in 42 states and the District of Columbia, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On March 6, President Trump

signed a bill totaling \$8.3 billion that would allocate \$2.2 billion in public health funding (\$1 billion of that for state and local preparedness grants), with each state receiving at least \$4 million. It also includes \$100 million in supplemental appropriations for Community Health Centers (CHC) — a key priority for counties as health safety-net providers.

The disease’s two-week incubation period and symptoms similar to the common cold, along with the frequency and ease of travel, has presented a challenge in detecting and

predicting new cases. But, the decentralized nature of county public health departments is playing a key role in defending against things getting worse.

“Public health personnel have been running at 100 mph since January, monitoring the disease before it even came to this country,” said Adriane Casalotti, chief of government and public affairs at the National Association of County and City Health Officials. “Every day the story changes; every four hours, the story changes. They

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President Trump touts county-White House connection

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

President Trump took breaks from touting the United States' economic growth to stress his commitment to a strong relationship between the federal and local governments during the March 3 General Session at NACo's Legislative Conference. It was the first appearance by a sitting U.S. president at a NACo conference in 24 years.

"I want you to know that my administration will always be your friend, your partner, your ally and resource as you work to deliver an amazing future, for your counties and for your communities and for the country itself," he said.

He reviewed his administration's three years, highlighting military investments, tax cuts and regulatory reform.

"You know the regulation business better than any group I can think of," he said.

"We've cut regulations at a level that nobody had ever thought possible and we did it with the help of local officials, people like yourself that work with us and work with the Department of Transportation and all the other departments that we work with."

He set a goal of new roads being able to pass the approval process within a year, though he acknowledged safety and environmental study requirements could make that difficult.

Trump lauded county health departments for their work responding to coronavirus contagion.

"Six weeks ago, eight weeks ago, you never heard of this," he said. "All of a sudden it's got the world aflutter."

"Things happen that you never even think would happen and you have to confront it, you have to do a lot of good

work and you take care of the situation," he said.

"You people do it better than anyone I can think of," he said.

"America has the world's most advanced public health system. We know that our county health officials play a front-line role in battling public health threats and we are working with Congress very closely to pass supplemental legislation to ensue state and county health departments get everything they need."

He mentioned efforts to work with pharmaceutical producers to accelerate vaccine development.

Trump was pleased to see Sen. Charles Schumer's (D-N.Y.) much higher request as part of a bipartisan emergency funding measure for local hospitals to combat the virus.

"I asked for \$2.5 billion, it looks like they're going to give us \$8.5 billion," he said. "I should say 'I'll take it,' right?"

Trump stressed the impor-

tance of the more than 3,000 county officials' trips to the White House in the past three years in response to invitations extended to every county elected official.

"My administration has made engagement with local leaders a top priority because nobody understands the needs of local communities better than local officials and people in this room," he said.

He also advocated for greater funding for mental health intervention, particularly in communities.

"County jails were not meant to deal with the mental illness problem," he said to a standing ovation.

"It's not compassionate to leave those with mental illness on the streets."

Trump promoted the Opportunity Zones program, part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that allows tax breaks for investments in projects located in low-income census tracts

designated by governors.

"Areas that haven't seen investment in 40 years," he said. "Things like that help make the economy good."

"This is a thing where people are investing in areas that they never ever in a million years would have invested in and it's becoming a tremendous success."

Trump invited Lea County, N.M. Commissioner Rebecca Long and Pasco County, Fla. Commissioner Kathryn Starkey onto the stage to elaborate how his administration has helped their counties.

"Your energy agenda is helping us with quicker right of way permits on BLM land and drilling permits, we're getting those faster so that's helping America be energy independent," Long said.

Starkey spoke of the consequences of Hurricane Irma.

"Counties were getting into bidding wars over debris removal contracts, and they were

creating affordable prices for other municipalities," she said. A call to the White House's Intergovernmental Affairs offices prompted a conference call with the Federal Emergency Management Agency that yielded an emergency rule change that resolved the situation.

"This would not have happened without the incredible outreach from the White House early on," Starkey said.


"As long as I am president, the federal government is on your side 100 percent," Trump told the audience.

"You always have a very important seat at the table and you'll always find an open door at the White House."

Earlier in the morning, he had visually surveyed the room.

"There's a lot of power in this room. You don't know the power you have."

He waited a beat.

"Yes... you do." 



President Donald J. Trump is flanked by NACo officers and staff (l-r) Matt Chase; Ray Jeffers; Joe Briggs; Cindy Bobbitt; Christian Leinbach; Mary Ann Borgeson; Gary Moore; Larry Johnson; Greg Cox; Deborah Cox and CDC Director Robert Redfield. White House photo

‘We want to know who is sick — that’s how we get the broader picture’

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have to be nimble and focused to be able to cut through the noise to do the work but also recognize how the reality on the ground has changed, and act.”

The intimate and in-depth knowledge public health officials have about their counties is crucial, Casalotti said, and their technical public health knowledge is sufficient in the meantime.

“You can always read a paper that says the best practice for any given health issue is X, but if that doesn’t fit your community context or needs to be translated into having an older population or one that has a large number of people who are experiencing homelessness or one where a lot of kids are dropping out of schools, you have to understand the nuances of your community so you can then implement public health best practices,” she said.

That has meant limits on the size of public gatherings in some counties, building closures and school cancellations in others, and for some health departments, innovations like drive-through testing centers for the virus.

It also means being ready to adjust.

On March 10, Sacramento County, Calif. dropped a 14-day quarantine order for anyone who had been exposed to the virus, the time period during which symptoms would appear.

“Their ability to not only communicate that but pivot was really critical,” Casalotti said. “Many communities are probably in that spectrum, it’s not a

binary choice of mitigation or containment. Every day, they’re looking at the numbers, looking at the spread in their community and figuring out where they need to be targeting their limited resources.

“You need to have all the options on the table and think creatively about how you want to achieve your public health goals while also doing so in an efficient way and a way that doesn’t put people at risk.”

Fayette County, W.Va. is considering joining the counties, cities and hospitals that have set up testing sites that allow residents to be tested while in their cars.

“We want to know who is sick — that’s how we get the broader picture of what we’re facing and more accurately address coronavirus, you want people to get tested,” Casalotti said. “At the same time, you don’t want someone who has coronavirus going into a waiting room at an urgent care or their physician’s office or an emergency room and potentially spreading the disease.”

Out of sight, not out of mind

Tucked away in northwest Wyoming, Teton County is far from the hotbeds of coronavirus activity. But Jodie Pond is not resting easy.

The director of the county’s health department can see up the road to Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park, the Jackson Hole Airport — the motives and the method for someone infected with coronavirus to enter her county.

“We’re not typical of the rest

of Wyoming,” she said. “If we made a bet, my money would be on the first case being in Teton County. We’ve been following and preparing since we heard about this — we have a high number of Chinese visitors to the parks. We’re 25,000 people but on any given day in the summer we’re 60,000 more, so there are a lot of people coming and going.”

Coronavirus hit the news days after the end of a statewide flu exercise.

“We feel very prepared,” Pond said. “Now we’re focused on limiting exposure.”

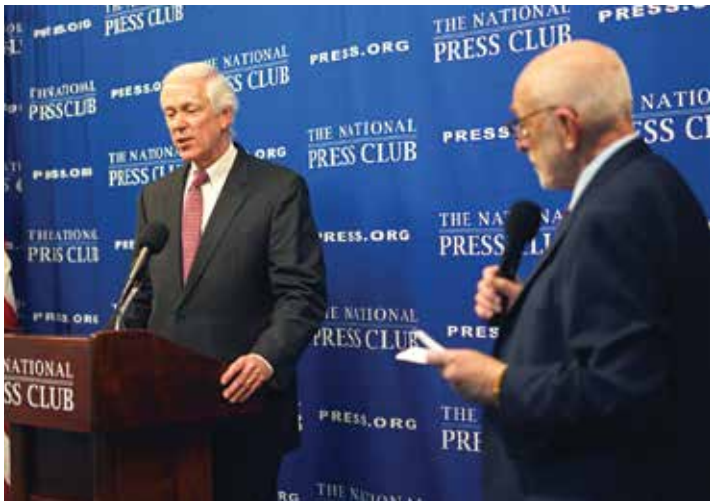
She is consulting with county officials to figure out the fate of two events in the county that could bring in 30,000 people.

“We’re trying to understand when we should cancel those events and make the right decision,” she said. “We will be importing a case if we hold those events, we’ll be bringing coronavirus to our community if it’s not already here.”

Questions of capacity

The coronavirus pandemic comes on the heels of 12 long years for the public health field. NACCHO found that since the Great Recession, health departments generally are, at best, flat funded since 2008. At worst, large health departments, without adjusting for inflation, have lost almost 30 percent of their budgets since 2008 and small departments generally lost more than 10 percent.

“The people who are responding to coronavirus are the same people who are responding to the unknown vaping illness, are the same people who



George Roberts Jr., NACCHO president, discusses the coronavirus situation March 6 in Washington, D.C. Photo by Hugh Clarke

are responding to the measles outbreak, are the same people who are working to the opioid outbreak,” Casalotti said.

Washington state was already dealing with a Hepatitis A outbreak before Snohomish and King counties started seeing domestic cases of coronavirus.

“We’re essentially going to let it get worse because coronavirus is more severe, but that speaks to the importance to bolstering local public health so we can provide all critical functions all the time,” said Jaime Bodden, managing director of the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials.

Washington had been, until recently, a picture of the liability that comes with a county-based public health system, after an automobile tax repeal in 2000 gutted funding for public health departments.

“Not all entities are created equal to be able to fund a local public health service,” said Eric Johnson, executive director of the Washington Association of Counties. “You have 3,069 counties, with different tax base structures, different revenue

structures, so when you’re trying to deliver what should be a really uniform system across the state based on a local funding capacity, that makes it very problematic.”

Washington’s Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) program, passed in recent years, came to smaller counties’ rescue, offering increased funding and service sharing.

“It’s a clear understanding of the role the state has in assuring access to resources and funding for our local health jurisdictions to deliver a core set of foundational public health services regardless,” Johnson said.

“Whether you live in King County with 2.2 million people or Garfield County with 2,200 people, those citizens have equal access to the delivery of a core set of public health services delivered by the locals, funded by the state.”

For instance, Garfield County might not need a full-time epidemiologist on staff, but it now has access to one. The program also binds the 35 different

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SNAP/STATS

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

Women in the United States 166 million

Women age 16 and older
in the civilian labor force 78.4 million

Number of female veterans 1.6 million

Percentage of women who have
a bachelor’s degree 41.7 percent

Percentage of women in Congress.....23.7 percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Rutgers

A colorful illustration featuring a collage of diverse women's faces. The women have various hairstyles, skin tones, and are wearing different types of head coverings like headscarves and headwraps. The style is artistic and modern, with a focus on representing a wide range of ethnicities and cultures.

HISTORY OF U.S. PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL PARTICIPATION AT NACo EVENTS



Gerald Ford meets with county officials.



Bernie Hillenbrand greets Jimmy Carter.



Bill Clinton meets county officials.

<p>1959 Vice President Richard Nixon attends first Urban County Congress Caucus in Washington D.C.</p> <p>1964 President Lyndon Johnson hosts NACo members on the White House South Lawn</p> <p>1969 President Richard Nixon addresses Annual Conference</p>	<p>1975 President Gerald Ford addresses NACo Legislative Conference</p> <p>1974-1977 (exact date unknown): President Gerald Ford hosts NACo members at the White House</p> <p>1979 President Jimmy Carter addresses Annual Conference</p>	<p>1980 Vice President Walter Mondale attends ground-breaking for new NACo HQ</p> <p>1981 President Ronald Reagan meets with NACo's Black Caucus at the White House</p> <p>1982 President Ronald Reagan addresses Annual Conference</p>	<p>1982 Vice President George H.W. Bush speaks at the Legislative Conference</p> <p>1982 Vice President George H.W. Bush cuts ribbon at the opening of NACo HQ</p> <p>1991 President George H.W. Bush signs proclamation establishing National County Government Week, with county officials in the Oval Office</p>	<p>1993 County leaders meet with President Bill Clinton at the White House</p> <p>1995 President Bill Clinton addresses Legislative Conference</p> <p>1996 President Bill Clinton addresses Legislative Conference</p> <p>1997 Vice President Al Gore addresses Legislative Conference</p>	<p>2001 Vice President Dick Cheney and Mrs. Lynne Cheney address Annual Conference</p> <p>2003 First Lady Laura Bush addresses Legislative Conference</p> <p>2011 President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden meet with county officials at White House</p>	<p>2015 Vice President Joe Biden addresses Legislative Conference</p> <p>2020 President Donald J. Trump addresses Legislative Conference</p>
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HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a 12-week, online course that connects your staff with practical leadership training.

THE ACADEMY FOCUSES ON FIVE ESSENTIAL SKILLS:



LEAD



ORGANIZE



COLLABORATE



DELIVER



COMMUNICATE

The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy empowers frontline county government professionals with fundamental, practical leadership skills to deliver results for counties and residents.

Find out more at [NACo.org/Skills](https://www.naco.org/skills)

With a curriculum developed by **General Colin Powell** and public and private sector leaders, NACo High Performance Leadership Academy gives students the opportunity to learn from world-class faculty. All content is guided by an expert facilitator.



Apply for 2020 NACo/ Nationwide Scholarship

by Amy Warner-Rodgers

Are you the parent, grandparent or legal guardian of a high school senior? If you actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program, your student is eligible to apply for one of four \$2,500 college scholarships. Scholarships will be awarded in the fall of 2020.

In its 16th year of existence, the NACo/Nationwide scholarship essay contest is an educational opportunity for high school students transitioning into a new stage of their lives. Engaging young people in civic life and responsibilities is a great way to show high school students the valuable roles that counties play in the lives of their residents. The 2020 scholarship program's goal is to help ensure that young people get involved and stay involved in local government — and understand the importance of being good stewards of their future finances.

To help students consider the importance of saving early and consistently, students are asked to write an essay that answers the following questions:

Most high school students dream of the day when they will be on their own and no longer depend on their parents, but that kind of freedom requires financial independence. What does financial freedom mean to you? What is your plan to achieve financial freedom for yourself, and how are you going to ensure that your financial freedom will continue through your retirement years?

Eligibility requirements

Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply. Please keep the following criteria in mind:

- The applicant's parent, grandparent or legal guardian must be enrolled in and actively contributing to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program.
- Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the autumn term of the 2020-2021

school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

- Immediate family members of NACo employees, members of the NACo Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee or its governing board of directors, staff of individual state Association of Counties that are members of the LLC and Nationwide employees are not eligible to apply; this program is not offered outside the United States.
- The application and entry must be submitted online at nrsforu.com/scholarship between April 1 and May 31, 2020.

Application process

Parents, grandparents or legal guardians should talk to their eligible high school seniors about applying right away. Applications can be completed online at nrsforu.com/scholarship beginning April 1.

Forty-one years of partnership — and still going strong

The NACo-Nationwide Scholarship is one of the many benefits available as a result of four decades of partnership between Nationwide and the National Association of Counties (NACo) and its member counties. For additional information about the NACo Deferred Compensation Program, please contact David Belnick at belnid1@nationwide.com or 410.790.5440, or contact your Nationwide representative at 1.877.677.3678.

Nationwide Retirement Solutions (Nationwide) partners with the National Association of Counties (NACo) to provide counties and their employees with a competitive deferred compensation program. As part of this partnership, Nationwide pays a fee to NACo in exchange for NACo's exclusive endorsement, marketing support and program oversight of Nationwide products made available under the program. For more information, including fees paid, Nationwide encourages you to visit NRSforu.com.

Amy Warner-Rodgers is a communications consultant with Nationwide.

'Broadband is something that is a necessity'

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internet access to areas without it.

Goochland County is located west of Richmond and on the outer edge of the metro-Richmond area. Administrative Services Manager Paul Drumwright said a significant population of the rural county does not have broadband access.

