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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

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## TIMELINE GETS TIGHT FOR 2020 CENSUS

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The 2020 census is coming in a matter of months, not years, and time is running out for counties to be ready.

The results of the census will determine how more than \$900 billion in annual funding is allocated and congressional seats are apportioned, which could change in 13 states.

"Illinois lost a congressional seat after the 2010 census and we could lose one or two more," Cook County, Ill. Commissioner Stanley Moore told the Rural Action Caucus at its March 4 meeting during NACo's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

See **CENSUS** page 3



**Surrounded by county officials, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) speaks in support of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools programs at a March 5 Capitol Hill press conference following NACo's Legislative Conference. See conference workshop and speaker coverage starting on page 7, plus a photo spread, starting on page 19. Photo by Denny Henry**

## Alabama county cleans up after tornado kills 23

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

Lee County, Ala. officials are cleaning up after a tornado packing 170-MPH winds ripped through the community March 3, killing at least 23 people and injuring dozens.

"It's very important to me to come before you as your commissioner to say my sorrow, sympathy and heart goes out to the families," said Lee District County Commissioner Richard LaGrand Sr., at a news conference. "And all the first responders — I take my hat off to you. This is a tough time for us."

Preliminary reports from the National Weather Service classified the tornado as an EF-4

tornado, which are clocked at between 166 to 200 MPH. The tornado hit the county's Beaugard-Smiths Station community. More than 100 homes were destroyed.

The United States has not seen a tornado of such magnitude since 2017, according to The Weather Channel. The last EF4 struck Van Zandt County, Texas, in the northeastern part of the state. The Lee County, Ala. tornado was the deadliest since 2013, when an EF5 killed 24 in Cleveland County, Okla. The tornado was estimated to be .87 miles wide and its track nearly 27 miles across Alabama and 43 miles in Georgia, according to the National

See **TORNADO** page 2

## NACo rolls out app to test broadband

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

Members of NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee March 2 expressed frustration over lack of internet and cellphone service in many parts of the country, but there was one bright spot: NACo has launched a mobile app, dubbed "TestIT," geared toward getting accurate information when it comes to who has broadband — and more importantly who does not.

NACo partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Rural Community Assistance Partnership to develop the app to

identify areas with low connectivity to help ensure adequate funding for broadband infrastructure. App users will be able to test their broadband speeds with the push of a button.

Meanwhile, April Jones, legislative assistant to Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), and Brendan Dailey, legislative assistant to U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W. Va.), took part in a discussion with some frustrated members of the Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee at NACo, who talked about poor internet and cell phone service.

See **TELECOM** page 16



# Lee County, Ala. Emergency Management Director: 'Be as ready as you can be'



A man salvages belongings March 4 in Lee County, Ala., after a tornado ripped through the area, killing 23. Photo by Mickey Welsh/Montgomery Advertiser; used with permission

## From TORNADO page 1

Weather Service.

Lee County is now picking up the pieces and beginning the road to recovery.

According to County Director of Emergency Management Kathrine Carson, emergency responders began providing immediate assistance after the tornadoes hit to fill survivors' needs, such as providing necessary medications.

"We took care of as many people as we could find in the immediate aftermath and made sure everyone had a place to go," she said.

Carson said recovery efforts are on track and may even be considered "ahead of schedule." To aid in the recovery, Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said multiple response units from both inside and outside the community are helping repair the damage.

Jones said church groups, business groups and Community Emergency Response Team-certified responders are some of the many organizations working to clear debris.

"It's all about getting the resources that are most needed now as far as what can be utilized whether it's heavy equipment and trucks," Jones said. "Just whatever it takes to get into the area to get to clean up the debris."

Carson said there are distribution centers in five different locations across the county where survivors can get supplies. She encourages all county members to call 211 to report any unmet needs.

"If we don't know about their needs, we can't meet them," she said.

Individuals will be able to visit disaster recovery centers that open soon, to meet with representatives from organi-

zations like the Red Cross and the Small Business Administration to discuss issues or file claims.

President Trump approved a major disaster declaration March 4 for Lee County after Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey requested it.

The declaration triggers assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for temporary housing, home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover.

"That turned a lot of avenues for our people for help," said Carson, who added the speed in which President Trump issued the declaration is "unheard of."

Both Carson and Jones said FEMA has been very responsive in the county.

The Lee County Emergency

Management Agency (EMA), United Way and the Red Cross are among the units that are in it for the long haul, Carson said. The organizations will be staying active in the area and overseeing continued recovery efforts.

Jones said the biggest challenges the county faces are the cleanup efforts and responding to the needs of those who lost their loved ones or their homes.

He advised other counties to have good, working relationships with partners in first response.

"Establishing those relationships and being on a first name basis with individuals involved goes a long way in streamlining and providing a more efficient response

should you have a natural disaster or event," he said.

Carson emphasized the importance of constructing tornado shelters in every home in case of an emergency situation.

"It can happen in your hometown and we knew that before this event occurred, but it becomes way more real when it does," she said.

"Be as ready as you can possibly be, but you will never be completely ready."

The local government is forever changed by witnessing the disaster, according to Carson.

"It just increases our dedication tenfold to our jobs and that what we provide to the public is the best that it can be," she said. **CN**

## SNAP/STATS

### THE TOP FIVE POULTRY PROCESSING STATES

(BY PAID EMPLOYEES, IN THE UNITED STATES.)



STATE	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
GEORGIA .....	32,212
ARKANSAS .....	28,390
ALABAMA .....	22,278
NORTH CAROLINA .....	21,759
MISSISSIPPI .....	15,497

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, 2016; National Poultry Day is March 19



# County outreach assists census response from hard-to-count populations

From CENSUS page 1

"This isn't a Republican issue or a Democratic issue, this is a national issue."

Census data determine regional eligibility for programs including rental assistance programs, loan programs, direct payments and the National School Lunch program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program allocates \$71 billion per year based on census data.

Although the controversial citizenship question remains in the courts, counties can still prepare by organizing outreach efforts to make residents aware of the census and the importance of having an accurate count.

"If your state association doesn't have a seat on your governor's complete count task force, ask for one," said Gary Moore, Boone County, Ky.'s judge-executive and NACo's second vice president. "That's where the work is done and the money is allocated."

Among states most likely to see congressional changes as a result of population shifts, Mary Jo Hoeksema, Population Association of America, said Texas, California, Arizona and Colorado likely stood to gain seats, while Minnesota, Michigan, Rhode Island and Illinois were likely to lose seats.

To retain 18 congressional seats, Stanley Moore said, Illinois would have to grow its population to 13.6 million from the 2010 census' count of 12.9 million.

"We've only gained about 50,000, so we are extremely concerned about this," he said. "Indiana gained 122,000."

## Complete counts

In Illinois, the state has set aside \$33 million for its state-wide complete commission and encouraged every county to set up its own local committee. Cook County funded its to the tune of \$2 million.

"It's an investment because if they have the correct number of people, they're going to get billions back," Gary Moore said.

But it is important not to



**Stanley Moore, commissioner, Cook County, Ill. explains to the Rural Action Caucus March 3 why complete count committees are important.** Photos by Leon Lawrence III



**Sylvia Doyle, U.S. Census Bureau**

get the lines of responsibility crossed, Stanley Moore said.

"Your complete count commission does not count people, your complete count commission educates people on the importance of being counted," he said. "The census will do the counting. Your job is to go out and make sure people who are uncanceled or hard to count understand the importance of being counted."

Sylvia Doyle, intergovernmental affairs liaison at the Census Bureau, further outlined the role of the committees.

"They are formed in whatever way and by whoever you feel is going to work for your community. They are there to educate, inform and assist your community in whatever way you feel they need," she said. "(The Census Bureau) will get you materials and advice, but we don't

prescribe how it is you will do your work because every area of the country is different and you know what's best for your community, certainly much better than we do."