Some areas have had private providers extend service, but for other areas, specifically in the western portion of the county where there is more farmland and large properties, broadband does not exist.

"Broadband is something that is a necessity," Drumwright said. "No longer just a nicety."

Goochland County IT Director Randy Buzzard helped install the hotspots in six fire stations and the county administration building. There are plans to install external hotspots at the county library, which already has Wi-Fi access internally.

Buzzard said the county chose the fire stations as hotspot locations because they are spaced out around the county. He explained that there were already fiber connections via a local network to these locations, leaving his team to just add more bandwidth on the network to make it available to the public.

"Since these are placed around the county in those service districts, it allows for a place for someone who doesn't have internet in that particular area a place that they can drive to and jump on the internet via the hotspot," Buzzard said.

Users can select the public Wi-Fi on their devices and agree to the terms and conditions to take advantage of the free internet access. A map on the county's website shows the locations of each facility with a hotspot and the designated parking spots where county residents are encouraged to park to use the Wi-Fi.

"They can pull up, park in these designated locations where we've ensured the signal is pointing in that direction," Drumwright said.

Buzzard said his team worked with fire chiefs to ensure they were not interfering



Goochland County IT Director Randy Buzzard uses the external hotspots outside the Goochland County Administration Building.

Photo by Paul Drumwright

with the fire stations' operations and to determine where in the parking lots were the best for the public Wi-Fi access points. Drumwright added that firefighters and volunteers have also benefited from the installation of the hotspots because it has improved their signal in the fire stations.

The county paid for the hotspots through additional savings and reserves in the IT department. The installation is part of Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's vision to provide broadband to the entire state within 10 years.

As the county and state are working on further expanding broadband, Drumwright said the county wanted to bridge the gap to provide temporary options to access the internet.

"The hotspots are meant to be a short-term bridge providing accessibility for citizens while we work on that long-term plan of rolling out broadband to folks' home," Drumwright said.

For longer-term strategies within the county, Goochland County officials established a 10 steps to broadband internet initiative, which outline ways to provide broadband in un-

derserved areas.

The steps include working with providers to identify specific areas that are unserved, working to attract private providers to offer service, dedicating staff to broadband initiatives, building coalitions, fostering relationships, meeting with providers and helping collect data, Drumwright said.

"The 10 steps came out of that as part of our looking to take a more aggressive approach to broadband," he said.

The county has helped bring together neighboring localities in the region to partner with suburban and rural counties to be more of a draw for providers.

"We're all dealing with the same issue and making sure we're talking to our neighbors and if they're doing something we can benefit from, that we can learn," Drumwright said.

But for now, the hotspots are working to fill the need.

"This is a first step — just a place people can go, jump on the internet for free, but we got to do some other things to attract more internet service providers in the area and get better broadband in the county," Buzzard said. **CN**

Gen. Colin Powell shares life lessons that led to leadership



Gen. Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State and former chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, talks about the life lessons that led to his leadership skills. He shared his advice in a conversation with NACo CEO Matt Chase and NACo members during the March 3 General Session at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Trust, accepting failure and remaining optimistic are keys to successful leadership, according to Colin Powell, a four-star general who served as President Reagan's national security advisor. He also served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the administrations of President George H.W. Bush and President Bill Clinton and was George W. Bush's secretary of state.

In a conversation with NACo CEO/Executive Director Matt Chase, Powell discussed leadership development to a packed room of county officials during the General Session March 3 at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference.

Powell's book, "It Worked for Me," is a key part of NACo's High Performance Leadership Academy, an online 12-week

program created to provide county officials with practical leadership skills. NACo partnered with Powell and the Professional Development Academy to establish the program (*Learn more here: naco.org/skills*).

During the conversation, Powell shared his experiences from his childhood in Harlem to becoming a retired four-star general. As Powell moved up the ranks, he focused on the importance of building trust among his teams, always placing an emphasis on the importance of trusting his subordinates.

"When you trust your people... they trust you," he said. "One team, one fight. We're all in this together."

Powell described that whenever he took on a new leadership position, he gave his aides rule cards with his preferred procedures, such as never sign-

'If you always have confidence and train your people, they will trust you and you trust them.'

ing his name and always keeping him informed.

"Don't hide anything from me. We're all in this together," he said. "When anything is going wrong, tell me about it. I'm not going to chew you out. We're going to solve it."

Powell said he also relied upon a second "staff," which consisted of his closest friends who worked outside the government. He stressed to county officials the importance of having this second team to count on to point out when he made mistakes. This group had a private phone number to

reach Powell at his desk, where he was the only one who answered the phone.

"Failure is part of life. No one goes through life without failing at anything. The question is, 'What do you do about it?'" he said. His answer has always been, "Examine the failures, where they go wrong, but most importantly, what did I do wrong? What did I forget to do?"

Powell said he has always used trusted agents who would provide him with feedback which included anything from telling him he messed up during a hearing or telling him he needed to get a haircut.

"You have to have somebody that will tell you that you screwed up or that you've done well," he said.

Powell stressed the importance of moving on from making mistakes by describing how he tries to take a failure, "roll

it up into a little ball, throw it over my shoulder and I never want to see it again."

"You've got to learn to move on and remember that your life is not spent because you had one failure. It's just beginning because you've learned something about yourself," he said.

Powell's book includes 13 "rules," which he described as sayings he refers to when something goes wrong in his life. He described his three favorite rules: "It ain't as bad as it looks. It'll look better in the morning," "It can be done" and "Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier."

"If you always have confidence and train your people, they will trust you and you trust them," he said. "Then, your optimism will fuel the whole organization so that they will always believe that they are capable of doing any job you put in front of them." **CN**

Interior Secretary Bernhardt wants county government in the big tent

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

As long as he is Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt wants to bring county governments inside the department's decision-making processes.

That process, he told NACo members March 2 at the Opening General Session, involves due diligence, time and careful reflection of any issue brought to him, along with careful evaluation of the views of the issue's stakeholders.

"That is the standard that I hold myself to, and that is the standard I expect (of) every single employee within the Department of the Interior who is interacting with state, county and municipal governments," he said.

It's personal for him.

"I grew up in a small rural community in western Colorado and was completely surrounded by federal lands," he said. "And one of the things that I left home with was the knowledge of how consequential decisions Interior makes can be to communities.

"Our decisions at times can

have a great impact on your economic hopes and dreams."

In a conversation with *County News*, Bernhardt elaborated on several issues of interest to county governments.

Firefighting efforts

"I think the president has given us very clear direction that he believes in more active management of our rangeland and forest to prevent catastrophic wildfire," he said.

"No matter where you sit, it looks like fires are larger...fire season [is longer]. We should begin to think about how we manage the workforce."

That will mean expanding the size and scope of the full- and part-time firefighters in the department's Office of Wildland Fire. Bernhardt proposes hiring more full-time firefighters and expanding the hours that seasonal firefighters can work, both of which would add roughly 700,000 man-hours of work per year, at a cost of \$50 million, compared to the office's \$1 billion annual firefighting budget.

"That time can be used for fighting fires or working to prevent fires, primarily through

active forest management or controlled burns," he said. "I'm really optimistic that Congress will support this initiative.

"We can't just keep doing the same thing that we've always been doing and thinking it's sufficient."

Bernhardt also said the department is planning to cut 11,000 additional miles of fuel breaks on federally managed land.

"We're going to be very aggressive in every state in looking at how we do veg (vegetation) management and maintaining fire breaks," he said. "That's a big priority of ours. It's amazing what a fire break can do for controlling fire."

DOI reorganization

The department is three years into a reorganization started by Bernhardt's predecessor, Ryan Zinke.

The relocation of the Bureau of Land Management headquarters to Grand Junction, Colo. has received the most attention. While the agency's core leadership staff will move to Colorado, other BLM staff will move to "centers of excellence"

elsewhere in the West, "where their work will line up with that done within the state that they're located in."

Such moves will put BLM staff closer to land over which the agency has jurisdiction, virtually all of which is west of the Mississippi River. Bernhardt said the new BLM headquarters has a targeted opening date at the end of 2020.

The reorganization effort has already consolidated 49 previous DOI regions into 12, organized around watersheds.

"At the end of the day, all of this is focused on better serving the American people," Bernhardt said.

The reorganization has also included revisions of the department's business processes.

"We've really sped up a lot of the the way projects move through our approval process," he said. "That may be one of the most consequential reorganizations. We've been in a position with government for a long time that we've been almost paralyzed by analysis. We've gone from an average of 5.2 years per EIS (environmental impact statement), to last year,

1.2 years.

I think with the new regulations we can do that or better pretty consistently."

Bernhardt hopes that streamlining can help reduce delays and costs for infrastructure projects on public land.

"With that, good projects get approved and bad projects get denied, but there's no reason for it to take seven, 10 years," he said.

Reforestation

President Trump's commitment to the Trillion Trees Initiative will involve a significant effort by the Department of Interior.

Bernhardt estimated the department planted 18 million to 20 million trees a year, slightly less than the Department of Agriculture.

"We work with companies that are rehabilitating and reclaiming land," he said. "In some places, we're fighting invasive species and then planting native vegetation."

There's no way the department would really go wrong in

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NACo First Vice President and Boone County, Ky. Judge Gary Moore greets Interior Secretary David Bernhardt March 2 at the Opening General Session. Photo by Denny Henry

Sen. Chris Coons tells NACo members: ‘Let me be your advocate’ on Capitol Hill



U.S. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) addresses NACo members March 2 during the Opening General Session at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in the Washington Hilton ballroom in Washington, D.C. Photo by Denny Henry

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Calling his work as a county official “the most meaningful and significant” public service of his life, Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) spoke to NACo members March 2 about legislation he’s working on that will impact their jobs back home. He served as the New Castle County, Del. executive from 2004-2010.

“Whether it’s dealing with the opioid epidemic, our aging in-

frastructure or the coronavirus pandemic that is just rolling up on our shores, counties are the first line of defense for our people,” he said. “Let me be your advocate.” He touched on an array of issues important to counties.

One of those issues he’s working on is water projects. “We need to do a better job in financing of restoration and repair of stormwater and sewer systems,” he said, “but in making sure that we help facilitate in the adoption of the latest technology.”

Coons said that “if I’m running the engineering and water and sewer department of a local county government, I’m not going to take the risk in putting in these new cutting-edge technologies until someone has really validated it.”

The Water Resources and Development Act, he said, will make sure “best practices water technologies are tested, tried are true and available to the most important level of government in our country.”

Coons cited his work helping to clean up PFAs contamination. A PFAs bill sponsored by his state’s senior senator, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) will invest \$10 billion in resources in cleanup and remediation, he said. PFAs are harmful chemicals (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

Coons also told the audience he is “an eager and enthusiastic funder of CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) and HOME funding programs.

HOME is the largest Federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. HOME funds are awarded annually as formula grants to participating jurisdictions.

“I know what good they’ve done in my community, I know what a powerful tool they are in the hands of good governments,” he said to applause, “and I know that cutting them to zero is the wrong path and we need to restore full funding to CDBG and HOME.”

Touching on transportation, Coons said “we are billions and billions” of dollars behind on fixing crumbling infrastructure including interstate highways, bridges, tunnels and culverts.

Another issue important to counties: The opioid crisis. Coons said his “little state of 900,000 people” is not immune to it and saw 400 overdose deaths last year and is on track to see even more this year.

“We have got to do more,” he said. Coons is working on bills that will help the Drug Enforcement Agency track where and when shipments of opioids go. “If Pizza Hut and Amazon have this technology,” he asked, “why doesn’t the DEA?” **CN**

Connolly: Help me pass ‘Restore the Partnership Act’

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

County officials attending NACo’s Legislative Conference heard from one of their own March 2, a former county official: Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-Va.).

“It was mentioned there are 78 members of Congress who are former county officials — I wish it was 435,” he said to applause.

Connolly, a former Virginia Association of Counties president who chaired the Fairfax County, Va. Board of Supervisors before heading to Capitol Hill, came to the conference seeking county officials’ support for a bill he’s introduced, “Restore the Partnership Act.”

Connolly now chairs the Subcommittee on Government Operations; last year, he and Rob Bishop (R-Utah) introduced H.R. 3883, the Restore the Partnership Act, bipartisan legislation to reconstitute and reform the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, which has remained dormant since 1996. The purpose of a new commission, the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations of the United States, would be to facilitate cooperation and accountability among federal, state, tribal and local governments.

“This is not some radical liberal idea,” he said. “This is something that came from local government to try to provide a platform for us to talk meaning-

fully about the legislative process.”

“One of my favorite unfunded mandate bills was ‘No Child Left Behind,’” he said.

“Whoever wrote it had wonderful intentions. But clearly, they never ran a school system. By putting a scarlet letter on a school because one small

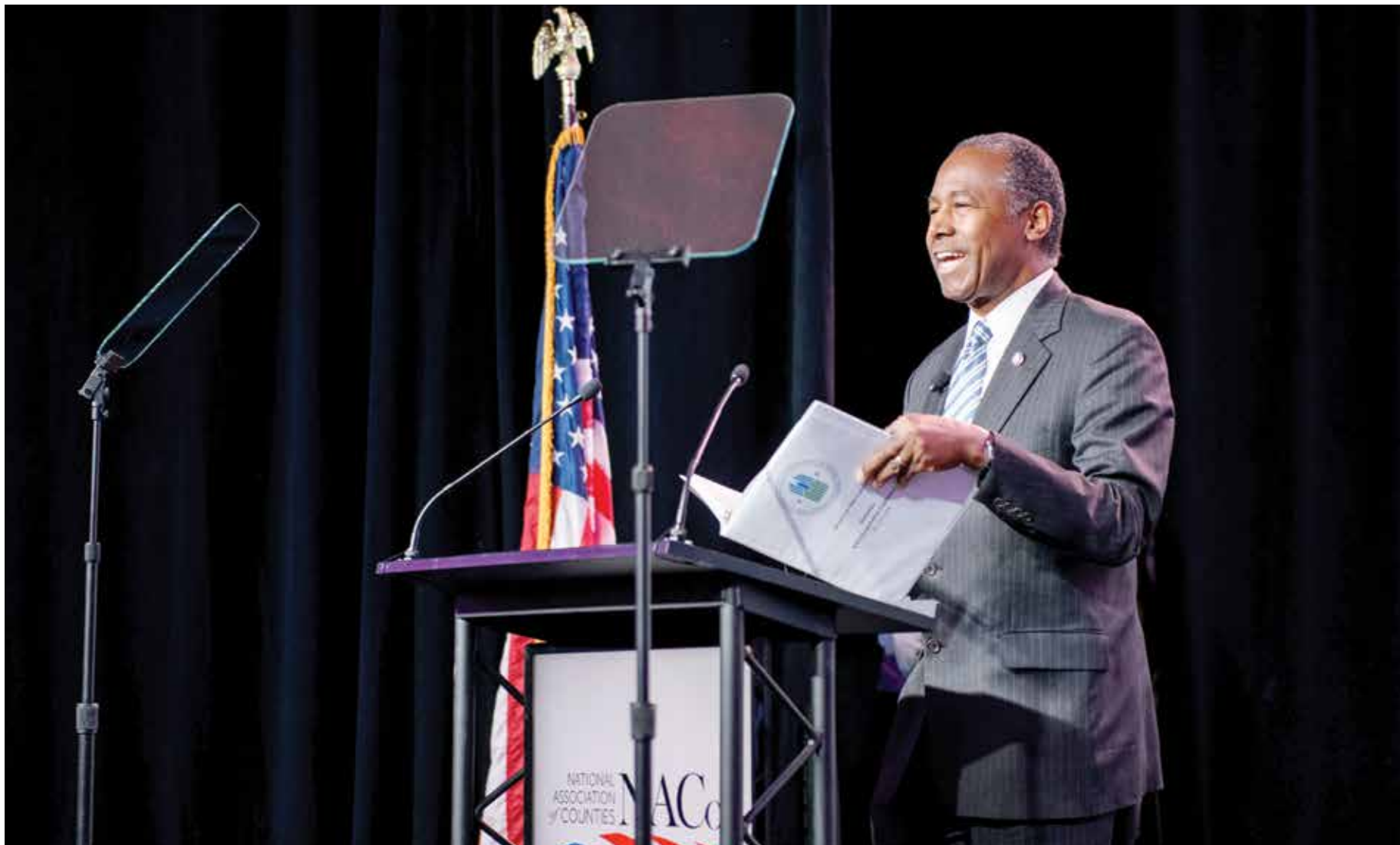
subgroup doesn’t meet metrics is a destructive act. It doesn’t help anybody. It damages that school, it makes people not want to go to it, teachers not want to teach at it. It doesn’t really solve the problem.”