Moore suggested that counties should recruit volunteers to staff their complete count committees, to promote grass-roots support for the effort rather than elected officials instituting a top-down approach.

The Census Bureau's Haley Ashcom said later that if counties assign a staff member as a liaison to the their complete county committee, they should choose a staff member who works in communications or public affairs, versus one from the planning department.

"It's going to be an outward-facing role dealing with the public better suited for their skills, even though planning might seem more relevant."

## Rural concerns

In 2016, 60 programs using census data specifically targeted rural areas distributed \$30 billion, which was of great interest to RAC members.

The Census Bureau has set a goal for 55 percent of respondents to reply online. Though this goal caused some consternation among RAC members, the online option is just the first of several that the bureau is of-

fering.

Doyle explained that if three internet-first postcards, sent to 95 percent of the U.S. population, go unanswered, the bureau will send a paper form. Addresses that don't follow an typical urban or suburban format would be sent paper forms by default.

The internet-first approach is a cost-saving measure to avoid printing and mailing unnecessary paper forms or sending enumerators in person to complete counts for each household. If those paper forms go unanswered, then an enumerator will try in person to reach the resident at home.

"If people in your county don't want someone knocking on their door, you should explain that it's important they answer the mailed form," Doyle said.

## Save the date

The reference date for the census, that people should answer in the county where they live most of the time as of April 1, will cause students to be counted at their college addresses.

That led to complaints from several RAC members. Doyle acknowledged that that date would end up hurting rural counties

"There are communities where that (date) shifts the pop-

ulation one way or shifts the population another way, but the truth of the matter is you have to come up with some kind of metric to do that," she said.

According to the Census Bureau, April 1 has been the reference date since 1910.

During the RAC day of action March 6, Blue Earth County, Minn. Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg acknowledged that while the loss of the student population hurt some counties, it accurately represented where those students would be using county services most of the year.

Nathan Ohle, executive director of Rural Community Assistance Partnership, pointed out to RAC meeting attendees that 79 percent of what the Census Bureau called "hard-to-count" counties were rural, and could be disproportionately affected by low response rates.

"If you get a miscount, where you have an underrepresentation or overrepresentation of household income, you can be eliminated from viability for some USDA program," he said. "These miscounts often affect primarily communities of color, communities in the South and tribal areas."

"It's up to us to connect those dots more clearly for people to know what is at stake," he said. **CN**



# NACo's 'New' County Explorer more simple, accessible

by Ricardo Aguilar

NACo's Counties Futures Lab unveiled an upgrade to its County Explorer tool during the Legislative Conference. On the surface, it is a simple interactive map, but under the hood, it contains a universe of data and insights.

Currently, County Explorer has more than 800 indicators each telling a unique county story.

The powerful tool can compare counties across multiple data points and create pre-packaged advocacy material — and serves as a foundation and a resource for NACo members.

Simple, accessible and impactful describe the guiding principles which have led to the creation of the new tool. The new County Explorer is more user-friendly with its easy-to-navigate menus.

The tool sports a redesigned user interface which makes exploring data simple, while maintaining familiarity, along with a sleek visual representation of the data. It now works on mobile devices and looks particularly great on tablets.

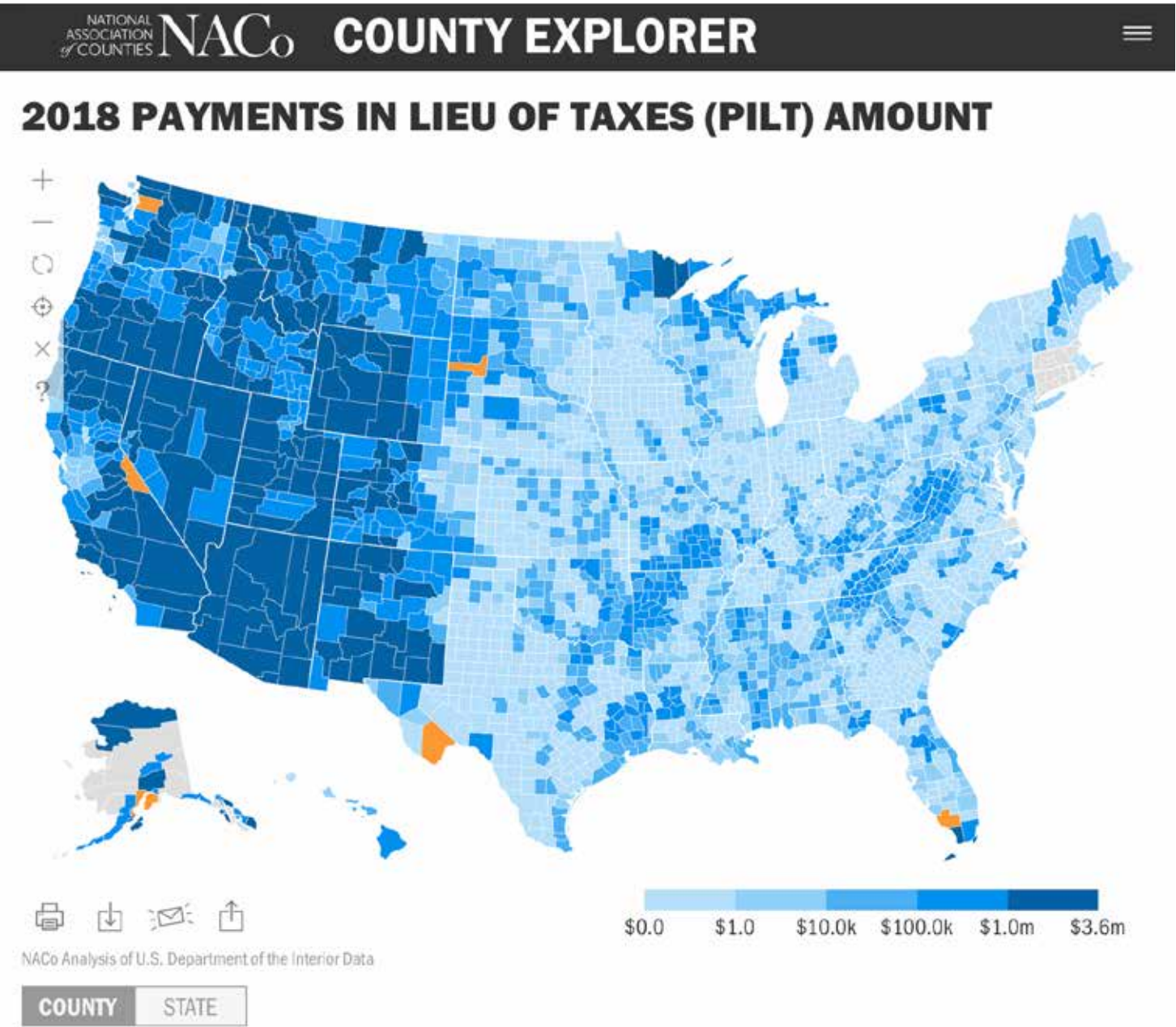
County Explorer's landing page features the newly designed "Find a County" feature.

The feature allows County Explorer users to type in any keyword to look for counties. "Find a County" combines the city/ZIP search, state search and county search into one. Just type in the name of a city or a ZIP code, hit "enter" and County Explorer will present you with a list of counties corresponding to your search.

The redesigned county information box features an interface with state-specific images themed "America the Beautiful."

The long-term goal is to have a photo for each county, which represents a point of pride for their community.

The search bar on the top right part of the navigation bar can now help with searches



on topics, counties and cities. The search feature not only combines multiple County Explorer functionalities into one area, but it is far more comprehensive than previous tools.