“And by the way, you were expected to implement that federal idea with your resources,” he said. “My view as a member of Congress, but from county government, is if we think it’s a good idea for a federal law, pay for it!”

Connolly reiterated his need for NACo members to support his bill: “I need your help in finding Republican support,” he asked. “This is not some radical idea. This is something that will help our partnership at all three levels of government.” **CN**



Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-Va.) addresses NACo members March 2 at the Opening General Session. Photo by Denny Henry



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson addresses county officials March 2 at the General Session during NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Denny Henry

HUD secretary talks cutting regulations to help create more affordable housing

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is tackling housing affordability challenges by taking actions on key regulations, HUD Secretary Ben Carson told county officials March 2 during the General Session at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference.

Carson said one of the biggest challenges in America is affordable housing, adding that HUD is working with local leaders to provide counties with housing affordability options.

"It's not just about cutting the regulations, it's about cutting costs so that homes can become affordable," he said.

Carson chairs the Council on Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, which President Trump established through an executive order last summer.

The multi-agency council engages with state, local and

tribal leaders to examine obstacles impeding the production of homes.

"Instead of replacing one regulation with a better regulation, we just keep piling regulation on top of regulation," he said.

Carson said NACo's affordable housing toolkit helps explain housing affordability challenges and prioritizes partnerships.

"Our job at HUD is not to proclaim on high what county representatives do, but rather to let local leaders lead," he said.

NACo members have participated regarding housing issues on the federal level at White House councils and roundtable discussions, he noted.

"On the whole, federalism has local leaders fundamentally set the height of regulatory barriers of affordable housing," he said.

In 2018, HUD reopened the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule to encourage affordable housing de-

velopment.

"It's local leaders who know their own communities much better than Washington bureaucrats and our new rule reflects that," he said.

In an interview with *County News* prior to his speech, Carson said county officials are in the perfect position to tackle regulatory barriers, which are some of the biggest hurdles to affordable housing.

"When you look at federal, state and local regulations, local are about 80 percent of the barriers that prevent us from being able to create affordable

housing," he said.


He said one of the biggest challenges to affordable housing is NIMBYism, an acronym for "not in my backyard."

"A lot of people think the government still comes in and builds these gigantic multi-family structures with little forethought or afterthought, which of course rapidly deteriorates and becomes the latest of crime and poverty," he said.

"Well, government doesn't do that anymore," he noted. "Now we're talking about public-private partnerships, mixed income developments, much

smaller and consistent with the character of the neighborhood."

Carson said HUD is fostering partnerships with community leaders, business leaders, public housing advocates, investors, builders, state and federal officials to benefit the communities across the country in need of affordable housing solutions.

"Each county official has a sphere of influence and it's much greater than they think," he said. "It can be used to really move counties in the right direction." 



POLICY RESOLUTIONS COVERAGE STARTS ON PAGE 25.

Trade agreements impact rural economies

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

The recent United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA) is having an impact on rural county economies across the country, according to Katherine Monge, senior policy advisor to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Monge addressed members of NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee Feb. 29 at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference, discussing how trade agreements impact rural counties.

In 2018, President Trump announced he would renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Monge explained as part of the negotiations, Trump threatened to withdraw from NAFTA.



Katherine Monge, senior policy advisor to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, speaks to members of NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee on Feb. 29 at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

"Withdrawal would have not only created chaos, but increased costs whether you're in the southern part of the country and your calves are born in Mexico and grazed across the border in the southern states or vice versa," she said.

"But also because we have never withdrawn from a trade agreement before."

As NAFTA was being renegotiated, Monge said they wanted to insert certainty and predictability into the trade relationship.

"That's particularly important in rural counties, because farm incomes are lower than they have been since 1987... crop prices are low... there's uncertainty," she said.

Monge said injecting certainty in North America specifically was important. In December, President Trump

signed the USMCA.

Concurrently, the farm bill was also passed during this time. It is still in the implementation phase.

"At full implementation of this farm bill, we think it will also help rural economies," Monge said.

The federal government is also looking at additional dollars for rural healthcare, community health centers and a prescription drug bill for domestic purposes, she noted.

"Hopefully, there's an overall strategy that will help all our rural economies as we weather the low farm prices," Monge said.

Monge referred to other potential trade agreements that will have an impact on rural America including potential agreements with Japan, the European Union and the United Kingdom. **CN**

Election officials talk security, funding, voter confidence

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

"Election officials are control freaks," Weber County, Utah Auditor/Clerk Ricky Hatch said. "We always have been, and we always will be and the concept of securing the election is not new."

Members of the Finance, Pension and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee and the Telecommunications and Technology Committee heard from Hatch and other panelists who discussed election security Feb. 29 at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.

"Ransomware is what keeps me up at night and it's not unique to elections and election infrastructure, but it's certainly affecting state and municipality governments," said Geoffrey Hale, director of the Election Security Initiative for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency/Department of Homeland Security.

During the 2016 presidential election, Russia targeted three communities: Election infrastructure, partisan organizations and social media with foreign-influenced activity, such as Facebook ads, he explained.

Since then, Hale said there has

not been computer network activity targeting different sectors, but foreign-influenced social media activity has continued and was present in 2018.

"We have aligned our work to support election infrastructure, to support campaigns and partisan organizations and to counter foreign interference on social media," he said.

Hatch explained that election officials want input on the security of their systems and encouraged constituents to visit election offices to ask the hard questions and help officials im-

prove their systems.

"We always have been careful with our elections and we are still being careful, just in more areas," he said.

U.S. Election Assistance Commission Chair Thomas Hicks said disinformation is hard to combat, but stressed the importance of encouraging voters to know their sources for information.

"There's going to be issues because there's issues with every election and I equate it to if you have a highway, you're probably going to have one or two acci-

dents, but you're not going to shut down that highway or just totally demolish it," he said.

When it comes to funding to provide resources for secure systems, Hicks said money usually is distributed to the chief election official for each state who then determines if funding reaches the local level.

"As we move forward, we need to have some sort of dedicated funding stream to the states so it's not one of these, 'Hey, there's an emergency. Let's throw money at it at the last minute,'" he said. "But also, that money

should go down to, in my opinion, the local officials because they are the ones who actually run the elections."

Hatch agreed that money is frequently getting stuck at the state level. In Utah, he said election officials have worked closely with the lieutenant governor and discussed the best uses for the funds at both state and local levels.

"If states need additional resources, then that's the main thing we need to get out to them," Hicks said. "That doesn't always translate to money — that could be technical assistance as well."

He said the ultimate goal is to make sure that voters' confidence remains high so they know their vote matters.

Hatch encouraged county officials to sign up for the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a free resource which provides information about software updates and detects vulnerabilities.

"The best thing we can do is keep our message out there, talk about the controls in place and as elections officials, we remain impartial and we do our job professionally and objectively," he said. **CN**



(L-r) Weber County, Utah Auditor/Clerk Ricky Hatch; Geoffrey Hale, director of the Election Security Initiative for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency/DHS and U.S. Election Assistance Commission Chair Thomas Hicks discuss election security at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

County health challenges: Suicide rates, hospital closings

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Suicide rates and rural hospital closures are just two of the health challenges facing counties, officials said Feb. 29 during the Health Policy Steering Committee meeting at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference.

There has been a significant uptick in suicide rates between 2005 and 2015 in pockets across the country, said Carol Moehrle, director for the North Central District Health Department in Idaho.

Specifically in rural communities, she said suicide rates are often higher because of financial strain, lack of access to health and behavioral health care, isolation and accessibility issues related to mental health services.

A workforce shortage of behavioral health specialists in rural counties is also contributing to the increased rates, she noted, adding that more than half of counties do not have a behavioral health trained specialist.

In Idaho, all sheriffs complete crisis intervention training and officials are currently working to create crisis intervention models in all counties throughout the state.

"It has been a community-wide effort," Moehrle said.

To address high suicide rates in rural counties, she advised NACo members to try to improve access to mental and behavioral health services and focus on expanding telehealth and tele-behavioral health services.

In addition to an increase in suicide rates, rural communities are facing challenges as rural hospitals close their doors.

Since January 2010, 124 rural hospitals have closed, according to Sarah Young, deputy director of the Policy Research Division at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

Out of 1,975 counties surveyed, 174 did not have access to a critical access hospital, a federally qualified hospital center or a rural health clinic within their county boundaries.

Young discussed resources for rural counties including a new rural EMS training and equipment grant that is coming out of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as well as grant programs from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

Neleen Rubin, president of Rubin Health Policy Consulting, LLC, told county officials about the Bipartisan Center's

Rural Health Project, which studied health challenges in seven Midwest states.

The study found rural communities need increased access to telehealth, an adequate rural health care workforce and rural hospital infrastructure.

Washington County, N.C. Commissioner Tracey Johnson discussed the closure of a rural hospital in her community.

The Washington County hospital was a critical access care facility previously run by the county before being purchased by a third party after the county could not afford to manage it.

When the third party filed for bankruptcy, the hospital closed, leaving a gap in services for the surrounding communities.

Johnson told the story of an individual who was driving and had a heart attack within a half mile from the closed hospital.

Police officers, volunteer firefighters and paramedics arrived at the scene and worked to resuscitate the individual for over an hour, but she did not survive.

"Would she have survived if the hospital was opened? I do not know," Johnson said.

The county worked with a bankruptcy trustee to reopen the hospital, which is now fully operational. **CN**

New bill aims to bridge digital divide



Christianna Barnhart, senior counsel for Communications and Technology Policy for Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), explains the SMART Act Feb. 29 to county officials at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Members from NACo's Telecommunication and Technology Policy Steering Committee learned about a new bill that plans to use revenue from a spectrum auction to provide resources for rural broadband deployment.

Christianna Barnhart, senior counsel for Communications and Technology Policy for Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), described the bipartisan Spectrum Management and Relocation for Taxpayers (SMART) Act to county officials Feb. 29 at the 2020 Legislative Conference.

Introduced in January, the bill was co-sponsored by Schatz and Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.).

Barnhart explained how the bill involves mid-band spectrum, known as the C-Band, which is currently occupied by foreign satellite companies. These companies, she noted, are not using the full spectrum and are able to yield some of it back to the United States.

This mid-band spectrum is used for 5G deployment, which brings faster download speeds and increased capacities.

The legislation would involve publicly auctioning the C-band spectrum for 5G use. The revenue from the auction would be used to bridge the remaining digital divide in rural and urban areas and provide broadband to the communities that need it

most. Barnhart said the auction could raise \$30 billion.

"We can also use this auction revenue to update our 911 infrastructure so that public safety can receive texts, photos and videos to keep them safe," she added.

Although the legislation is currently pending in the Senate, Barnhart said the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted an order that would auction the spectrum without congressional instruction.

She explained without Congress instructing the FCC on how the auction should work and what the money should be used for, the money will go back to the Treasury and not be used for American priorities.

"We are really pushing that Congress and the Senate act on the SMART Act, because we think it's a great way to leverage existing American resources and match them with American priorities while still pushing out 5G, which is going to revolutionize our telecommunication space," Barnhart said.

If passed, the legislation would mean money from the auction could be used to ensure everyone is connected.

"If you only get 1G, the conversation about 5G is meaningless to you, and that is really what the impetus was behind this bill," she said. "We need to be thinking about this holistically and we can't leave a group of people behind." **CN**



Neleen Rubin, president of Rubin Health Policy Consulting, LLC, discusses rural hospital closures with members of the Health Policy Steering Committee at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

NACo members get briefing on coronavirus from CDC



CDC Chief Medical Officer Mitch Wolfe discusses the 2019 coronavirus with members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus March 1 in Washington D.C. at the 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

With more cases of the coronavirus appearing across the United States, federal agencies are working with local officials to take preventative measures.

Representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Health and Human Services discussed the coronavirus outbreak March 1 during NACo's Large Urban County Caucus Meeting at the 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.

CDC Chief Medical Officer Mitch Wolfe said the CDC is working closely with health departments to assess local readiness for the virus.

He said the center is encouraging counties and states to review their pandemic preparedness plans.

The 2019 coronavirus, known as COVID-19, was first identified in Wuhan, China and is part of a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illness.

The virus causes symptoms similar to a mild or moderate

upper respiratory infection like a common cold, but can also cause more severe diseases like pneumonia and bronchitis specifically in infants, young children and older adults.

"I think the most important thing I can say that you can take back is everyday preventative measures for respiratory illness," Wolfe said.

This includes washing hands, using alcohol-based sanitizers, avoiding touching the eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, staying home when sick and disinfecting objects that were touched.

The CDC does not recommend using face masks, Wolfe said, because the virus can also be spread through touching the face after touching a contaminated surface.

"Again, routine respiratory precautions especially in public are going to be very important for preventative disease spreading," Wolfe said.

The virus spreads from an infected person to others by respiratory droplets, coughing

or sneezing. Individuals can get infected from being in close contact with another sick individual or touching an object or surface that has the virus on it.

Currently, there are ongoing investigations into how the virus spreads, Wolfe said.

The virus is presumed to spread primarily from close person-to-person contact or when someone coughs or sneezes.

It is unknown how long the virus lasts on surfaces.

The case fatality rate is between 0.5 percent and 1 percent, with a higher rate in China, according to Wolfe.

He noted that this rate depends on multiple factors such as the healthcare setting and total number of cases found in an area.

The estimated incubation period is between two to 14 days. Wolfe said the CDC is working with a number of modeling agencies to try to examine the length of its incubation period.

In King County, Wash., officials opened an emergency operations center Feb. 29 after

announcing the nation's first coronavirus death, a man in his 50s. Officials confirmed the second coronavirus death of a man in his 70s, also from King County, on March 1.

On Feb. 29, King County Executive Dow Constantine returned to King County from Washington, D.C., where he was attending the NACo Legislative Conference.

"We are rapidly shifting our operations here to be focused primarily on dealing with this crisis," Constantine said at a news conference about the coronavirus death.

The county is exploring options for any homeless to have places to stay to recover from coronavirus away from shelters, he said.

Public transportation is also being monitored extra carefully for cleanliness.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan told county officials the department is working with Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the response to the coronavirus, as well as Health and Human Ser-

vices Secretary Alex Azar.

Hargan said in response to the coronavirus, the White House has sent a request to Congress for supplemental funding, which includes five major areas — expanding surveillance work, therapeutics, developing vaccines, purchasing protective equipment and funding for public health preparedness and response for state and local governments.

"As we continue our response, your partnership in aggressive containment of potential mitigation of community spread will be vital," he said.

Hargan said the administration takes preparedness seriously, adding that the CDC's budget has increased by \$668 million since fiscal year 2017.

"Our mission is to try to stop disease spread and slow disease spread as much as we can," Wolfe said.

"That's our goal and mission to try to prevent and slow the spread to the United States."

Wolfe encouraged county officials to visit www.cdc.gov for the latest information surrounding the coronavirus. **CN**

Bill to stop mass shootings IDs behavioral threats

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Could identifying and investigating disturbing behavior stop mass shootings?

That's the premise behind bipartisan legislation proposed in Congress by Rep Brian Babin (R-Texas) and Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.).

Members of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee heard about the proposed legislation, the Threat Assessment, Prevention and Safety Act or TAPS (H.R. 838) Act, Feb. 29, during the first day of NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. (A Senate companion bill is S. 265.)

"The strategy of 'it won't happen here' doesn't work anymore," Steve Janushkowsky, legislative director for Babin, told NACo members. "Nothing ends up being accomplished."

A conversation with one constituent of Babin's inspired the proposed legislation aimed at curtailing mass shootings,

Janushkowsky said.

"Nobody just snaps," said Lauren Ziegler, senior legislative assistant in Babin's office. "One of the problems we're finding...say this information

comes to a co-worker, there's not really an avenue for 'What do we do?' There's this gray area."

"We need to find a way to fill the void," she said. "It's about

patterns of concerning behavior. You can look at risk factors."

"That's something we should all advocate for," said steering committee member Sally Heyman, commissioner, Mi-

ami-Dade County.

Later in the day, steering committee members passed a proposed interim policy resolution backing the proposed legislation. **CN**



Lauren Ziegler, senior legislative assistant, Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas), makes a point Feb. 29 at NACo's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee meeting. Looking on is (right) Steve Janushkowsky, legislative director for Babin and Brad Watts (left), chief counsel, Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.). Photo by Denny Henry

LUCC members talk funding opportunities at federal level

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) discussed how to use inter-governmental partnerships to obtain funding opportunities March 1 at the 2020 Legislative Conference.

Katharine Sullivan, principal deputy assistant attorney general of the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice, shared with county officials that Attorney General William Barr "is a real believer in federal government working hand in hand with state and local government."

Sullivan heads the Office of Justice Programs, which houses the majority of grant-making money — approximately \$5 billion — at the Department of Justice, she said.

Under the umbrella of the Office of Justice Programs is the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Office of Victims and Crime; the Office of Juvenile Justice, Delinquency and Prevention; the Bureau of Justice

Statistics and the National Institute of Justice.

For counties seeking grants to combat the mental health crisis, Sullivan noted that "there's so much funding out there for help for all of you to address this issue," but said she is concerned that the message

isn't getting out about those grant opportunities.

President Donald Trump is extremely focused on mental health and substance abuse, she said.

She described a Law Enforcement Mental Health Collaboration Grant that comes

from her office and will soon be posted online.

"There really are funding opportunities at the federal level, but how do you get to them?" Sullivan asked. "And therein lies the issue. How do you get there?"

She added that when it

comes to criminal justice reform, re-entry programs are also a priority for the administration.

Sullivan discussed grants aimed to stop school violence and referred LUCC members to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, which is geared toward localities and counties.

The program funds equipment and school resource officers while other grants fund threat assessment teams and full safety strategies.

For the first time last year, there was money to fund anti-violence and anti-bullying training for students in school, she said.

"I really wanted to fund localities directly, so sheriffs and police departments are acting with local governments... so that your community as a whole is looking at what happens if there is a horrific event and you have to respond to that," Sullivan said.

Sullivan referred county officials to www.grants.gov for funding opportunities. **CN**



Katharine Sullivan, principal deputy assistant attorney general of the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice, discusses funding opportunities March 1 with county officials at the Large Urban County Caucus meeting during NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

State governments' actions impact county operations

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

From opioids to housing to rural broadband, county officials at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference discussed March 1 how some states' actions are impacting county priorities.

When it comes to opioids and litigation, states are taking more of a behavioral health perspective and recognizing the co-occurring disorders between mental health and chemical dependency, said Eric Johnson, executive director of the Washington State Association of Counties.

In 2019, Washington had 776 deaths from opioids and 531 from methamphetamines.

"I think that has merged into this whole concept of whole health and that this is a treatment of a medical condition as much as it is about just behavioral health," Johnson said.

For example, he described how the state of Washington is seeing a connection between substance use disorders and homelessness issues.

"If you can't keep someone housed first, it's very difficult to be able to understand how you're going to provide treatment because if they're not in a safe, healthy, home environment, the last thing on their mind frankly is how to deal



Ginger Delegal, executive director of the Florida Association of Counties and Eric Johnson, executive director of the Washington State Association of Counties, discuss how states are tackling county priorities March 1 at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Denny Henry

with either a mental health issue or chemical dependency issue," he said.

Johnson added that Washington has been working to do more in this area out of the criminal justice system, such as embedding social workers with law enforcement.

When discussing county revenues and the state government's impacts on county revenue streams, Ginger Delegal, executive director of the Florida Association of Counties, explained that there are multiple examples of restrictions on county-imposed sources of taxation in Florida.

"Many states around the country are feeling the impacts of state legislatures creating additional restrictions and limitations on property taxes," she said.

Florida counties face challenges when there are additional restrictions coming from the state legislature that are placed upon the only primary local government revenue source, she noted. Delegal said other restrictions are placed on taxes that are state-authorized taxes, but imposed at the local level, such as gas taxes, tourist development taxes and surtaxes on sales tax revenue.

"We're seeing an entire swath of additional restrictions on these areas and it's taking the form of increasing the voting thresholds for when your county commission may take one of these approval questions to the electorate," she said.

North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Executive Director Kevin Leonard discussed how states and counties in North Carolina are working on broadband access.

Rural broadband deployment and infrastructure is the number one legislative issue for North Carolina counties, he

said. Due to a variety of topography issues with mountains, beaches and wide-open areas, providing broadband there is difficult. "Our objective in North Carolina is to change the laws so counties can use funding to build infrastructure," Leonard said.

He explained that counties have no desire to provide service, but want to work with the private sector to get broadband access to underserved and unserved locations.

"The major distinction is that electricity/energy is federally regulated, and broadband is not," he said. "It is not a utility, although we think of it as a utility, it is not."

Leonard said North Carolina is attempting to change the process so counties can put requests for proposals out to small providers who want to provide service in unserved areas, but don't have funds to build the infrastructure. With changes made, counties would be able to provide the infrastructure.

"We're trying to flip the paradigm on the front process of just trying to get the internet out," he said. "We're trying to take advantage of the fact that fundamentally, it is a free market process and it is not a regulated industry from the federal level." **CN**

Special needs shelter helps most vulnerable during disasters

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

If your county is looking for a solution to helping your most vulnerable population when disaster strikes, the answer might be a special needs shelter.

Palm Beach County (Fla.) Commissioner Gregg Weiss told a packed room of NACo members March 1 at NACo's Legislative Conference to prepare to help those populations who might have difficulties helping themselves when disaster strikes.

Weiss made his comments at the "Preparing Vulnerable Populations for Disasters: A Meeting of the Resilient Counties Advisory Board" meet-

ing chaired by Hawaii County Council Chairwoman Valerie Poindexter.

NACo President Mary Ann Borgeson also stopped by the meeting with a message: Counties need to think about how they can help their elderly populations age gracefully in place.

In addition to the elderly, Weiss said that counties also need to consider the needs of the homeless, lower-income families, young people and children when it comes to caring for them during disasters.

Ahead of a disaster, some of the things a county can do ahead of time, he said, include:

- Conducting outreach activities throughout the year.
- Guiding persons with special needs to a special needs



Palm Beach County, Fla. Commissioner Greg Weiss
Photo by Hugh Clarke

shelter program so the county can assess their needs.

- Creating a list of special needs shelter clients.
- Asking residents to prepare to shelter in place for at least three days, with supplies of food, water and medicine.
- Assessing the needs of your

vulnerable population with a survey.

- Making arrangements to identify people with special needs in advance when the power goes out, such as those on oxygen.
- Talking to retirement communities.

- Getting on every media (radio, TV, newspaper, online) to get the word out.

What is a special needs shelter?

Weiss gave some definitions of what a special needs shelter is (and also what it is not): It provides a setting for those with certain medical needs and others to remain independent during a disaster; it is staffed by licensed medical personnel, contractors and county staff who provide medical observation and assistance when necessary, and it is not a health-care facility.

Clients are expected to provide their own care, and caregivers as required to maintain their health. **CN**

Rural development expert takes aim at drug addiction in rural areas



Anne Hazlett, senior advisor at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, addresses members of NACo's Rural Action Caucus March 1 at the Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Anne Hazlett, formerly assistant to the secretary for Rural Development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has pivoted to address a specific ill plaguing rural counties, serving now as the senior adviser at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

She's leading the agency's multi-faceted approach toward illicit drugs — addiction prevention, supply disruption

and proliferation of treatment efforts.

"We focus on prevention by educating our youth about the dangers of illicit substances, but it's much more than just talking to kids," she said March 1 at a meeting of NACo's Rural Action Caucus during NACo's Legislative Conference.

"Much of our focus has been on looking at prescribing practices at the local level, ensuring that doctors are well educated about the dangers of over prescribing," she said, "or [the danger of] combining opioids

with other substances."

The ONDCP is also trying to disrupt the international drug supply, particularly via "dark web" online sales, she said.

"Most of the drugs that are killing Americans are coming from outside our borders," she said. "We are working with international partners to cut off production and the supply chain so these substances don't get to our country in the first place."

She also said her office is targeting shipments of drugs ferried through the U.S. Postal

Service.


"We're strengthening our infrastructure to detect these products as they travel through the mail," she said.

While those measures will help slow the rate of new drug addiction cases, hundreds of thousands of Americans in rural counties are struggling with existing addictions, and there aren't enough options for them, she said.

"We believe that someone who needs help should be able to get it when they ask for it," she said. "Not just the help that

they need to get well through treatment, but the recovery services that are then needed to go on to live that healthy and productive life."

Hazlett is hoping to not only find ways to increase the number of healthcare providers available in rural areas, but also increase employment opportunities for people in recovery.

"We could start this all off better by training healthcare providers to screen for this issue more effectively and connect people with services," she said. 

Department of the Interior 'seriously considers' counties' positions in decisions

From **BERNHARDT** page 7

its part of a reforestation effort, he said.

"Whatever a person's perspective on climate change, there's no doubt that increasing greening has a lot of upside," he said.

"When you get down to it, plant life is the very basis of life."

Departmental data

The Department of Interior

has a wealth of data, but it is plagued by incompatible formatting and will need work before its user-friendly for the public to make sense of.

Frankly, Bernhardt said, it needs work before department staff can make sense of it.

"We have so much data and we have a ways to go before it's seamless to the American public," he said.

"Some of the data in GIS files but different offices use


different standards, so I can't unpack it," he said. "We spend well over \$1 billion a year on GIS data and we need to really make it usable and transparent for the American public. That's an area where there's a lot of interest."

The department is finishing up a web tool that allows users to enter a ZIP code and can see nearby wildlife refuges and what species living there can be hunted.

"Over the last three years, it's my hope that the counties realize that we are accessible to them, that we seriously consider their positions and they should know that the people at the top at Interior fully recognize how significant the decisions we make can be on those counties," Bernhardt said.

"As a result of that, we take it extremely seriously when they have a decision coming across our desk, that affects them in a

particular way.

"I hope that they walk away saying we have a good relationship, we're not going to agree on everything but what I want them to know is that there's never an instance that we disagree where we haven't gone through a real effort to see 'how does this line up with the law, how does this line up with the president's policy?' and try and harmonize those with their wishes." 

Proposed policy change aims to fix loss of health benefits for pre-trial detainees

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

NACo and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) joint task force took their cause of jail health reform to Capitol Hill March 3, discussing a proposed policy change that would reinstate federal health care benefits for non-convicted justice-involved individuals during NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.

"Those who are wealthy enough to pay bail keep their healthcare and those who are not wealthy enough to pay bail lose their healthcare," Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) said. "This really amounts to a penalty before adjudication."

According to Merkley, 34 states have suspended, rather than cancelled outside health care for pre-trial detainees. "We need bipartisan work."

In 2019, NACo and the NSA formed the joint task force to examine the impact of the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP), which removes health and veterans benefits from individuals who have been incarcerated, but not convicted.

The MIEP applies to individuals who are confined inside a jail. States are unable to bill Medicaid for any inmate care, unless the individual requires a hospital stay for at least 24



Arapahoe County, Colo. Commissioner Nancy Sharpe shakes hands with St. Charles Parish, La. Sheriff Greg Champagne as Ed Zackery looks on. They co-chair a task force looking into reinstating healthcare benefits for pre-trial detainees. Photo by Denny Henry

hours.

Senators Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Merkley, Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) have introduced the Equity in Pretrial Medicaid Coverage Act. The legislation amends the Social Security Act to remove a limitation on an individual's eligibility for medical assistance under the state Medicaid plan while the individual is in custody pending disposition of charges.

Merkley has also introduced the Restoring Health Benefits for Justice-Involved Individuals Act of 2019. The bill re-

moves limitations on inmate eligibility for Medicare, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and veteran's health benefits.

NACo released the NA-Co-NSA Joint Task Force Report, which includes a set of recommendations for policy holders, an overview of pre-trial detainees and jail healthcare and an outline of best practices. Nancy Sharpe, Arapahoe County, Colo., commissioner and co-chair of the task force, said the report calls for the need for federal policy to help restore federal health benefits.

"These are people who have not been convicted," she said.

There are three main issues with the MIEP, she noted: Constitutionality to allow those who are awaiting trial and presumed innocent to have access to federal health benefits; the physical, mental and behavioral health of individuals and the costs to counties.

Greg Champagne, St. Charles Parish, La. sheriff and co-chair of the task force, said changing the MIEP policy is a crime prevention measure.

"The overwhelming number of inmates are in for a short pe-

riod of time," he said. "They're plea agreement is to get in and out but even a short jail stay on a minimal charge where the benefits are cut off can have a big impact on your life and your healthcare."

Champagne said 11 million people cycle in and out of county jails across the country.

"They're falling through the cracks out there and ending back in our jails," he said.

Currently, Merkley's bill does not have any co-sponsors. Markey's bill has four co-sponsors, but does not have bi-partisan support. **EN**

Federal funding not reaching county elections departments

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The hanging chads in 2000 got Congress' attention.

In response, the first wave of funding from the Help America Vote Act financed new voting machines for counties across the country. Supplemental funding, allocated in 2018, hasn't trickled down to the same extent.

Scotland County, Mo. Clerk Batina Dodge noted that only roughly 10 percent of the \$7 million Missouri received in 2018 from the Help America

Vote Act was dispersed in more than a year and a half. And that's mostly been at the state level.

"Largely, that money's not getting to the counties where it would be much more effective," she said during a March 3 Capitol Hill briefing on county election administration.

"Working in a small county, sometimes we're just trying to tread water," Dodge said.

She joked that her rural county likely has fewer registered voters than nearby St. Louis County has trained elections judges.



Yuma County, Ariz. Recorder Robyn Stallworth-Pouquette speaks during a March 3 Capitol Hill briefing on county elections. Photo by Denny Henry

And that funding gap isn't just there for small counties. Montgomery County, Md. Deputy Director of Elections Alysoun McLaughlin sees the same problem.

"Not a single dime of any of the funds that Congress has appropriated in recent years has reached our office," she said. "Those funds are going, in many of our jurisdictions and rightfully so, to shore up security of statewide registration lists, they're going to duties that are responsibilities of the



THE CONFERENCE IN PICTURES

ALL PHOTOS
BY DENNY HENRY
UNLESS NOTED



NACo members stand as a color guard procession makes its way to the stage at the Opening General Session March 2 at the NACo 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.



Members of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee vote for a bail reform measure.

NACo President Mary Ann Borgeson, commissioner, Douglas County, Neb., welcomes President Donald Trump to the stage March 3 at the 2020 NACo Legislative Conference.



Person County, N.C. Commissioner Ray Jeffers takes in the General Session at the 2020 NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Jeffers is the new NACo Regional Representative for the Southern Region.



NACo members pause for a photo March 3 at the U.S. Capitol during the 2020 NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Hugh Clarke



Charlotte County, Fla. Commissioner Bill Truex listens during the Immigration Reform Task Force meeting March 1 in Washington, D.C.



(L-r) Adams County, Colo. Commissioner Emma Pinter talks with Pitt County, N.C. Commissioner Mary Perkins-Williams March 2 during the General Session.