Comparing data in County Explorer is easy.

You can click on any of the categories on the map legend to isolate similarly catego-

rized counties and click on the same category again to get back to the full map. Additionally, double-clicking on counties will create a Quick Compare table which allows comparison of information on the current map.

The Quick Compare tool enables you to compare data for up to 10 counties (*example below*).

A new style of county and state profiles has also been created. The new profiles have a beautiful interface which provides a lot more information on the topic. Profiles now include tables with information about other counties in that county's state.

For example, if you open the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) profile for San Ber-

nardino County in California, you get PILT information for the county, state and the United States. Additionally, a table with data for all the counties in California is added at the bottom of the profile.

In addition to a better experience, simple yet elegant design and impactful new features and data, the new County Explorer tool offers lots more content, reach and functionality.

You can experience the new County Explorer at *Explorer.NACo.org* and sign up for the monthly email letter to stay up to date with everything County Explorer.

*Aguilar is a data analyst in NACo's Counties Futures Lab. Teryn Zmuda, director of Research and Data Analytics in NACo's Counties Futures Lab, contributed to this article.*

2018 PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT)				
COUNTY	PILT AMOUNT	PILT PER ACRE	PERCENT OF PILT ENTITLEMENT	TOTAL PILT ENTITLEMENT
×				
Mono County, CA	\$1.3m	\$0.75	89.66%	1.75m
×				
Collier County, FL	\$1.4m	\$2.71	40.00%	511.77k
×				
Pennington County, SD	\$1.7m	\$2.48	38.53%	684.75k
×				
Snohomish County, WA	\$1.7m	\$2.61	47.31%	631.79k
×				
Kenai Peninsula Borough, AK	\$3.6m	\$0.54	65.35%	6.70m
×				
Brewster County, TX	\$1.3m	\$2.23	14.18%	561.07k

# Supreme Court to take up 2020 census citizenship question

by Lisa Soronen

*\*Indicates a case where the SLLC has filed or will file an amicus brief.*

The Supreme Court's docket for its current term is set. This term lacked a blockbuster case for local governments (and in general) until the Court decided to hear a case challenging the addition of a question about citizenship to the 2020 census.

The Court will also decide a religious display on public land case, a significant procedural employment case and a case involving money damages against a local government employee who allegedly fabricated evidence used in a trial.

In *Department of Commerce v. New York*, the Supreme Court will decide whether the Secretary of Commerce violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) by adding a question about citizenship to the 2020 census. In March 2018, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross issued a memorandum stating he would add the question (for the first time since 1960). He claimed the Department of Justice (DOJ) wanted the data to enforce the Voting Rights Act's prohibition against diluting the voting power of minority groups.

The Census Bureau "strenuously" objected warning "that adding a citizenship question would harm the quality of census data and increase costs significantly and that it would do so for no good reason because there was an alternative way to satisfy DOJ's purported needs that would not cause those harms."

A number of state and local governments and nonprofits sued the Secretary claiming that adding this question is arbitrary and capricious in violation of the APA. The APA prohibits federal agencies from acting in a manner that is arbitrary and capricious or not

in accordance with law.

A federal district court found numerous APA violations in the manner in which the question was added to the census. For example, "[Ross] failed to consider several important aspects of the problem; alternately ignored, cherry-picked, or badly misconstrued the evidence in the record before him; acted irrationally both in light of that evidence and his own stated decisional criteria; and failed to justify significant departures from past policies and practices — a veritable smorgasbord of classic, clear-cut APA violations."

In *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission v. American Humanist Association*\* the Supreme Court will decide whether a local government has violated the First Amendment by displaying and maintaining a

93-year-old, 40-foot tall Latin cross memorializing soldiers who died in World War I.

The Fourth Circuit applied the so-called three-prong Lemon test, as modified by the Supreme Court's most recent monument decision *Van Orden v. Perry* (2005), to conclude that the government display and maintenance of this

cross violates the Establishment Clause.

The lower court first concluded that the cross has a secular purpose, thus passing the first prong of the Lemon test. Specifically, the Commission obtained the cross to maintain safety near a busy highway intersection and preserves the memorial to honor World War I soldiers.

But the Fourth Circuit concluded that a reasonable observer would understand this cross to advance religion. The Latin cross is the "preeminent symbol of Christianity." While the cross has secular elements (like the words "valor," "endurance," "courage" and "devotion" inscribed on its base and a plaque at the base listing the memorialized soldiers), the "immense size and prominence of the Cross" ... "evokes a message of aggrandizement

and universalization of religion, and not the message of individual memorialization and remembrance that is presented by a field of grave-stones."

The Fourth Circuit also concluded that the cross fails Lemon's third prong because it creates an excessive entanglement between government and religion. First, the Commission has spent \$117,000 to maintain and repair it. In 2008 it set aside an additional \$100,000 for renovations.

"Second, displaying the Cross, particularly given its size, history, and context, amounts to excessive entanglement because the Commission is displaying the hallmark symbol of Christianity in a manner that dominates its surroundings and not only overwhelms all other monuments at the park, but also excludes all other religious tenets."

The question the Supreme Court will decide in *Fort Bend County v. Davis*\* is if an employee fails to exhaust administrative remedies with the EEOC before filing a lawsuit, is the lawsuit barred?

Lois Davis claims she was fired for not reporting to work on a Sunday (she attended a church service), in retaliation for reporting that she was sexually harassed and sexually assaulted by a superior. She filed sexual harassment and retaliation charges with the Texas Workforce Commission. After investigating, the Commission told her she could sue and she brought a retaliation and religious discrimination lawsuit.

Fort Bend pointed out she didn't exhaust her administrative remedies by filing a charge of religious discrimination with the Texas Workforce Commission. Fort Bend argues that administrative exhaustion is a jurisdictional requirement of Title VII, meaning if an em-

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The Supreme Court will decide whether the Secretary of Commerce violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) by adding a question about citizenship to the 2020 census.

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# Local government EEOC case coming up before Supreme Court

From **HIGH COURT** page 5

ployee fails to satisfy it, a court cannot hear the case.

Davis argues that exhaustion is a “waivable claim-processing requirement” and that Fort Bend waived it by waiting five years “and an entire round of appeals all the way to the Supreme Court” before raising it.

The Fifth Circuit held that the failure to exhaust administrative remedies is a waivable rule, not a jurisdictional rule, that would bar the lawsuit from proceeding. The lower court reasoned: “Here, Congress did not suggest — much less clearly state — that Title VII’s administrative exhaustion requirement is jurisdictional, and so we must treat this requirement as non-jurisdictional in character. The statute says nothing about a connection between the EEOC

enforcement process and the power of a court to hear a Title VII case.”

The issue the Supreme Court will decide in *McDonough v. Smith* is whether the statute of limitations for a due process fabrication of evidence claim begins to run when the criminal proceedings terminate in the defendant’s favor or when the defendant becomes aware of the tainted evidence and its improper use.

Edward McDonough, former Democratic commissioner of Rensselaer County (N.Y.) Board of Elections, approved forged absentee ballot applications which he claims he didn’t know had been falsified.

Youel Smith investigated and prosecuted McDonough. McDonough claims Smith “engaged in an elaborate scheme to frame McDonough for the crimes by, among other things,

Since 2010,  
the Supreme  
Court has refused  
to hear almost  
100 gun cases.

fabricating evidence.”

After two trials, McDonough was ultimately acquitted. Just before three years passed since McDonough was acquitted, he sued Smith under Section 1983 for violating his due process rights by fabricating evidence and using it against him.

The Second Circuit held that McDonough’s due process claim was time barred because the three-year statute of limitations started running when the fabricated evidence had been disclosed to him (as late as the end of his first trial), not

on the day of his acquittal.