NACo members take part in the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem opening ceremony for the General Session.



Florence County, S.C. Councilman Waymon Mumford (right) shakes hands with Berks County, Pa. Commissioner Christian Leinbach during the NACo Board meeting.



Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) addresses NACo members March 3 at a transportation briefing on Capitol Hill.

Volusia County, Fla. Commissioner Heather Post applauds a speaker during a General Session at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference.



Montgomery County, Md. Councilmember Craig Rice makes a point at the NACo Board meeting March 2.



Ed Borgeson helps kick off the March 3 General Session by singing the national anthem.

Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), takes the stage March 2 at the Opening General Session of NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference. Connolly is a former county supervisor from Fairfax County, Va.



Salt Lake County, Utah Mayor Jenny Wilson takes the microphone during a session at the NACo 2020 Legislative Conference.



Ramsey County, Minn. Commissioner Rafael Ortega (with microphone) addresses fellow members during a meeting of the Large Urban County Caucus.

Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Fulton County, Ga. Commissioner Liz Hausmann speaks to NACo members at a transportation briefing March 3 on Capitol Hill.



NACo members pulled out their smartphones to capture President Trump's speech March 3 in the Washington Hilton ballroom.



(L-r): Commissioner Hillary Cooper, San Miguel County, Colo.; Council Member Ernestina Wenger, Elkhart County, Ind.; Theresa Perry, Solar Foundation; Commissioner Anna Hansen, Santa Fe County, N.M. and Commissioner Kevin Austin, Yadkin County, N.C. receive recognition for energy-saving efforts.



NACo Second Vice President and DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson takes the podium at the March 3 General Session to introduce Reps. Murphy and Katko.



Roane County, Tenn. Commissioner Ron Berry (center) shares a laugh with fellow NACo members during a break in the General Session at the NACo Legislative Conference.



(L-r): Harney County, Ore. Commissioner Patty Dorroh chats with Orange County, N.C. Commissioner Renee Price Feb. 29.



NACo President Mary Ann Borgeson greets fellow NACo members Pulaski County, Ark. Judge Barry Hyde and Guilford County, N.C. Commissioner Kay Cashion.



Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, a vice chair of the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee, discusses the fine points of a bail reform measure with fellow committee members.



(L-r) Michelle Stockwell, senior VP, Bipartisan Policy Center, moderates a talk with Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.) and Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.) at the March 3 General Session.

Relations continue to improve with Forest Service



U.S. Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen signs a memorandum of understanding March 1 at NACo's Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The improving relations between NACo and the U.S. Forest Service culminated in the signing of a renewed memorandum of understanding March 1, outlining the priorities and expectations of both counties and the Forest Service.

Before the signing, U.S. Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen spoke to the cooperative relationship necessary to succeed while addressing members of NACo's Western Interstate Region.

"We really understand that counties and communities have such a close cultural, social and economic tie to the land, the national forests and the grasslands, they've always had special importance for those communities in terms of economic health and livelihood," she said. "We really get that and we're really trying to get better at this, at recognizing how interdependent these lands are across shared landscapes and throughout communities."

It was her third such appearance at a NACo Legislative conference in three years; the first was as deputy chief for State

and Private Forestry in 2017.

"I'm trying to set a really different tone in the Forest Service, and to say we really share the responsibility, we share the ownership, we share the outcomes of what we want to create on these lands," she said, pointing to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's shared stewardship initiative in 2018 as a catalyst for that, which has resulted in 13 signed agreements and 25 in the works. "This is a way for us to up our game, frankly. But we have scale mismatch. We're not responding in a way that matches the size of the challenge, with a billion burnable acres, with catastrophic insects and disease, with a need to amp up our rural economies."

She touted a 21-year high in timber sales in 2019 — 3.3 billion board feet, and the forest service is on pace for 3.7 billion board feet in 2020.

"We're improving forest conditions and that's all about more active forest management," she said. "We're using every tool and every authority that we have."

She reported that the two signed Good Neighbor Authority agreements were an early success, but work remains in

"...we really share the responsibility, share the ownership, we share the outcomes of what we want to create on these lands."

Congress to allow counties and tribes to keep their timber receipts.

Years of fighting wildfires led to a growing maintenance backlog for the Forest Service, and the bill currently stands at \$5.2 billion — \$3.6 billion of which is roads and bridges. Christiansen acknowledged frustration with road conditions and pledged to work with counties and push the envelope with innovations, estimating a \$445 million annual investment over 10 years to catch up with deferred maintenance.

"We've got to have functioning roads and bridges to be able to treat the forests, fight the fires and reduce the risk," she said. "It just doesn't happen without those roads and you rural Americans need functioning roads and bridges

for their daily use," and it ties the fabric of rural America.

She promised Secure Rural Schools counties would receive their payments by the end of March.

Christiansen said the draft revision to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) had received more than 100,000 comments, and a final rule would be released later this spring.

"In our reform of NEPA, we intend to be science-based and meet our environmental responsibilities and to keep the public included and have a clear voice and transparency," she said.

"But it doesn't take all the steps that we're doing today to get to that bottom line.

"We have layered on all kinds of processes over the years, all good intended, but there's process after process that isn't really helpful to meet our environmental responsibilities nor to include the public like we should."

The John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act of 2019 created the national "open unless closed" standard, codifying standard Forest Service practice. The service is close to

meeting the one-year requirement of publishing the first public list of priority lands that have access issues.

"We have set up a process, along with our counterparts in the Department of Interior, of where the public can really inform us where there's not legal access," she said. "That will help inform the priorities of where we can gain access in the future."

In addition, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is permanently reauthorized.

Sublette County, Wyo. Commissioner Joel Bousman and NACo's Forest Service liaison Randy Phillips gave the caucus a preview of a guidebook that would serve both frontline Forest Service personnel and county officials to understand how each organizational structure works and protocols for cooperation. The guidebook is in the finishing stages.

"If we can set some common understanding, to understand the roles and responsibilities that county government and our forest service line officers have, we can really make good on that commitment to work with the local county governments," Christiansen said about the guide. **CN**

Transportation allies give voice to wish lists

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

The bridge collapse over I-85 in Georgia in 2017 still resonates for Liz Hausmann.

"It pretty much crippled us," the Fulton County, Ga. commissioner told the audience at a March 3 Capitol Hill briefing on transportation infrastructure funding. "We had limited access from our most populated area into downtown Atlanta, so it really highlighted the issues we face not only with normal congestion but with the lack of transit services."

The state's gas tax is now an excise tax, but there is no funding for a transit system in the 13-county metro Atlanta area, despite the counties working together on a plan.

"It's come together into a \$27 billion plan to address the transit needs," she said. "The problem is, we don't have \$27 billion." The current rail system is financed by three counties' penny sales tax, but there are no plans to expand that.

"As a Fulton County commissioner, I can raise that tax, and I can build that system out to my county line, but that's where my authority level stops," she said. "We have a big problem that falls to the locals to fund, the state doesn't participate too much, but it's very important the federal partners recognize that our limitations really do not allow for a regional solution."

As the surface transportation act, the FAST Act, approaches its September expiration, counties are urging Congress to take action. "We have a problem that I cannot fix," Hausmann said.

Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), ranking member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, expressed his confidence that his committee would get a surface transportation bill done.

"What we have to worry about more than anything else is leadership," he said. "The committee will continue to work on transportation reauthorization, but we have to worry ...that leadership will stop or at least postpone it until after the election."

Now that both parties have put out their statements of principles, "the easy stuff is finding the common ground," he said. "We should be able to come up with a pretty decent bill. We want to give states flexibility, we need to deal with long-term sustainability of the highway trust fund, and we want to make sure rural communities are taken care of."

The big question, he noted, is funding. "Everything is on the table," Graves said, opining on some of those options: Public-private partnerships (not great for rural counties), tolling (not a fan), vehicle miles traveled (big fan), fuel tax, tire tax and battery tax.

"We have to recover those



Rep. Sam Graves, Jr. (R-Mo.), speaks to NACo members March 3 during a transportation briefing on Capitol Hill. Photo by Denny Henry

miles from the vehicles that are simply not paying for the use of those roads."

He also put in a pitch for vehicle miles traveled both for personal and commercial vehicles. "Infrastructure is something the government should do and should do well," Graves said.

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) promoted the American and Transportation Infrastructure Act, a five-year reauthorization with a 27-percent increase over FAST Act funding.

"It passed the Environment and Public Works Committee by unanimous vote," he said. "People, we don't do many things, anywhere, by unanimous votes in the U.S. Senate, so this is not only bipartisan, but it is strongly supported."

It will be crucial, he said, to allow plenty of local control for the funding. "Locals make better decisions than we do in Washington when it comes to infrastructure; we want to give you more control over how those decisions are made."

Sen. Mike Braun (R-Ind.) tried to scare counties out of looking for help from Congress.

"The mid-term to long-term does not bode well for those of us who believe in infrastructure, to be honest," he said. "You need to consider a different business model if this place does not reform. Maybe look at a new business partner until this one gets its act in order," noting that congressional priorities should be defense and securing funding for entitlements.

Braun referenced Indiana's three-year-old Community Crossings Matching Grants, \$1 million 50-50 grants that the state financed with diesel and gas tax increases.

"We did what I think worked well, didn't ask for others to pay for everything, put some of our own skin in the game, then it gets done more efficiently," he said. "The counties and cities that complained about it found a way to come up with their half. Healthy balance sheets, P3s (public-private partnerships) and more state and local involvement has to be the realistic way because you can't rely on a business partner like this place."

"You have to at least hedge your bets." **CN**

'Not a single dime Congress has appropriated has reached our office'

From **ELECTIONS** page 16

state board of elections, of the secretaries of state."

The problem is that counties handle so many of the basic functions of election administration. McLaughlin listed some: security of equipment, the actual inventory handling, testing, management of the voting equipment, the training of the poll workers, procuring security cameras for our physical plant and material, handling the building badge entry systems for our equipment, handling all of the person-

nel costs that are associated with doing something like a post-election audit.

"Those are local costs and not costs that the federal funds are reaching for many local jurisdictions across the country," she said.

Robyn Stallworth-Pouquette, Yuma County, Ariz. recorder, seconded McLaughlin's tally.

"That long list is a great picture of all of the duties you are responsible for in an election administration office and the reason it is so important is because the integrity of elections is our number one priority," along

with serving the voters, she said. "And that picture changes periodically," to incorporate shifting issues like cybersecurity.

Amid all of the change, Stallworth-Pouquette sticks to the bedrock principles her office runs on.

"The integrity of an election hinges on the integrity of your voter registration records and how your processes are in place to ensure the accuracy and security of those records."

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), a former member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, acknowledged her former

legislative body's shortcomings in the '80s and early '90s.

"I'm ashamed to admit we didn't always allocate the resources necessary to the registrar of elections because there were so many pressing needs. That in the end was something that as a group, as an American, that we need to deal with, because if we don't have free and fair elections, we don't have a country."

Voting options are expanding nationwide, though in some places more glacially than others. Montgomery County, Md. only has about 8 percent of

votes cast by mail.

"We're still largely an Election Day election experience," McLaughlin said. "That's just not how our voters are used to doing businesses with their government. They're used to doing business with their government in a face-to-face experience."

"I compare running elections to running a music festival, except that we've got eight days of opening acts, 250 stages going on simultaneously and we have to be really, really control freaks about making sure everyone only gets one ticket." **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

ROBERT SHEEHAN

Board Member
CEO, Community Mental Health Association of Michigan

Number of years involved in NACo: One

Years in public service: 42

Occupation: CEO, Community Mental Health Association of Michigan

Education: Wayne State University, MSW; Michigan State University, MBA

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Still doing it — fighting for justice for the voiceless and marginalized.



SHEEHAN

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Jesus Christ, Jack Kerouac and Abraham Lincoln.

A dream I have is to: See an America where economic and social mobility is a reality.

You'd be surprised to learn: I was a competitive math team member throughout high school.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done: Backpack segments of the Appalachian Trail.

I'm most proud of: My wife and kids' generosity, courage, selflessness and commitment to hard work and family.

Every morning I read: The New York Times

My favorite meal is: Breakfast

My pet peeve is: People who are full of themselves with little concern for others.

My motto is: Take the long view.

The last book I read was: Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

My favorite movie is: The Godfather

My favorite music is: New folk/Americana/old folk

My favorite U.S. president: LBJ

WORD SEARCH

KING COUNTY, Wash.
Created by: Rachel Looker

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

AEROSPACE: The county is a large center for aerospace activity with over 45,000 employees and more than 400 aerospace companies. The local economy has been shaped around aerospace, aviation and manufacturing.

AMAZON: The company has more than 40 state-of-the-art buildings located in the county seat of Seattle.

BRIDGE: A bridge over Lake Washington that connects the county seat of Seattle to the neighboring city of Medina is the world's longest floating bridge.

CASCADES: The Washington Cascades, part of the Cascade Mountain Range, extends through King County and offers outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, backpacking, climbing and skiing.

FOREST: King County has 850,000 acres of forest lands. The county's forestry program focuses on the retention of the forests for environmental, social and economic benefits.

GATES: The richest man in the world, Bill Gates, calls King County home. He paid the county over \$1 million in property taxes last year.

KING: King County was first named in 1852 in honor of William Rufus King, who won the election that year

as vice president on the Democratic ticket with President Franklin Pierce. In 1986, the King County Council passed a motion to name the county in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

LARGE: The county is the 12th largest county in the United States.

MICROSOFT: The headquarters for the tech company are located in Redmond in the county's northwest region. Additional offices are in Bellevue and Issaquah, both located in King County.

PUGET: King County borders the Puget Sound, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean and the third largest estuary in the country. Seattle lies in the center of the Puget Sound region.

RAINFALL: King County receives an average of 38 inches of precipitation annually.

SALMON: It is common to spot salmon during their migration from the ocean to rivers throughout the county. There are three federally protected species of salmon.

SEATTLE: The county seat of King County.

STARBUCKS: The popular coffee chain got its start in the county seat of Seattle in 1971.

WETLANDS: The county has over 975 wetlands.

My favorite way to relax:

Listening to jazz and new and old folk music while reading.

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BOARD ADOPTS NEW POLICIES RANGING FROM BAIL REFORM TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

Coos County, Ore. Commissioner Melissa Cribbins, who chairs NACo's Energy and Land Use Steering Committee, addresses fellow NACo Board members March 2. Photo by Denny Henry

NACo's POLICY STEERING COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES MET DURING THE CONFERENCE TO CONSIDER NEW LEGISLATIVE POLICIES. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVED MORE THAN 30 INTERIM POLICY RESOLUTIONS MARCH 2. THESE INTERIM POLICY RESOLUTIONS WILL SUPPLEMENT EXISTING NACo POLICY UNTIL NACo'S 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN ORANGE COUNTY, FLA. (ORLANDO). THE APPROVED INTERIM RESOLUTIONS ARE:

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Amend the Highway Beautification Act to Improve Agritourism

ISSUE: Efforts to improve rural economies through new agritourism activities are being hindered by a lack of outdoor advertising on highways that receive federal funding.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports amending the 23 U.S. Code § 131, Control of outdoor advertising pursuant to the Highway Beautification Act (HBA), to allow appropriate and attractive outdoor advertising signage to include off-premise directional signage in agriculturally zoned districts for agritourism activities to foster economic vitality for our rural communities and counties.

Reduce Farmer Suicides

ISSUE: Support the Seeding Rural Resilience Act (S. 2599) to reduce the growing rate of farmer and rancher suicides.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the Seeding Rural Resilience Act (S. 2599), which seeks to curb the growing rate of farmer and rancher suicides by creating a Farmer-Facing Employee Training Program, developing a mental health awareness and de-stigmatization campaign and establishing a task force on rural mental health.

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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

ISSUE: Support Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to support the following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than \$3.8 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than \$1.6 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); \$2.8 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; \$40 million for HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits

ISSUE: To build and preserve more affordable housing through the expansion of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to pass the Affordable Housing Credit Improve-

ment Act of 2019 (S. 1703 / H.R. 3077) to expand and preserve the nation's affordable housing stock.

Appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

ISSUE: Support FY 2021 appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to provide adequate resources for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and fund the Title I, Title II and III accounts at the levels authorized and listed below:

- Title I – U.S. Department of Labor
\$861.1 million for Adult Employment and Training

See **POLICY** page 26



Congress must prioritize funding to improve military housing

From **POLICY** page 25

Services, \$922.2 million for the Youth Account and \$1.37 billion for Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Services

- Title II – U.S. Department of Education

\$656.955 million for Adult Education

- Title III – Wagner-Peyser Employment Services

\$668 million for Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) current-year levels to give states the additional resources they need to provide WIOA's intensive reemployment services

In addition, NACo supports only a WIOA formula allocation funding approach. NACo supports local control and investment at the county and municipality level and rejects any mechanism that gives states more authority than WIOA intends. NACo also supports strengthening the county's role in planning and administering WIOA programs.

Increase Funding and Prioritization for Military Housing

ISSUE: Media and official reports throughout 2018 and 2019 detailed the below-adequate, neglected and unsafe state of military housing for the Armed Services. Military officials have stated the need for more funding to improve the conditions of housing stock for the Armed Services.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense to prioritize funding and implementation of improvements to military housing to improve safety and quality of life for the members of the Armed Services that protect our country.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE Implement U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Refrigerant Management Rules

ISSUE: New federal regulations require strict air condi-

tioning (AC) system inspections, maintenance and record keeping, include heavy fines and apply to all AC system owners. Most county governments are subject to these rules and many are not aware of their liability.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the federal government to provide resources to assist with the implementation of Section 608 of the Clean Air Act, including additional funding for training and assistance with tracking and documentation, maintenance, disposal and reporting requirements.

National Estuary Program Designation

ISSUE: Designating the Pensacola Bay System and Perdido Bay System as estuaries of national significance and the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program as a National Estuary Program.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to designate the Pensacola Bay System and Perdido Bay System as estuaries of na-

tional significance, and by extension recognize the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program as a National Estuary Program (NEP), per Section 320 of the Clean Water Act. Furthermore, NACo urges the federal government to achieve a funding level to continue the NEP to all counties that meet a locally significant start up program.

Partnerships for Clean Energy and Rural Development

ISSUE: 201 counties in the United States, with a population of nearly 125 million people, do not attain the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards. This can have a profound effect on the economies of these areas, yet county officials often have little control over the sources of air pollution because they originate in other political jurisdictions or are regulated by other entities.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports federal financial assistance to counties to implement innovative regional

approaches for reducing air pollution, including locally driven actions that include energy efficiency, renewable energy projects and cross jurisdictional legislative actions. NACo urges the U.S. House and Senate Committees on Appropriations to include a specific line item for new direct non-competitive grants in the funding for U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Federal Government Nonpayment of Special District Fees

ISSUE: The federal government refuses to pay its fair share, arguing it is a tax rather than a fee.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports federal regulatory and legislative efforts to ensure the federal government pays its fair share of special district fees.

HEALTH

New Restrictions on State and Local Flexibility to Finance the Non-Federal Share of Medicaid

ISSUE: State and county flexibility to finance the non-federal share of Medicaid.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the current rules that undergird the federal-state-local partnership for financing the Medicaid program, including Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments and other supplemental payments. These rules permit using an array of public funds for intergovernmental transfers (IGTs), certified public expenditures (CPEs) and other financing mechanisms. Counties encourage maximum flexibility for states and counties to finance the non-federal share of Medicaid. Counties oppose any new restrictions on that flexibility which could shift costs to state and local taxpayers and/or limit the ability to plan and reduce access to essential health care ser-

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Franklin County, Ohio Commissioner Kevin Boyce, who chairs NACo's Finance, Pensions and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee, takes the microphone during the NACo Board of Directors meeting March 2. Photo by Denny Henry



Increase the Earned Income, Child Tax credits

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vices for low-income, uninsured and underinsured residents.

Increase Resources for Suicide Prevention

ISSUE: Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the strengthening of services through additional funding and resources for those suffering from mental illness and other factors, who may be at risk for suicide.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Regulations of Cannabidiol and Other Cannabinoids

ISSUE: The U.S. is in the midst of a “CBD craze.” Purveyors of cannabidiol (CBD) make vastly exaggerated claims about its effects for a very broad array of health conditions. These claims have not been tested for accuracy. In this context, persons with mental health and substance use conditions are at great risk of using CBD to attempt to “cure” their conditions, rather than adhering to more appropriate and effective medications. Other consumers are likely to take the same actions with respect to other health conditions because of the wild claims made about CBD products. Clinical trials also demonstrate that there are adverse health effects associated with inappropriate use of CBD, including drug-induced liver injury and drug-drug interactions. Adverse effects such as these can be monitored and managed with physician oversight, which occurs with prescription medicines. But for CBD consumer products, individuals will be self-administering CBD without physician supervision. Thus, the CBD craze poses a major public health risk.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to develop appropriate pathways for the testing and approval of cannabinoids

as medications using rigorous standards. To date only one CBD based medication, Epidiolex, has been approved for the treatment of refractory epilepsy in small children. NACo further urges the FDA to develop appropriate pathways for the testing and approval of food supplements and cosmetics that contain low concentration levels of CBD, as well as other cannabinoids, using rigorous standards. These standards should address important issues of safety, purity and consistency. Finally, NACo urges FDA to require physicians to share with their patients’ appropriate information and resources regarding the safety of CBD products and the status of the products approved by FDA.

An Amendment to the Federally Supported Health Centers Assistance Act Clarifying that County Mental Health and Behavioral Health Treatments Involving Court Ordered Patients are Covered by the Federal Torts Claim Act

ISSUE: As more and more counties turn to addressing issues at the intersection of public safety and behavioral health, protecting counties from related litigation must be a part of that conversation. Courts are partners in these policy evolutions and already enjoy wide ranging immunity for their actions. When courts order defendants into community treatment within a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), it is imperative that counties are clear on the federal protections provided to their employees to be considered a federal employee in the event of a lawsuit. NACo seeks clarifying language that will make the original intent of Congress clear, such that counties are not exposed to excessive litigation or forced to bring suit against the federal government for protections which exist under the Federally Supported Health Centers Assistance Act and the Federal Tort Claims Act. This resolution does not

remove or diminish access to justice, rather it shifts the source of potential remedies from counties to the federal government.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the following amendments to the Federally Supported Health Centers Act:

Amend 42 USC § 233 (g) (1) (c) to clarify that an individual ordered into treatment at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) by a court is a patient of the entity.

The intent of this first amendment is to clearly establish that not all patients of a FQHC are voluntarily seeking treatment and that not all FQHC are voluntarily providing treatment. Patients may well have existing criminal charges pending or have otherwise been ordered by a court to receive treatment from a FQHC to establish their competency to aid and assist in their own defense or as part of an alternative-to-incarceration sentencing framework.

Amend 42 USC § 233 (a) to clarify that behavioral and mental health treatment is a related function (to medical, surgical and dental functions)

The intent of this amendment is to more clearly establish that behavioral and mental health treatment is included as an exclusive remedy. The Federally Supported Health Centers Assistance Act suggests damages arising from death and injury “resulting from the performance of medical, surgical, dental, or related functions...shall be exclusive of any other civil action or proceeding...”

Urgent Congressional Action for COVID-19 Response and Protecting Local Public Health Funding

ISSUE: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Azar has declared COVID-19 a public health emergency. Response from local public health and other county emergency services, as well as state and federal partners, requires urgent additional appropriation.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to pass a Fiscal Year

2020 supplemental appropriation to expand and strengthen global, federal, state, territorial, tribal and local capacity and coordination to adequately respond to this infectious disease outbreak. NACo requests that the Department of Defense maintain jurisdiction over cases within their health system if there is adequate capacity to treat and contain the risk. Furthermore, NACo requests that the federal government use the long-standing communication practices in use in previous public health emergencies.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Fully Fund Title I and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

ISSUE: For over 50 years, the federal government has significantly underfunded both Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, denying adequate resources to our most at-risk youth.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports legislative efforts to require Congress to fiscally meet its obligation to fully fund Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) over the next 10 years.

Support Working Families by Increasing the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits

ISSUE: The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) are important tax policies supporting working families and their children. Tied to incomes, the EITC and CTC help increase employment and earnings. Consequently, the tax credits assist in increasing the economic independence of low to middle income working families.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports legislation to increase and expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). Those provisions include, but are not limited to, increasing the EITC and lowering the age of eligi-

bility for single individuals who are not raising their dependent child, thus increasing the non-custodial parent’s incentive to work and income for their child; and, reforming the CTC to include, among other provisions, making it fully refundable so all families may benefit from it.

Early Childhood Development

ISSUE: Children ages birth to three need a healthy start consisting of comprehensive, nurturing and supportive services to help them reach their full potential for success in life.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports legislation that would protect and increase investments in early childhood development to ensure that needed educational, nutritional and social services are available to children in the critical years of development between birth and age three.

These investments include greater coordination among pre-school programs in schools and county-run programs such as home visiting programs, publicly funded child care, child wellness, Head Start, Early Head Start and quality childcare including the support of the early childhood workforce. Collaboration with highly trained and motivated partners who build exceptional early childhood ecosystems are pivotal in providing a generation of young people who enter school ready to learn. By investing in and demonstrating leadership in these early childhood development programs, we can begin to bring about successful educational outcomes to fight poverty and reduce inequality across our nation.

Administration’s FY 2021 Budget Proposal to Improve the Family First Prevention Services Act

ISSUE: The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) makes reforms to the delivery of child welfare services by providing federal reimbursement

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Assess behavioral threats

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through IV-E federal foster care for evidence-based prevention programs and services approved by FFPSA's Prevention Services Clearinghouse. A goal of the FFPSA is to keep children in their homes whenever safe and possible. The current statutory requirements used by the clearinghouse to determine those programs are very restrictive, resulting in few prevention programs eligible for reimbursement.

The FFPSA also intends to reduce the use of congregate care by setting a number of new federal requirements to discourage its use. One of those requirements, however, would have the unintended effect of disallowing Medicaid reimbursement for FFPSA Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) that are currently under the Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion. The IMD provision prohibits Medicaid from paying for institutions of more than 16 beds that are primarily engaged in providing diagnosis, treatment or care of persons with mental illnesses, including medical attention, nursing care and related services.

The Trump Administration's FY 2021 budget proposes statutory changes to address the above FFPSA impediments.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the administration's FY 2021 budget proposal and introduction of legislation to address the current lack of evidence-based prevention programs eligible for federal IV-E reimbursement under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). NACo supports the administration's proposal to allow the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to approve all programs currently rated as evidence-based by the California Evidence-Based Clearing-



L-r) Ravalli County, Mont. Commissioner Greg Chilcott, vice chair of NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee and Banner County, Neb. Commissioner Robert Post, who chair's NACo's Rural Action Caucus, share a laugh March 2 during the NACo Board of Directors meeting. Photo by Denny Henry

house and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness Project.

NACo also supports the administration's proposal to remove the federal bar on Medicaid payments to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) that are currently under the Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) payment exclusion in order to allow some congregate care entities to serve children when that placement is appropriate and necessary.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Vulnerable Incarcerated Individuals Medical Care, Housing and Safety

ISSUE: Vulnerable inmates deserve appropriate medical care, and physical, mental and emotional safety while incarcerated.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges additional funding specifically available to counties to imple-

ment Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) compliance in local jails, and for the National Institute of Corrections to issue comprehensive guidance based on scientific evidence and best practices regarding medical care, housing and safety considerations for the most vulnerable incarcerated individuals.

APS Act and Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Legislation to Prevent Targeted Acts of Violence in Our Communities

ISSUE: The issue of targeted acts of violence in America's schools and workplaces has grown in importance and impact to the American psyche. Years of efforts to restrict the tools used by violent actors have failed to stop these atrocities and no reactive method is fast enough to stop actors once they fire their first shot or stab their first victim. For decades, the process of Behavioral Threat Assessment and

Management (BTAM) has been used to proactively identify, investigate, assess and mitigate threats of targeted violence – and BTAM is, in fact, the methodology used to protect members of Congress and their staff as well as other government officials. Scientifically validated BTAM processes exist that can and must be used in our communities.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports legislation to implement Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) by providing guidelines across all levels of government and providing counties with training, resources and support needed to stand up community-based multidisciplinary BTAM units in order to intervene and mitigate targeted acts of violence in our communities. Specifically, NACo supports the establishment of a temporary working group made up of BTAM experts to make recommendations to Congress regarding a national strategy for preventing targeted violence and the oth-

er components of the Threat Assessment, Prevention, and Safety (TAPS) Act (H.R. 838/S. 265).

Reforming Pretrial Monetary Bail

ISSUE: Seeking alternatives to existing bail structure that lessen the financial burden of pretrial detainees.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress and the administration to put forth legislation that would provide alternatives to the existing monetary bail structure for nonviolent crime; to reduce mass incarceration in the current system involving individuals awaiting trial, who are incarcerated because they cannot afford to pay bail. NACo encourages the federal government to support counties through funding and technical assistance for data collection and explore the viability of monetary bail alternatives, such as a pretrial safety assessment (PSA) release option. NACo also urges Congress to

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Support grazing for wildland fire management

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direct funding to counties and relevant agencies for their support to conduct research on alternatives to the current bail system.

Community Violence as a Public Health Issue

ISSUE: Determining the causes of community violence through data collection to establish a prevention framework for local governments from a public health approach.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to introduce legislation and ensure sustained funding for: (1) collection of data on community violence offenders and firearm-related deaths, including but not limited to age, gender, location of crime, prior charges or convictions and race; (2) research on the gathered data to better understand the root causes of community violence; and (3) implementation of community violence prevention plans and programs by counties to address the causes identified. NACo also calls on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide funding and technical assistance for the collection and analysis of this data, as well as counties' community violence prevention strategies.

PUBLIC LANDS U.S. Forest Service Workforce Capacity and Infrastructure

ISSUE: The U.S. Forest Service lacks the personnel and infrastructure capacity necessary to properly manage, conserve and restore the National Forest System.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the findings and conclusions set forth in the National Association of Forest Service Retirees' report, entitled "Increasing Workforce Capacity to Increase the Pace and Scale of Restoration on National Forest System Lands" and will work with the administration and Con-

gress toward implementing the report's recommendations and toward policies that add, repair and maintain needed infrastructure with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and other appropriate entities.

Council on Environmental Quality's Revisions to the National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations

ISSUE: The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has promulgated a proposed rulemaking that would update its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports revising National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations to standardize the qualifications for cooperating agency status, to allow for a cooperating agency to participate in the schedule planning process for NEPA analyses, to direct the lead federal agency to meet with a cooperating agency at the cooperating agency's request and to amend the definition of cooperating agency to increase the

opportunities for involvement from experts within state, local and tribal governments.

NACo supports revisions that would allow federal agencies' local and regional offices to enter into formal agreements with state and local partners, including allowing state and local governments to conduct portions of, or provide critical data for, a NEPA analysis. NACo recommends that federal agencies work with state and local officials to ensure proposed actions and categorical exclusions are consistent with state and local infrastructure development and land management plans by expanding and mandating reviews for federal agencies with counties and considering the input of all affected parties.

NACo supports page and time limitations for environmental assessments and environmental impact statements to minimize the administrative burden that counties face as a result of the NEPA process. NACo also requests the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to clarify that any potential deleterious environmental impacts a project may cause will continue to be thoroughly analyzed as changes to NEPA implementation are developed.

Targeted Grazing for Wildland Fire Management

ISSUE: Targeted grazing can offer an alternative method of fuel load management on our nation's public lands to reduce the growing threat of wildland fire.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo calls on the federal government to establish a program to target livestock grazing toward areas at high risk of wildland fire. Such a program should compensate livestock owners for these efforts to reduce wildfire fuel loads on public lands.