McDonough argued his claim was most analogous to a malicious prosecution claim, which does not accrue until a favorable termination of the prosecution.

But according to the Second Circuit: “Because the injury for this constitutional violation occurs at the time the evidence is used against the defendant to deprive him of his liberty, whether it be at the time he is arrested, faces trial, or is convicted, it is when he becomes aware of that tainted evidence and its improper use that the harm is complete and the cause of action accrues. Indeed, the harm — and the due process violation — is in the use of the fabricated evidence to cause a liberty deprivation, not in the eventual resolution of the criminal proceeding.”

In other Supreme Court

news, Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined the Supreme Court this term replacing Justice Anthony Kennedy. The most obvious impact of him joining the Court thus far is the Court agreeing to hear *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. City of New York, New York*.\* In this case the Court will decide whether New York City’s ban on transporting a handgun to a home or shooting range outside city limits violates the Second Amendment, the Commerce Clause, or the constitutional right to travel. Since 2010, the Supreme Court has refused to hear almost 100 gun cases. This case will not be decided until next term. **CN**

Lisa Soronen is executive director of the State and Local Legal Center in Washington, D.C.

## CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED

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# Perdue plugs TestIt app, plans for rural broadband



USDA Sec. Sonny Perdue (right) touts a new app launched by NACo that helps measure the strength of internet connectivity in an attempt to help map coverage in rural areas. He was introduced by NACo President Greg Cox. Perdue addressed NACo members at the General Session March 5. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The divide between urban and rural America seems to be growing, but U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue sees an opportunity to bridge that divide, with counties' help.

Like residents of many rural counties, he sees that bridge to be broadband internet access, and he sees himself as a proponent in the Trump administration for a "moonshot" effort to get ubiquitous broadband access across America.

While speaking to the General Session March 5, he encouraged county officials to spread the use of NACo's TestIt app, which evaluates the strength of internet connectivity and sends it to a central map, to help give NACo and USDA tangible numbers with which to work as the government seeks to spread broadband internet access.

"These data maps we have basically from the incumbent carriers I don't think are quite

accurate," he said. "I think you all can be very, very helpful with the data nationwide to report in.

"Those unserved areas, those underserved areas are exactly what we're looking for."

He also promoted USDA's ReConnect program, which is offering \$600 million evenly divided among grants, loans and loan-grants combinations

to connect one another — rural, urban, suburban — for the benefit of our great country, I think it's going to require connectivity."

In some places, he added, "You've got kids in your county driving to town 10 to 20 miles to do their homework in a parking lot. Think about the creativity and ingenuity if we could get broadband to every home, every hamlet, every

"It was the best experience I could have for a public official — it taught me how to listen."

—Perdue, on his own county experience

to help build rural broadband infrastructure. Grant applications are due April 29, loan and grant combination applications are due May 29 and low-interest loan applications are due June 28.

"Ubiquitous broadband from the major cities to the smallest hamlets is the rural electrification of the 21st century," he said. "If we're going

field across America. We need it now, sooner rather than later."

He sees a lot of common mission and customers with the Small Business Administration and other executive departments, including Housing and Urban Development, particularly as some rural counties transition to become suburban and urban areas.



"Those lines blur, you've seen some or your counties transition," he said. "We're working together on common policies and protocols and rules and regulations when those things change, how do we work together. Clarity leads to compliance."

Underlying all of those efforts, though, is a strong connection among the federal,

state and local levels, which Perdue thinks, particularly after inviting county elected officials to the White House, the Trump administration is building.

"We want to be on your side, our building doesn't get bigger or better without a strong foundation," he said.

Perdue reflected on his own service in county government, as a Houston County, Ga. Planning & Zoning Commission member in the 1980s.

"It was the best experience I could have for a public official — it taught me how to listen," he said. "We saw the right to own property colliding with the tension for the community good — that I can do with my property most everything I want as long as it doesn't affect my neighbors. It taught me how proud we were of our communities, our neighborhoods and our properties."

He also remarked that he only worked in an advisory role for the county, and that the big decisions were left to the elected officials. **CN**



# HUD Secretary Ben Carson: Opportunity Zones can lift distressed communities out of poverty

by Mary Ann Barton  
editor

Taking advantage of Opportunity Zones and streamlining regulations are two ways that county officials can help create more affordable housing in their communities, HUD Secretary Ben Carson told county officials March 5 at NACo's 2019 Legislative Conference.

"Our programs try to empower local governments," said Carson. "We have a new tool, Opportunity Zones, created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Bill." The goal of Opportunity Zones is to spur private investment in low-income rural and urban communities nationwide.

As chair of the Opportunity and Revitalization Council, created by the White House in December, Carson oversees the new program. Governors can designate 25 percent of their most most economically-distressed areas as Opportunity Zones. There are 8,761

of these areas in all, Carson said, where 35 million people live — more than 10 percent of the U.S. population.

Carson urged county officials to align transportation, land use plans and infrastructure projects with private development to maximize returns for all — investors, the county and most of all "its most vulnerable residents."

"There are always people who say 'I don't like this because rich people are always getting an advantage.' You know what? I don't care who gets an advantage, as long as everybody gets an advantage," Carson said to applause. "This is the last place on earth that we should be entertaining class warfare."

In addition to Opportunity Zones, county officials should look at any "archaic" rules, regulations and zoning restrictions that might be adding anywhere from 25-42 percent to the cost of home-building



**U.S. Sec. of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson speaks with NACo Second Vice President Gary Moore March 5 during the General Session at the NACo Legislative Conference.** Photo by Denny Henry

and housing prices, Carson said. "A lot of these things have been on the books, 10, 20, 50, 100 years. We need to be thinking about the rules and regulations that keep people mired in poverty," he noted. "These aren't things that promote

self-sufficiency."

Later, in an interview with *County News*, Carson said he is always on the lookout for innovation in housing — and noted that he was on his way later Tuesday to Texas, where he planned a stop in Austin to

see a 3D-printed house, built in 48 hours.

Carson also urged county officials to check out "Humans of HUD" on the HUD website to read about the "trials and triumphs" of people that HUD serves. **CN**

## Trump administration to push for 'a million apprenticeships'

by Mary Ann Barton  
editor

President Donald Trump, who popularized apprenticeships in his TV show "The Apprentice," before his move to the White House, is pushing to make apprenticeships an even bigger part of the American workplace.

That was the message Labor Sec. Alexander Acosta touted to a NACo audience March 4 during the General Session.

The administration has a goal of reaching 1 million new apprenticeships, Acosta said. Trump signed an executive order in 2017 to increase the number of apprenticeships, which currently stand at half a million, Acosta said.

"We're going to announce grants of \$150 million to community colleges, asking them to find matching partners in



**U.S. Sec. of Labor Alexander Acosta speaks to NACo members March 4 during the General Session.**

Photo by Denny Henry

the business community," Acosta said.

"It's a win-win. Businesses get skills they ask for and colleges get insight into skills that

are required."

Acosta told the audience to be sure to check out apprenticeship.gov, a DOL website that connects career seekers,

employers and educators.

Acosta asked county officials to talk to their schools about showing students "multiple paths to success."

"Kids can take apprenticeships and get a college degree with no student debt," he said, noting that they can come out making on average of \$28 an hour. "Is that the message schools are sending? It's 'college or bust!'"

Acosta also wants county officials to be aware that occupational licensing regulations can hurt people who move from one state, county or city to the next; he zeroed in on one audience that is particularly hard hit: military spouses.

"Our men and women in the armed forces ... often, we recruit them as an individual and somewhere along the line they get married," he said.

What happens with frequent moves, Acosta noted, is that a spouse who is in a licensed occupation might lose that license, interrupting his or her career. **CN**



# Ernst stresses county roots in Senate service

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) has not forgotten her county roots as the Montgomery County, Iowa auditor, a role she held from 2005-2011.

"Much of what I learned and experienced as a county official has informed my work in the United States Senate," she told the Opening General Session audience at the NACo Legislative Conference.

"Perhaps most importantly, working as a county auditor gave me a true appreciation for the importance of local control."

That county feedback and focus on local control motivated Ernst's sponsorship of a joint resolution in 2015 to rescind the Waters of the United States of the Clean Water Act, a thorn in county governments' sides for years.

"When I'm looking at a policy issue in Washington, my first thought is 'What do the folks on the ground have to say about this particular issue?' I rely on local officials across Iowa to give me the information and feedback I need to make informed decisions."

She supports policies that delegate as much authority as possible to state and local governments.

"It's not important only to listen to you but also to empower you," she said.

Ernst also wants to see more diffusion of federal government throughout the United States, and introduced a bill that would move executive branch agency headquarters out of the Washington, D.C. area.

"This would bring good government jobs to different parts of the country and it would also result in more sen-



**U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), speaks to NACo members March 4 at the Opening General Session at the NACo Legislative Conference.** Photo by Denny Henry

sible policy-making," she said. "We would love the opportunity to compete for some of these headquarters, and it just makes sense. I don't know of too many farmers and ranchers in the D.C. Metro area. It

would be great for them to move out into the states that they represent."

Ernst lauded President Trump's effort to bring county officials to the White House over his first two years in office.

Echoing her senior colleague Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), she visits each of the state's 99 counties every year, though she has a while to go to match Grassley's 38-year streak. **CN**



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- SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE: **MARCH 25, 2019 AT 11:59 P.M. EDT**
- NOTIFICATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS: **WEEK OF APRIL 22, 2019**
- NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION: **JULY 11 – 15, 2019**  
**CLARK COUNTY/LAS VEGAS, NEVADA**



# LUCC members eye strategies to erase homelessness

by Mary Ann Barton  
editor

Members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) discussed ways they can conquer homelessness in their meeting March 3 at NACo's Legislative Conference.

"We face a crisis," said Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do, who was one of four panelists in the packed room at the Washington Hilton. The first step that county officials who are facing the issue of homelessness in their communities can take is to form a regional public-private leadership group, he said.

"We have to play the role of facilitator," said Do, who noted that he himself is an immigrant from Vietnam.

Fellow panelist, Clackamas County, Ore. Commissioner Martha Schrader, said her county also develops public-private partnerships to find



**William Crozer, special assistant to the President and deputy director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House, speaks March 3 to members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus at NACo's Legislative Conference.** Photo by Denny Henry

solutions, including bringing in members of the county's real estate and construction industries.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger told the audience that her county has about 52,000 homeless on the streets each night, with more

than a third struggling with mental illness. She and her fellow supervisors are urging their state to apply for a Medicaid waiver that would expand coverage for inpatient mental health treatment at residential facilities.

"There is no 'one size fits all,'

but we're looking at the root causes," Barger said.


When affordable housing is going up in your county, panelist Claudette Fernandez, director, Office of Block Grant Assistance, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), noted that

one important factor is to be sure that the infrastructure is available (sewer, roads, etc.) to support it. "It needs to be sustainable," she said.

Fernandez also said that HUD is working on a proposed rulemaking to help streamline regulations that hamper the building of affordable housing.

Miami-Dade County, Fla. Commissioner Sally Heyman noted that her county makes use of a half-cent tourist tax that goes into a "homeless trust." Heyman also suggested that a "best practices" on finding solutions to homelessness be accessible to NACo members.

The 2018 LUCC Symposium will take place Nov. 6-8 in Miami-Dade County, Fla.

LUCC members were advised to take advantage of the just-released NACo Affordable Housing Toolkit: <https://www.naco.org/resources/affordable-housing-toolkit>. 

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# Klobuchar talks jobs, infrastructure, criminal justice reform

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a former county attorney, told a NACo audience March 5 that Congress and county officials “have our work cut out for us” when it comes to everything from criminal justice reform to infrastructure.

The former Hennepin County attorney told NACo members at the annual Legislative Conference that it was “probably the best job I ever had.”

Klobuchar, 58, is running for another job — she announced a run for the White House Feb. 10 on a snowy day in her hometown, joining a crowded field of Democrats running for president in 2020.

“We couldn’t have a more important time for local officials...with healthcare, infrastructure or dealing with criminal justice issues,” said Klobuchar, who mentioned she was recovering from a cold.

“It’s one of the reasons I get energized when I visit all of our 87 counties in Minnesota.”

What she hears when she’s visiting counties in Minnesota: The cost of their healthcare, infrastructure and workforce issues, she said.

“What it means is we should be governing from the heart, from opportunity and not from chaos,” she noted.

Klobuchar recounted a story about the Interstate-35 bridge, an eight-lane steel truss arch bridge, that fell across the Saint Anthony Falls of the Mississippi River.

“Last time I was here, I remember the story about the bridge coming down on a beautiful day in Minnesota,” she said. “A bridge shouldn’t fall down in the middle of America.”

The bigger story, she noted “was about community. When it collapsed, the entire world

was focused on our town. People went in and out of that murky water to save lives.”

“A school bus plunged down 30 feet and the driver one by one got the kids off that bus,” she said. “That is community. I know you have seen it every single year in your own communities.”

“In the words of my friend John McCain, fight for a cause larger than ourselves,” she said.

“Locks and dams; rail, roads and bridges — we need to invest in infrastructure in this country,” she said. “I truly believe there’s a will to get it done and we need your help.”

Rural broadband, she noted, should be able to “get done” in the United States “by 2022.”

“If the whole country of Iceland is hooked up I think we can too” she said. “There’s no reason we should have a digital divide.”

Other areas that need work, she said include workforce training. “Counties have job openings and the workforce doesn’t match up,” she said. “We should be doing so much more with apprenticeships. Not everyone wants to needs a four-year degree.”

“My own dad started out with a two-year degree,” she said. “There are many paths for success and we need to design our education system to meet those needs.”



**U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), waves to the crowd March 5 before addressing NACo members at the 2019 Legislative Conference.** Photo by Denny Henry

On another issue important to counties — immigration reform — the country needs to look at it “not just as a security issue,” she said. “We need workers in our factories and our fields. They are America.”

Costs in the form of pharmaceuticals and healthcare was another topic that Klobuchar mentioned in her address, specifically how to bring down those costs by stopping “big pharma” from “paying off generics to keep their products off the market.”

“We don’t have competition for so many drugs,” she noted. “Think about what we could do” if Medicare could negotiate prices, she added. “It’s also

about the taxpayer burden.”

Challenges to counties, she said, continue to be the opioid epidemic and criminal justice reform. Government needs to change prescription practices and stop illegal drugs from coming out of places like China, she said.

Criminal justice reform is a challenge whether you’re in a rural or urban county,” she said.

“Part of our job is to build trust and talk about what we can do better. We have to have more accountability in our criminal justice system,” such as videotaping interrogations, she said.

Counties can also save mon-

ey with shorter sentences and treatment for drug offenders, she added.

“There’s a lot of work cut out for us,” she said.

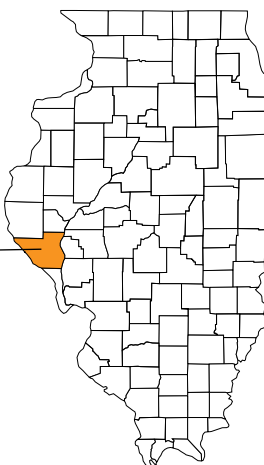
“I have an optimistic view of our country, I see people every day doing their jobs, like you. I’ve been there on the local level and I bring that every day to work.”