Flexibility in the Elections Section of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act

ISSUE: Changes to the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) elections section in 2013 have removed flexibility for counties to decide whether to accept SRS payments or 25 percent of the revenue from timber harvests off national forests within their jurisdiction and have frozen counties' election choices as they were in 2012, even if

local conditions have changed.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports a return to the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) elections language of 2008 which allows county boards the flexibility to make local decisions based on current local conditions.

Stopping the Annual 5 Percent Drawdown of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Payments to National Forest Counties

ISSUE: The annual five percent drawdown of Secure Rural School and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) payments to national forest counties has not been replaced by increased timber receipts, resulting in dire financial impacts to counties, schools and local economies.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports amending the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) to remove the annual five percent drawdown and

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Tarrant County, Texas Judge Glen Whitley, a past president of NACo, speaks March 2 during the NACo Board of Directors meeting at the 2020 Legislative Conference. Photo by Denny Henry



PILT, SRS must be fully, permanently funded

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restore funding levels to those commensurate with providing mandated services.

Increasing Timber Harvests and Forest Restoration from National Forest System Lands to Maximum Sustainable Levels

ISSUE: Reduced timber harvests and other management activities have left 80 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) land at risk of wildfire, insect or disease infestation. This negatively affects community security, public health and economic opportunity.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo calls on federal land agencies to use all available tools—including stewardship contracting, Good Neighbor Agreements and other collaborative efforts to increase timber harvest levels to the maximum sustainable levels to reduce the threat of

wildfire and insect and disease infestation while spurring economic opportunities for public lands counties.

Prohibiting New Wilderness Designations Without the Approval of the Governing Bodies of the Counties of Jurisdiction

ISSUE: Oftentimes wilderness designations are made without the support of the elected officials within the impacted counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports the prohibition of new wilderness designations without the approval of the governing bodies of the counties of jurisdiction.

No Net Increase in Public Land Ownership Without the Approval of the Governing Bodies of the Counties of Jurisdiction

ISSUE: Organizations purchase private property and donate it to federal land management agencies, thus removing it from economic production and reducing the tax base of county governments.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to pass legislation requiring federal land management agencies to receive the approval of the governing bodies of the counties of jurisdiction in order to have a net increase in federal land ownership.

United States Secretary of the Interior and the United States Secretary of Agriculture: Reinstate All Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee Charters and Confirm All Nominations

ISSUE: The U.S. Secretary of the Interior has not reinstated

all Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) charters authorized under section 309 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLMPA). Furthermore, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior has not confirmed all the community nominations to the BLM RAC and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture has not confirmed all nominations for U.S. Forest Service (USFS) RACs authorized under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (P.L. 116-94), which leaves many RACs nonfunctional due to vacancies and an inability to meet a quorum.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to expeditiously reinstate all Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) charters and confirm all nominations to the BLM RACs as authorized under Section 309 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLMPA). Additionally, NACo urges

the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to expeditiously confirm all nominations to the U.S. Forest Service RACs as authorized under Secure Rural Schools.

Including Full Payments In-Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act Funding in the President's Annual Budget

ISSUE: The annual appropriations cycle leaves funding for Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination (SRS) subject to potential cuts or elimination on an annual basis.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo calls on the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

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NACo 2020

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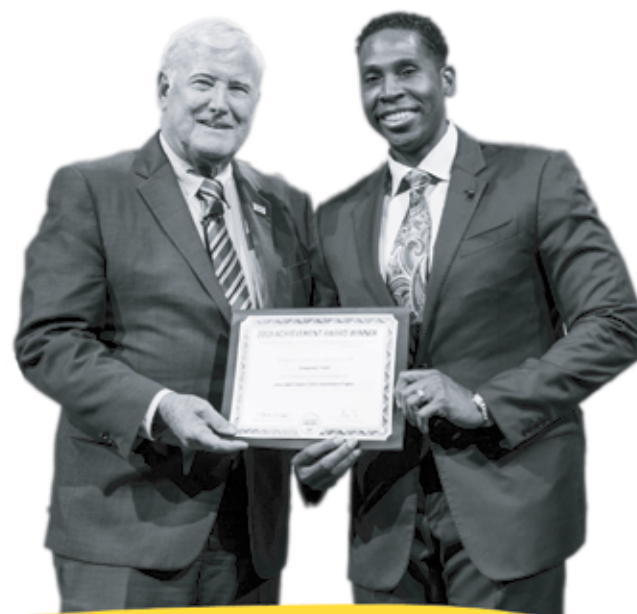
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SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE:

March 30, 2020 at
11:59 p.m. EDT

NOTIFICATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:

Week of April 27, 2020

NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION:

July 17 – 20, 2020
Orange County/ Orlando, Florida



Congress must create a national infrastructure bank

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to include proposals for full, permanent funding of Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and full funding of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination (SRS) until a long-term sustainable funding solution for national forest counties is agreed to.

TRANSPORTATION Congress: Enact Legislation Creating a National Infrastructure Bank to Finance Urgently Needed Infrastructure Projects

ISSUE: According to the American Society of Civil Engineers and the U.S. Congress, there is a budget shortfall of over \$2 trillion needed to finance urgently needed infrastructure programs. Current budget estimates cut discretionary funding. Also, this does not include much needed programs such as broadband, passenger transit systems, high speed rail, clean water supply projects, flood control systems, energy distribution systems, ferries, fish passage barriers and power grid upgrades. Therefore, the real financing need is well over \$4 trillion. The National Infrastructure Bank (NIB) would finance projects within all regions of the U.S. In the past, the United States has employed four National Banking systems to build out the infrastructure, and the proposed new legislation follows in that successful model and tradition.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to enact legislation to create a new National Infrastructure Bank (NIB) system in the tradition of George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. This proposed bill has the following critical points:

It would create a new NIB by exchanging existing Treasury debt for preferred stock in the bank. The proposal is to raise \$500 billion, out of the \$23 trillion in Treasury debt, and put it in the bank. This would require no new federal debt.

The NIB would pay two percent interest above the Treas-

ury yield to the investors, with all transactions being federally insured. The two percent would be included in the U.S. budget and not go through appropriations. This model has been used in the past, initiated by the first Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton.

The NIB would perform as a traditional commercial bank and be able to provide financing in the form of loans. The bank would loan \$4 trillion to states, cities, counties, authorities and multi-state entities to address the infrastructure crisis in the nation. Loans would be long term, at Treasury rates and for infrastructure projects only.

There would be a Board of Directors composed of mainly engineers and infrastructure experts, with state, local and county officials with experience in infrastructure construction to assist in the implementation of the projects. The bank would report all banking transactions to Congress on a regular basis.

The NIB would create 25+ million new high paying jobs, which would increase the tax base and increase the productivity of the entire economy. Previous such entities have increased real GDP by 3-5 percent per year, and payback multiples have been anywhere from 2-10 times the investment.

Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation: Allow Public-Private Partnerships for the Continued Operation of Federal Rest Areas

ISSUE: Deferred maintenance and budget shortfalls on federal rest areas have grown in recent years, causing operating deficiencies that threaten the safety of travelers and the long-term viability of rest areas. Due to federal law, state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) are not allowed to contract with private partners for the commercialization of federal-aid rest areas.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports policies to allow public-private partnerships (P3s) on federal Rest Areas and to



NACo First Vice President and Boone County, Ky. Judge Gary Moore (right) and Second Vice President and DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson take part in the NACo Board meeting.

ensure that federal laws do not prevent rest areas and other safety initiatives along highways from flourishing that will benefit travelers nationwide and bring much-needed revenue to local economies and budget relief to state Departments of Transportation (DOTs). NACo encourages Congress to do a thorough and complete study of commercialization of federal-aid rest areas, with an emphasis on policies that maintain free and open public access to the core facilities, including parking, restrooms and drinking fountains.

Congress: Establish a Discretionary Grant Program to Fund the Elimination of Highway-Rail At- Grade Crossings

ISSUE: Collisions, fatalities, chronic traffic congestion, increased pollution, train horn noise, delayed emergency response, freight and trucking impacts and rail crossing violations are a fraction of the impacts communities, commuters and commerce face as a result of at-grade crossings between rail and passenger vehicle traffic. Ac-

cording to the Federal Railroad Administration, there are over 211,000 active highway-rail grade crossings in America. Left unaddressed, issues at these crossings will continue to grow resulting in compromised safety and negative economic impacts for Americans across the country.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo urges Congress to create a new discretionary grant program providing federal funding opportunities for counties desiring to eliminate at grade rail crossings.

County Staff Handling GRANTS Need Help?

The National Grants Management Association (NGMA) can assist with:

- Membership Benefits—Grants Management Body of Knowledge Guide printed and online, Webinar Library and many more membership resources
- Annual Grants Training, April 14-16, Arlington, VA
- Grants Management Body of Knowledge Training (GMBok)
 - Grants Management "101" for your staff
- Networking and Best Practice Sharing
- Certified Grants Management Specialist (CGMS)

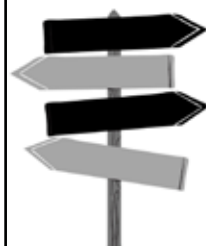
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andrew@ngma.org

Contact: Andrew S. Goldschmidt, CAE--Executive Director



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BRIGHT IDEAS | BALTIMORE CITY, MD.

'Gainsharing' Reduces Costs, Improves Staff Productivity

PROBLEM:

Inefficiencies within Baltimore City's fleet operation contributed to a substantial budget deficit.

SOLUTION:

Create a gainsharing program to avoid unnecessary costs, create systems for continued savings and incentivize employee productivity.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

The Department of General Services (DGS) in Baltimore City launched a new program that simultaneously saves money while improving staff productivity within its fleet management division.

The DGS implemented a "gainsharing" program, which serves as a collaboration between the department and labor organizations representing fleet employees. Through the program, generated savings are shared among staff, the department and the city's general fund.

Baltimore City's Fleet Management Division oversees the administration of over 5,600 pieces of motorized equipment including police patrol cars, fire apparatus, water skimmers and lawn mowers, among others. The division includes a team of automotive technicians.

To improve the efficiency and productivity of its fleet operation, the department launched the gainsharing program for its fleet management division. The program incentivizes higher performance through employee participation. It tracks costs and returns a portion of avoided expenses to employees as additional income.

Through the program, fleet employees are encouraged to identify and implement operational changes to improve service and reduce costs. David Martin, a business analyst with the Fiscal Office at the DGS, who serves as project manager for the gainsharing program, said gainsharing divides the



As part of the gainsharing program, members of Baltimore City's Fleet Management Division repair a firetruck in house instead of sending the vehicle to an outside vendor.

savings from productive activity among employees.

When the program first launched, DGS tracked expenses in different categories based on fleet expenditures, Martin said.

To the extent that employees outperform the expectations of the expenditures, a portion is shared among employees, the finance office and within fleet maintenance.

"The idea is we track information as a whole and everybody shares in the successes of everyone else," he said.

The city launched a 10-year plan to address a substantial budget deficit and identified fleet management as an operation with significant savings potential. The program financially benefits both the government and employees.

"It's not directly saving employees money so much as allowing them to share in the savings that we're recognizing for the city," Martin said.

Through the gainsharing program, Martin said fleet

staff increased their in-house capacity to perform work that would otherwise have been sent to outside vendors. Fleet employees are now performing the work in-house which results in lower costs and increased direct labor hours.

For example, Martin explained how DGS tracked the expenses for repairing vehicles with third-party vendors when sending them to local mechanic shops. He said when mechanics perform those repairs in house and complete preventative maintenance operations, costs are saved and put into the gainsharing pool.

"People become more involved and think about sort of the strategic positions of vehicle maintenance work, what makes sense to be working on in this moment, and make more tactical decisions on those vehicles," he said.

Renee Johnson, acting chief of Fleet Management within the DGS, said employees have shown interest in the program, and are asking questions and

improving their overall performance.

"It's highly motivating to our team [and] to the employees," Johnson said.

Martin added that the program aims to help employees feel engaged with the decision-making and outcomes of the agency "not just as employees, but as part of a larger team that is contributing toward the success both of the fleet and of the city in general."

The department spent two and a half years planning the program and ensuring a data infrastructure was in place. The DGS identified which parts of the fleet had good data to measure.

The department completed a pilot period from January 2018 to June 2018 and concluded its first formal phase in December 2018. Fleet Management has avoided \$1.15 million in extra costs during the six-month pilot and first full phase of the program. The majority of these savings came from reduced use of private vendors for fleet

maintenance work. Nearly \$650,000 of total savings was shared among 230 employees, resulting in each full-time employee receiving nearly \$3,000 each for 2018.

"I think just one of the things that I've really appreciated working on in the program is the degree to which we've been able to engage with employees and have them be an active part of understanding and disseminating the information that's coming out of gainsharing," Martin said.

"I also think it's been a highly successful program throughout the city as well and I know a number of other departments within the city have approached us with a lot of interest in seeing how gainsharing programs might also be developed in other city agencies," he added. **CN**

The program was a Best in Category winner in the 2019 NACo Achievement Awards Financial Management and Services category.

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& Winkler

Coronavirus: Check Your County's Telecommuting, Other HR Policies

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is the topic of countless national and local news stories these days. And this HR column is not going to give you a reprieve from that. As of last week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) stated more than 500 total cases of COVID-19 have been reported across 34 states. More than 20 deaths have been attributed to the virus. Several counties across the country, including the City and County of Los Angeles, have declared local emergencies. Doing so will aid them in coordinating responses and obtaining state and federal funding toward efforts to minimize the spread of the virus.

While your county may not yet be affected by the COVID-19, many officials believe it's only a matter of time. The best way to keep the virus from spreading further is through education and preventative measures.

Getting a plan in place now can alleviate some fear and can give employees a map of what to do if they are concerned that they may have been exposed to the disease. A plan can also consider how an outbreak in your community will affect county operations and staffing and address how your county will manage the impacts in the event such an outbreak occurs.

First, education. Take the opportunity to provide employees with resources to answer what is known about the virus: how it is spread, what are the symptoms, how individuals can protect themselves and others.

The CDC has created a "need-to-know" fact sheet at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf> that you can share with your employees.

As your county health department is likely monitoring the spread of the virus, you can utilize their resources and un-



derstanding of any local cases to provide local-specific information and frequent updates and the virus spreads as anticipated.

It is important for employees to know that they can and should stay home if they feel sick. Many employees may hesitate to take sick time, even if they have plenty of accrued leave, because they perceive a day off as letting their team down or they may be concerned that their work will be neglected and pile up in their absence.

Assure your employees that the most important consideration is their health and the health of their colleagues and the greater community. The best decision they can make for their team is to stay home.

What about an employee who may not have any more accrued time and cannot afford to take a day without pay? Perhaps your sick leave policy allows for a sick time advance to the employee.

If your policy presently prevents such an advance, language allowing an advance in

a declared emergency or exceptional circumstances may be a desired future language addition.

Of course, some employees are disinclined to take sick days. They may take pride in their extensive history of not taking sick days. Or they may downplay their symptoms. While we can encourage our employees to take care of themselves and consider their colleagues, employees cannot be compelled to take sick leave. They cannot be made to go to a doctor.

As employers, the best we can do is to foster an environment that allows employees to take necessary time off without fearing resentment and encourage them to do so when they seem ill.

Next, as your employees are taking steps to protect themselves and their families, your county department should develop or revisit your Continuity of Operations, or COOP, plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify your agency's essential functions and set forth how those functions will continue

through an emergency, such as a contagious disease outbreak, or will resume after a disruption. You can use your plan to address order of succession and delegation of authority to ensure necessary decisions get made even if certain decision-makers in your office are unavailable.

It can also be used to identify essential employees and how they will be activated, either in response to the emergency, or to maintain essential functions of the office if nonessential staff is reduced.