“We want to improve peoples’ lives and we need to put politics aside,” Klobuchar said.

“I cannot emphasize enough how important that is. So, thank you for being at that point in democracy. If we didn’t have you I think we’d be in a lot more trouble in this country.” **CN**

**GET TO  
KNOW...**

**Pike  
County, Ill.**



## Welcome, Pike County, Ill.

Pike County was founded in 1821 and is **named for Zebulon Pike, leader of the Pike expedition in 1806 to map out the south and west portions of the Louisiana Purchase.** The county seat and most populous city in the county is Pittsfield, where Abraham Lincoln practiced law. The county courthouse built in 1894 and designed by Robert Franklin, is a popular landmark and often photographed by tourists.



# SRS supporters advocate for long-term funding



Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) speaks to the crowd during the PILT and SRS press conference March 5 at the U.S. Capitol. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) stands to the left. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

With sympathetic legislators in influential positions, county and congressional supporters of federal public lands policies feel they're in a better place than ever to achieve long-term stability for crucial funding programs.

At a Capitol Hill briefing March 5, those supporters advocated for permanent funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and a long-term funding solution for the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program, both of which compensate counties for federally managed land that cannot be taxed.

In particular, they championed the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act, sponsored by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), which would create an endowment to fully fund SRS, first passed in 2000 and which Wyden sponsored.

"We are as close now as we have ever been," said Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), who that day declined to run for president in favor of a Senate reelection race in 2020.

"We need to seize this moment and make this happen."

Wyden pointed out that he,

as ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, and Crapo, the senior Republican on the committee, seemed to have the clout to move the bill.

"We just might be well positioned to finally get the revenue to secure the services that you had a right to have starting over 100 years ago," he said.

"This is going to be a challenge, we'll have to educate members of Congress who come from places where there aren't a lot of federal lands."

"We already did it once, 20 years ago nobody had ever heard of any of us."

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), chair of the House Republican Conference, framed PILT and SRS as leveling the playing field for rural counties. The 10 Eastern Washington counties in her district received \$4.5 million in PILT funding in FY 2018.

"Without PILT and SRS, many of the counties I represent would only struggle more to keep up," she said.

"Both of these programs need long-term certainty. Our rural counties need this certainty."

Harney County, Ore., which received \$2.8 million in FY 2018, is larger than six states but three-quarters of its land is

managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service.

"When SRS wasn't reauthorized (for FY 2016), we were having conversations on what roads we were going to grind up," said Commissioner Mark Owens.

"We were not going to have the money to protect the investment and the equity in infrastructure of our roads. We were talking about losing 24-hour law enforcement and hospice care."

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.), a former Santa Barbara County supervisor, didn't like that proposition.

"That uncertainty is not the way local governments want to budget to address safety-net issues like making sure our homeless veterans have services, that we have mental health programs, that we are serving our infrastructure and providing for public safety," he said.

The tradeoff seemed fair to Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.).

"If we're going to have federal lands, we should compensate the counties that provide emergency services, provide roads and other services that county residents depend on," he said. **CN**

# Counties can boost economy by wooing foreign investment

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

Pasco County, Fla. Commissioner Kathryn Starkey wants to get the word out to counties that there are foreign companies out there looking to expand.

Just ask her — she travels to Switzerland and Germany on trade missions to talk to company heads that have located in her county. Pasco County sits just north of Tampa.

Starkey moderated a discussion about international trade Sunday with members of NACo's International Economic Development Task Force Saturday as part of the NACo Legislative Conference.

Speaker Brian Lenihan, executive director of SelectUSA, Commerce Department program, told audience members that they have a chance to tell their county's story to investors at the annual Investment Summit set for June 10-12 at the Washington Hilton.

SelectUSA pairs economic development organizations

(EDOs) with qualified foreign firms to jumpstart business investment and job creation.

"It's sort of like speed dating," said Starkey, who was recognized in 2017 as "International Person of the Year" by the Tampa Bay Organization of Women in International Trade.

Panelist Marek Gootman, fellow and director of Strategic Partnerships and Global Initiatives at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., said he often sees well-meaning economic development activities going on, "but they're not well-coordinated, there is limited strategy."

"There is a significant amount of resources but it's not organized," he said. Counties need to partner with other counties, cities, business groups and universities to sell themselves to foreign investors, he said.

Brand recognition and visibility, in the context of the region, is extremely important, Gootman noted.

"Ask yourself: What is our advantage?" **CN**



Brian Lenihan, executive director, SelectUSA, U.S. Department of Commerce, speaks March 3 to NACo members at the International Economic Development Task Force meeting. Photo by Denny Henry



# Seeking DOJ grants? ‘Identify a need’



Andre Bethea, policy advisor, Corrections, Bureau of Justice Assistance, speaks March 2 to members of NACo’s Justice and Public Safety Policy Steering Committee. Photo by Denny Henry

by Mary Ann Barton  
editor

Andre Bethea, policy advisor for Corrections and Reentry, Justice Department, has a message for counties: “I can’t make awards if you don’t apply — creativity is on you,” he told members of NACo’s Justice and Public Safety Policy Steering Committee March 2 at the kick-off to the association’s annual Legislative Conference.

“Identify a need in your community,” he said. “There is a great deal of flexibility.”

Bethea, a former 911 operator in New York early on in his career, amazed members with his ability to recall grant activity in each state and discussed with members which states and counties were actively seeking and getting grants, and which were not.

County officials and staff heard from federal partners and policy experts on the latest developments in justice-related policy issues.

Discussion topics included the outlook for implementation of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act and the Second Chance Act, passed in the closing days of the 115th Congress.

“I’m for pushing funding outside of the beltway,” Caren Harp, administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, Justice Department, told the audience.

Several members of the committee had questions for Harp about prevention funding for girls and women since they’re seeing an uptick in crime in that demographic.

Harp told them there’s \$2 million a year to spend nationwide, and some said they thought that amount was too low. He said to be sure to let their representatives in Congress know if their communities need more funding in that area. **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

MARTHA SCHRADER  
Board Member  
Commissioner  
Clackamas County, Ore.



SCHRADER

**Number of years involved in NACo:** 16

**Years in public service:** 16

**Occupation:** County Commissioner

**Education:** Bachelor’s Degree in Biology/Environment Education from Cornell University; Master of Science in Entomology from the University of Illinois; Master of Science in Education from Portland State University

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done is:** Raise my five children and run a 60-acre farm at the same time

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner are:** Pope John XXIII, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

**A dream I have is to:** Travel the world with a backpack

**You’d be surprised to learn:** I was a librarian at a Benedictine monastery

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** Hike Lake Como and the Swiss Alps (last year!)

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Read and go kayaking

**I’m most proud of:** My children

**Every morning I read:** *Celtic Prayers from Iona*

**My favorite meal is:** Home-made ravioli with meat sauce

**My pet peeve is:** Getting up at 6 a.m.

**The last book I read was:** *Leadership in Turbulent Times* by Doris Kearns Goodwin

**My favorite movie is:** *Moonstruck*

**My favorite music:** Anything by Bruce Springsteen

**My favorite U.S. president:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**My county is a NACo member because:** The organization brings all the counties in the United States together where we can share ideas from diverse communities about good governance.



A dream I have is to:  
Travel the world with a backpack

ON THE MOVE

NACo COUNTY OFFICIALS

- Second Vice President **Gary Moore** spoke to the National Association of Regional Councils Feb. 11 in Washington, D.C., updating the membership on NACo’s federal policy achievements.
- First Vice President **Mary Ann Borgeson** gave an update Feb. 12 on NACo federal legislative efforts at the West Virginia Association of Counties conference in Kanawha County (Charleston).
- President **Greg Cox** spoke Feb. 14 at the Police Jury Association of Louisiana’s conference in Calcasieu Parish (Lake Charles).

NACo STAFF

- Abel Darg** recently joined NACo as a staff accountant and is responsible for accounts receivables, membership dues/sponsor revenues, general ledger processes and account reconciliations. Prior to joining NACo, Abel worked as a financial analyst with Easter Seals. Abel holds bachelor’s degrees in Accounting and Business, as well as a master’s degree in Accounting.
- Rachel Looker** has joined the staff of *County News* as a writer responsible for contributing articles for each bimonthly issue. Prior to joining NACo, Rachel worked as a web producer and assignment editor for WFMZ-TV. Rachel holds a bachelor’s degree in Digital Media from Marywood University in Scranton, Pa.

Darg

Looker

# Zero traffic deaths? Not a pipe dream

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Bernard Arseneau told the Transportation Steering Committee that it's not unrealistic to imagine a world with no fatalities on public roads.

And even if that target isn't hit, any improvement would be better than the 37,133 deaths recorded in 2018, which was an improvement over 2017.

Arseneau is the director of

highways and roads at HDR, Inc., an architectural, engineering and consulting firm. He previously worked for the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

"This whole concept of zero is something people struggle with," he said.

"We're not going to get there tomorrow ... we can have a broader collaboration of folks who can buy into this thing."

He outlined the six areas

crucial to improving road safety, but stressed that leadership was paramount.

"Top-down leadership does work," he said. "You have the ability and influence to say 'we have to do more.'"

He added that a technical champion, one who is working in engineering or enforcement departments, was pivotal, too, giving a political leader some backup.

Collaboration is necessary

to bring all factors together. Engineering, education, emergency services and enforcement all complement each other.

Focusing on six areas, he said, can influence road safety. Those areas are:

1. The road infrastructure itself
2. The driver - more than 90 percent of traffic accidents are due to driver error
3. The vehicle - technologi-

cal improvements and safety features are added to every model year

4. Enhanced emergency medical services - improved response times and making sure accident victims are taken to the appropriate medical facilities are crucial

5. Safer vulnerable users - such as bicyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians

6. Improved safety management. **CN**

## NACo, sheriffs zero in on Medicaid inmate policy

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

NACo is teaming up with the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) to try to put a stop to a practice that leads to more problems — people who lose their Medicaid benefits when they're locked up in jail, NACo President Greg Cox announced at NACo's Legislative Conference.

NACo is teaming up with the NSA, forming a task force to tackle the problem.

Medicaid benefits are stripped from people "on admission to jail, not upon conviction, terminating federal benefits from those who are presumed innocent — it is a violation of their constitutional rights," said Cox, a San Diego County supervisor, at the March 4 General Session. He introduced NSA Executive Director Jonathan Thompson to the crowd.

"We have a crisis before us," Thompson told the audience. "Every day in this country, more than 300,000 individuals are in our jails for one reason — because they are mentally ill."

"To me, the father of two children who have mental illnesses, we can't do this alone," he said. "We cannot arrest our way out of an opioid crisis, and we can't arrest our way out of the mental illness crisis facing this country."

Thompson said asking sheriffs, county officials and other local government officials and employees to "carry this bur-

den" is "unconscionable."

"This is our humanitarian obligation — we must treat these people with dignity," he noted. "[We] must stop putting them in jails and put them where they belong," he said to applause.

Thompson urged the audience to talk to members of Congress on Tuesday when they visit Capitol Hill.

"Share those personal stories," he said. "Tell them about the 17-year old who woke up one day with schizophrenia and couldn't control his rage. Tell them about the 35-year old with PTSD who did nothing more than decide it was so hot out, he had to take his clothes off to stay cool."

"We cannot do this anymore," he said. "The most civilized nation in the world is locking people up ... because they're mentally ill or addicted to a drug."

"Ladies and gentlemen together we can fix this crisis," Thompson said.

The task force is made up of NACo and NSA members representing county leaders, law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, behavioral health and veterans' services. They will explore the impacts of the national mental and behavioral health crisis and the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy, which strips federal health and veterans' benefits from individuals upon admission to jail — not upon conviction to conviction — leading to increased recidivism.

Members of the task force are:

- Co-Chair: Nancy Sharpe, commissioner, Arapahoe County, Colo.
- Co-Chair: Greg Champagne, sheriff, St. Charles Parish, La.
- Delrice Adams, executive director, Cook County, Ill. Justice Advisory Council
- Hon. Michael Adkinson, sheriff, Walton County, Fla.
- Hon. Kathryn Barger, supervisor, Los Angeles County, Calif.
- Hon. Roy Charles Brooks, commissioner, Tarrant County, Texas
- Hon. Brett Clark, sheriff, Hendricks County, Ind.
- Hon. Jerry Clayton, sheriff, Washtenaw County, Mich.
- Hon. Thomas Dart, sheriff, Cook County, Ill.
- Hon. Jerry Demings, mayor,

Orange County, Fla.

- Hon. John Flynn, district attorney, Erie County, N.Y.; Board of Directors member, National District Attorneys Association
- Hon. Daron Hall, sheriff, Davidson County, Tenn.
- Hon. Michael Heldman, sheriff, Hancock County, Ohio
- Hon. David Hudson, judge, Sebastian County, Ark.
- Hon. Clay Jenkins, judge, Dallas County, Texas
- Hon. Peter J. Koutoujian, sheriff, Middlesex County, Mass.
- Hon. Steven Leifman, associate administrative judge, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, Miami-Dade County, Fla.
- Nick Macchione, director, Health and Human Services Agency, San Diego County, Calif.

- Hon. John McMahon, sheriff, San Bernardino County, Calif.
- Hon. Gabriel Morgan Sr., sheriff, Newport News, Va.
- Hon. Christopher Moss, county executive, Chemung County, N.Y.
- Hon. Eric Severson, sheriff, Waukesha County, Wisc.
- Hon. Helen Stone, commissioner, Chatham County, Ga.
- Hon. Tim Svenson, sheriff, Yamhill County, Ore.
- Hon. Janet Thompson, commissioner, Boone County, Mo.
- Hon. Errol Toulon, Jr., sheriff, Suffolk County, N.Y.
- Hon. Jenny Wilson, mayor, Salt Lake County, Utah
- Edward Zachary, director, Veterans Service Office, Medina County, Ohio



**Jonathan Thompson, CEO and executive director of the National Sheriffs' Association, speaks during the General Session March 4, after being introduced by NACo President Greg Cox (left).** Photo by Denny Henry



# Federal legislation moving on cannabis

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

State and local efforts to legalize and regulate cannabis may be more consequential than any federal drug laws enforcement, according to Saphira Galoob, CEO of the Liaison Group, which lobbies exclusively on federal cannabis issues.

"While you think what happens in D.C. with me has a big impact on you locally, I want to let you know it's actually the reverse," Galoob told participants March 3 at a cannabis roundtable. "What's happening locally has far more of an impact on where we're going and how we're going to get there federally."

There is a generational divide among support for cannabis legalization in Congress, with fairly even support across younger members of both parties, and the stigma associated with the drug plays a big part in

opposition. Proven success regulating cannabis would be the record on which the movement could run, but information exchange and state sovereignty are crucial.

"Most folks from Oklahoma have never been to Washington (state) and seen how a regulated industry will reveal itself, she said. "States should be in the driver's seat. If the state wants an opt-out provision or a state wants no cannabis, then the STATES Act approach is what you want."

Galoob called the bipartisan STATES Act, which would recognize legalization of cannabis and the U.S. state laws that have legalized it through their legislatures or citizen initiative, a good first step, if an imperfect bill.