Something for you to consider for your COOP plan is whether and how you might implement telecommuting as an option for employees. If telecommuting is an option, employees may be more cautious about attending work — particularly in a public, high-traffic building — when they are showing symptoms of illness or believe they may have been exposed to someone ill.

It would also allow for continuation of work in the event the situation in your local community rises or becomes severe

enough to warrant school closures. School districts in several states are closing schools or curtailing school activities.

Whether the virus impacts your county or not, there is likely a lot of fear in the community about the possibility. It is always worthwhile to remind employees that there are employee assistance programs available. There is a lot of unknown right now, as we watch the CDC's numbers rise and wonder how our community and country will weather this epidemic.

Sharing the hard work and preparedness of our public health departments, as well as sharing information from our epidemiologists and infectious disease investigators, can help staff to feel informed and comforted. It is just one way we can provide our employees some structure and reassurance and remove at least a little uncertainty from the situation. **CN**

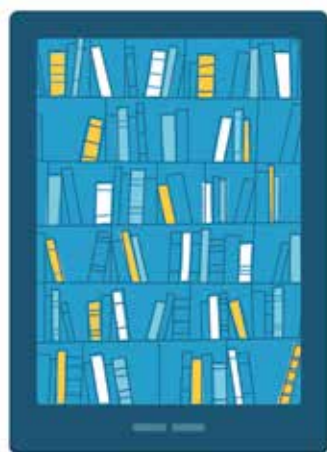
Erika Philpot is the human resources director and Rose Winkler is the deputy county attorney for Coconino County, Ariz.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



ARIZONA

• The health department in **GRAHAM COUNTY** is launching a gleaning program to **collect excess produce** to give to individuals within the community. The department will obtain produce from farmers throughout Arizona and distribute the foods locally, the *Eastern Arizona Courier* reported. County residents can enroll in the distribution program, which will offer produce monthly on a first-come, first-serve basis.



ARIZONA

• The **PIMA COUNTY** Public Library created **eReading Rooms** that house a digital collection of children's books with recorded narrations that highlight words when reading. The concept for the eReading Room comes from physical spaces in libraries that are designed for different ages, subjects or themes, *Tucson Local Media* reported. The library has more than 300 children's read-alongs available online.

CALIFORNIA

• A **reentry portal** in **ALAMEDA COUNTY** is serving as an online resource to provide information on state and coun-

ty agencies to help those who were formerly incarcerated re-establish their lives. The portal includes reentry resources and other useful information to help individuals transition back into society, *Pleasanton Weekly* reported. The portal is located on the county's 211 information system website and on the county probation department's website.

• The District Attorney in **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** has asked the court to **dismiss 66,000 marijuana convictions**. When marijuana was legalized in California in 2016, prosecutors worked to reduce past marijuana convictions from felonies to misdemeanors. District Attorney Jackie Lacey wants to go further by dismissing eligible convictions and sealing the convictions that date back decades, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. The county is working with Code for America, a non-profit group, to create algorithms and find eligible convictions.

COLORADO

County officials in **SUMMIT**

COUNTY are working to create new workforce housing options. Efforts include a recent push to partner with the U.S. Forest Service to **develop projects on federal lands**, according to *Summit Daily News*. This is possible through President Donald Trump's signing of the 2018 Farm Bill, which authorized the Forest Service to lease administrative sites that are under 40 acres.

INDIANA

An ordinance in **VANDERBURGH COUNTY** is **expanding traffic laws** for golf carts and other off-road vehicles on lower speed and less-traveled roads. Neighboring Posey County already has a law allowing off-road vehicles on county roads, 14News reported. If the ordinance is approved, off-road vehicles must have headlights, taillights and brakes.

MICHIGAN

A new **ambulance program**

in **JACKSON COUNTY** allows paramedics to treat patients at home or transport them to a primary care doctor or to urgent care instead of an emergency room. If paramedics determine a patient does not need emergency transportation, the patient will speak to a doctor through a Teladoc interview who will determine if they can receive in-home treatment or if they need to be taken elsewhere, MLive.com reported. The "Emergency Triage, Treat and Transport" program is funded through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

MINNESOTA

• Commissioners in **OTTER TAIL COUNTY** approved The Big Build program to **invest in single and two-family homes**. The program aims to increase the tax base through a rebate of property taxes on newly constructed homes and offset the cost of building new primary residences, Perham Focus

reported. It also encourages homeowners to move up into the next tier of housing, leaving lower level housing available for first-time home buyers.

• **ST. LOUIS COUNTY** received a \$50,000 grant to fund individuals with substance abuse or mental illnesses who have **emergency housing needs**. The grant, from the UCare Foundation, will make housing accessible and low barrier. The emergency housing fund will be used to bridge gaps for those who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless and covers a security deposit, one month's rent and housing application fees as well as moving costs, according to *Duluth News Tribune*. The fund can also be used to help pay for mental and behavioral health services.

NEW MEXICO

BERNALILLO COUNTY Sheriff Manuel Gonzales will lead a **U.S. Department of Justice working group** that is part of a federal effort to explore issues affecting the ability of law enforcement to reduce crime.

Gonzales told the *Albuquerque Journal* that as chairman of the panel, he will work with criminal justice experts on a report on how law enforcement should work with people experiencing mental health problems. The commission is made up of police chiefs, state prosecutors, county sheriffs, rural and tribal authorities and federal agents and includes 15 working groups, including a panel on mental ill-



GEORGIA

County officials have **restricted travel on all dirt roads** in **BULLOCH COUNTY** after excessive rainfall. Only residents living on those roads, drivers making deliveries, law enforcement and emergency services are permitted to use the roads, WTOC-TV reported. Officials said unnecessary traffic puts residents who live on dirt roads in danger. Bulloch County Public Works is unable to make any repairs until the rain stops.

ness. The commission is expected to meet monthly over the next year.

NORTH CAROLINA

For the first time, **DURHAM COUNTY's Board of Commissioners will be entirely female**. Five women won the Democratic primary for the board's five seats, and with no Republican candidates for commissioner in November's general election, they are the presumptive winners, *The News & Observer* reported.

OREGON

MULTNOMAH COUNTY is trying to limit the spread of **coronavirus among the homeless population**. The county is drawing up guidelines for all of their partners who deal with the homeless on how to handle a coronavirus outbreak.

"A significant percentage of folks in shelters are older — 55 and older — or have other serious health issues, including some folks who are on chemotherapy in our shelters," said Denis Theriault, spokesman for Multnomah County, according to KATU News. "We have folks who have heart issues, diabetes — they need that help. So, we've been working on a set of guidance plans and recommendations for how shelters can work with those folks."

PENNSYLVANIA

Following the detention of an undocumented immigrant at the **NORTHAMPTON COUNTY Courthouse**, County Executive

Lamont McClure has issued an order **prohibiting such arrests without a warrant**. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent who took a local man into custody claimed to have a warrant in his car, the *Morning Call* reported, but when challenged by an attorney to produce the warrant, the agent said he was making an "administrative warrantless arrest." McClure said there was no written policy regarding ICE arrests in the courthouse prior to the incident

UTAH

With a nasty temperature inversion that amplifies pollution, **SALT LAKE COUNTY** announced a new campaign to **improve air quality** through a range of initiatives, including the use of hybrid vehicles for police. The Unified Police Department will use new hybrid vehicles, and officers will monitor cars that idle too long and hand out flyers to the drivers, which will educate them about how idling cars can impact air quality. Police will hand out a separate flyer for people with smoking tailpipes and will have the option to issue tickets. The Health Department will also provide emissions inspections and testing free and offer some repairs to low-income individuals.

WASHINGTON

The **SPOKANE COUNTY** Commission is pursuing legal action against the owner of a **helipad located in a low-density residential zone**. Helipads are not allowed in the county's zoning code.

A 2018 Federal Aviation Administration analysis of the helipad, which has been named "Birdhouse" on the FAA report, found it to be objectionable due

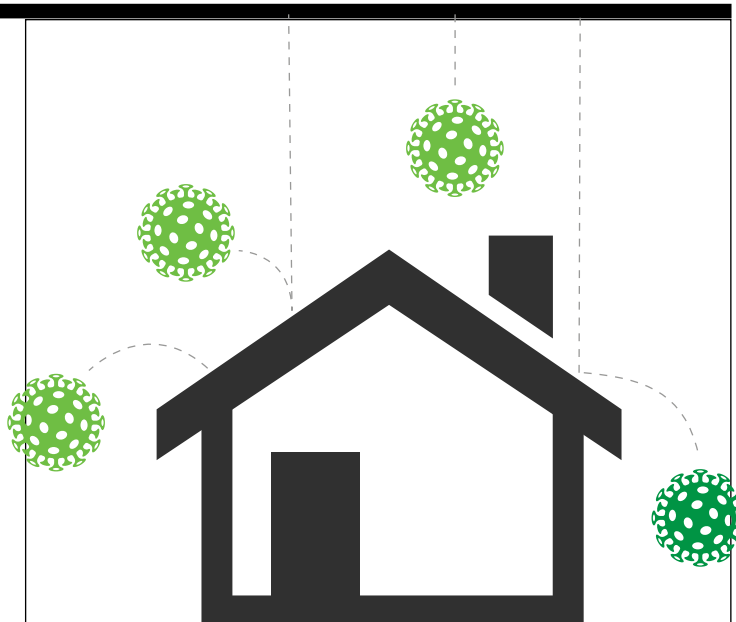
to lack of fire protection and lights, its location in a congested residential neighborhood and its close proximity to tall trees, the *Spokesman-Review* reported.

WISCONSIN

The **PORTAGE COUNTY** Human Resources Committee approved a resolution that will **include transgender services** in the county's health plan, retroactive to Jan. 1. The benefits will apply to county government employees and their families needing transgender medical services, the *Stevens Point Journal* reported. In September 2018, a federal judge ordered the state and its insurers to cover

transgender medical services after they denied coverage to University of Wisconsin employees, and nearly a year later, the same judge ordered Wisconsin Medicaid coverage to include transgender medical services and expanded that lawsuit into a class action. County Human Resources Committee Chair James Gifford said the county wanted to err on the side of caution and not open itself up to a potential lawsuit.

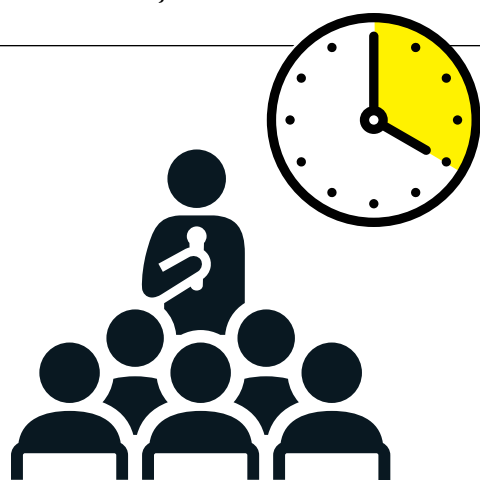
News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Do you have an item that we should consider? Contact us at cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.



WASHINGTON

• In hopes of isolating as many cases of **coronavirus** as possible, **KING COUNTY** has recommended people in higher-risk groups — over age 60 and with underlying health conditions — stay home and avoid large groups. Fox News reported that the county recommended its 2.2 million residents work from home if they are able.

The county has also purchased an EconoLodge motel to use as a quarantine facility. The hard surfaces, easy-to-clean floors and separate heating-and-cooling units in each room make the motel ideal for isolating patients. The 84 rooms of the two-story building open to the outside, rather than to a central hallway, reducing the likelihood of contact between those who are quarantined. Officials are also setting up isolation units in trailers on public parking lots or other land, the Associated Press reported.



MARYLAND

The **BALTIMORE COUNTY** Council is making a change to hold its **work sessions in the late afternoon** to be more accessible to the public. The legislation states that work sessions would start at 4 p.m. or later, *The Baltimore Sun* reported. Prior to the resolution, the council's sessions convened around 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. The change aims to make it easier for county residents to attend sessions.



CITY-COUNTY OF BUTTE SILVER BOW, MONT.

The seal for the City-County of Butte Silver Bow is based on the history of the consolidated local governments of the City of Butte and the County of Silver Bow. The City of Butte was established in 1879 and named "Butte" for the French word meaning "isolated hill," where prospectors found gold. The county of Silver Bow was established in 1881 and named for a creek that resembled a silver archer's bow. In 1977, the City of Butte and the County of Silver Bow merged into one municipal corporation in Montana. An official seal was created to mark the consolidation.



The circular seal has a rope design along the outer circle and a broken dash design along the inner circle.

The seal reads "Butte-Silver Bow" in the upper portion and "State of Montana" in the lower portion. Between both circles, the seal reads "The Richest Hill on Earth."

The seal includes the date "5-2-77," signifying the effective date of government of Butte-Silver Bow County.

Within the inner circle, replicas of a readied bow depict the former seal of Silver Bow County, the natural landmark of Big Butte, an eroded neck of an extinct volcano, displaying the Letter "M" and a mining headframe.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

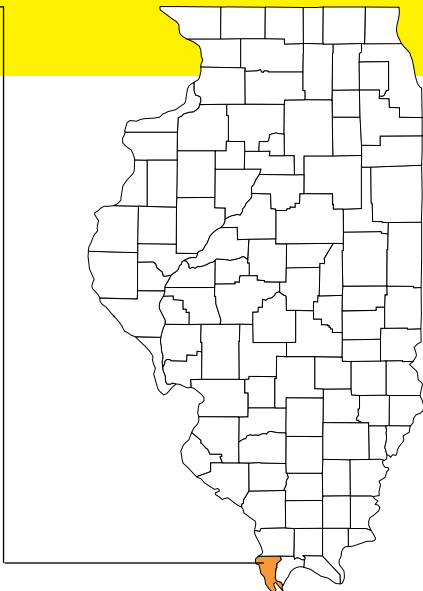
GET TO KNOW...

Alexander County, Ill.

Welcome, Alexander County, Ill.

Alexander County is the southernmost county in Illinois. The 250-square-mile county has a population of about 6,000. Original settlers in the county were from Tennessee. The county is named after William M. Alexander, a physician who practiced in the town of America, which was established as the first county seat. The county seat was relocated multiple times and is now in Cairo, named because it was presumed to resemble Cairo, Egypt. Cairo, pronounced “care-o,” was established as a trading point at the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and was once a major hub for steamboat traffic.

The county seat has the lowest elevation of any location in the state and is entirely surrounded by levees. Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant built Fort Defiance, a civil war camp, near Cairo. Attractions in the county seat include a historic government building called the Old Custom House, local museums and historic mansions along “Millionaire’s Row.”



Washington boosts public health

From CORONAVIRUS page 3

health organizations that cover the state’s 39 counties in terms of communications.

“When you’re in Spokane you’re getting that same consistent message as you are when you’re traveling to the west, and that’s really important in times of emergency where you need to have consistent messaging to be that respected place of information,” Bodden said. Battling rumors about the disease further distracts other efforts.

“Clearly there’s a statewide message around coronavirus but there’s also a customized local message that needs to occur, every jurisdiction is at a different stage with the virus, so this really helps us to communicate.”

“This issue does not know a political boundary,” Johnson said. “We need a geographic solution. Now that we’re in the midst of this crisis, those years of building those relationships with the state are really paying off.”

Despite the groundwork, Bodden and Johnson expect coronavirus to grow in Washington state, both in number and severity. As of March 12, King, Snohomish and Pierce counties have restrictions on the size of gatherings allowed to take place. Johnson expects that number to at least double in a week, with possible state-wide restrictions.

“The whole goal of this is to try to not to create a surge (in patients) that shuts down our healthcare system, slow the wave as much as possible because people will still be breaking their arms, getting the flu and needing the hospital for things that aren’t related to the coronavirus,” Bodden said. “And our public health departments still have restaurant inspections to do, we still have food handlers’ permits to issue, we still have septic systems to inspect.” **CN**

See some individual efforts counties have made to deal with coronavirus in News From Across the Nation, pages 34 and 35.

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