"It's a fairly simple and direct solution that allows us to continue to evaluate how we in the states want to address the cannabis situation," she said. Roughly 60 bills propose



**Federal cannabis lobbyist Saphira Galoob, CEO of the Liaison Group, addresses the Cannabis Roundtable March 3.** Photo by Leon Lawrence III

removing cannabis from the Drug Enforcement Agency's most-regulated Schedule I, where it has been since the Nixon Administration.

"We haven't had the thoughtfulness and the federal framework on what would be the impact of descheduling," Galoob said. Although bills

that would deschedule cannabis could clear the House, the likelihood that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) would allow such a vote are slim. Although it is difficult to pass standalone legislation, the appropriations process remains a powerful tool. For example, in 2014, the appropri-

ations process defunded the Department of Justice's ability to prohibit a state from implementing its own medical cannabis laws.

"We want to continue that support so lawfully licensed regulated businesses in your counties are free from federal interference," she said. **CN**

## Immigration policies exacerbate worker shortages

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

A packed room of county officials heard from immigration experts March 3 who said county officials frustrated by worker shortages in their communities need to tell their stories to members of Congress in order to make changes to immigration policy.

Industries including farming, construction, home healthcare, hospitals, hospitality and janitorial services depend on immigrant populations and are taking a hit due to ongoing confusion with immigration policies, panelists said.

Charlotte County, Fla. Commissioner Bill Truex, who chairs the Immigration Reform Task Force, introduced the speakers and Theresa Brown, director of Immigration Policy, Bipartisan Policy Center, mod-

erated the discussion.

Panelists said that the immigration issue has been paralyzed by extremists in both parties, leaving behind frustrated, hard-working businesses and workers faced with a tangle of regulations.

"Politics is an impediment," said Paul Schlegel, managing director for Public Policy at American Farm Bureau. He noted that the farming industry is facing competition for workers. "They're leaving agriculture for construction."

And builders are losing workers who can hop to other jobs for a raise in pay due to the worker shortage, said Ben Brubeck, vice president of Regulatory, Labor and State Affairs at the Associated Builders and Contractors. "They can't finish

buildings because the workforce is jumping from competitor to competitor, because there's such a shortage."

Hanna Siegel, managing director, New American Economy, said her group's forte is telling the stories of the economics of the issue in communities across the country. She pointed out that immigrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs because they don't have connections to find a job.

"Your voices are so important on Capitol Hill," she said.

Brunswick County, N.C. Commissioner Patricia Sykes said that immigrants in her county do a good job when they work, but employers often don't abide by laws and regulations, often paying cash to workers.

Siegel said counties can offer information to the immigrant community in their language to help them understand laws and regulations. **CN**



**Paul Schlegel, managing director for Public Policy at American Farm Bureau, makes a point as Ben Brubeck, vice president of Regulatory, Labor and State Affairs at the Associated Builders and Contractors, looks on March 3 at a meeting of NACo's Immigration Reform Task Force at the Legislative Conference.** Photo by Denny Henry



## Residents complain to FCC, but blame county officials

From TELECOM page 1

In Capito's home state, 74 percent of rural residents do not have access to broadband.

Kent County, Del. Commissioner Allan Angel, vice chair of the committee, said he can't talk to constituents in his own county in some areas due to poor cell phone service, but he can go all the way to Hawaii and talk to family members back home and ser-

vice is just fine.

Another county official said she hears from constituents who write to the Federal Communications Commission, but never hear a word back. "Thousands have made complaints to the FCC, with no action — they blame me," said Henrico County, Va. Commissioner Patricia O'Bannon.

Another member, Sherburne County, Minn. Commissioner Raeanne Dan-

ielowski said her county is stuck with a provider who receives federal funding for landline services, but won't upgrade the service and won't allow competitors to lay fiber.

"We are falling way behind," she said.

"It's a conversation we've been having for a long time. Kids are sitting outside of restaurants at 10 o'clock at night looking to get broadband." **CN**



April Jones, legislative assistant to Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), makes a point as Brendan Dailey, legislative assistant to U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), looks on. The two spoke to members of NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Policy Steering Committee. Photo by Denny Henry

## Sen. Rubio: Priority on innovation can start at county level

by Rachel Looker  
staff writer

Could your county be home to the next big start-up company?

According to Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Steve Case, director of the Advocacy for Social Justice and Sustainability Program, increasing innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities to grow the nation's economy can start at all levels of government.

During the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference, Rubio and Case discussed the importance of leveling the playing field when it comes to providing opportunities for job creation.

According to Case, it is a problem that three quarters of venture capital funding goes to three states: California, New York and Massachusetts. He explained there is a correlation between venture capital funding and job creation, specifically in the start-up sector which accounts for most new job growth.

"If we're only backing or predominantly backing entrepreneurs in a few places like Silicon Valley and not all over the country, we shouldn't be surprised that a lot of people are feeling kind of left out, left behind, maybe anxious about the future as opposed to optimistic," he said.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is an independent agency focused on small



(L-r): John Lettieri, president and CEO of Economic Innovation Group, speaks March 5 with Steve Case, chairman and CEO of Revolution and co-founder of America Online, and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) during the General Session. Photo by Denny Henry

business and entrepreneurship issues. Rubio, who also serves as chair of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, explained the agency helps to provide a healthy economy that provides opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"We have a responsibility at every level of government — county level, federal level, state level — to ensure that we identify what are our national or local priorities and make sure there are policies reflecting those priorities," Rubio said.

Rubio added that many

small businesses need help to turn an idea into a business plan that becomes a reality, which is where counties can get involved.

Counties may play a role in accessing export markets for services or goods when, for example, it comes to helping small businesses figure out how to access international customers or clients, he said.

Case warned against complacency and said it is critical that counties create a sense of possibility by creating a collaborative, risk-taking atmosphere that will launch the next big

companies.

"The only sustainable approach to economic development is backing little companies that are doing crazy things, some of which are going to be the big companies of tomorrow that really elevate your county," Case said.

Internationally, Rubio said the country's economic status will impact the outcome of geopolitical competition, specifically with China, which will define the 21st century.

"What we have in this country is not self-perpetuating. It will go away and we will be

displaced if we do not begin to change our mentality on that front and government policy should achieve it," Rubio said.

Rubio advised counties to understand their cities and the unique role they play in the broader economy. He asked attendees to ensure their counties have environments that are conducive to growth and recommended creating a chief innovation officer position to help find advantages within the community.

"Don't underestimate the power of county governments to be conveners," he said. **CN**





# THE CONFERENCE IN PHOTOGRAPHS

**ALL PHOTOS  
BY DENNY HENRY**  
(UNLESS NOTED)



A color guard enters the Washington Hilton Ballroom March 4 at the opening of the NACo Legislative Conference General Session.



Wayne County Commissioner Alisha Bell, chair of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Committee, briefs members March 2.



Valley County, Idaho Commissioner Gordon Cruickshank, NACo Western Region representative, enjoys a performance March 4 by the Capitol Steps.

NACo President Greg Cox, San Diego County supervisor, greets Nationwide's Eric Stevenson, senior vice president, Retirement Plans Distribution, at General Session.





NACo members pause for a photo at the U.S. Capitol March 5 during the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Hugh Clarke

# 2019 LEGISLATIVE NACo MEMBER





# CONFERENCE PORTRAIT





**Loudoun County, Va. Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis Randall and Richard “Dick” Cecil, executive director, Delaware Association of Counties, enjoy a performance by the Capitol Steps at the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference.** Photo by Leon Lawrence III



**(l-r) Catoosa County, Ga. Commissioner Chuck Harris, Catoosa County, Ga. Commissioner Jim Cutler and Shelby County, Ala. Manager Alex Dudchuck**



**Ruby Brabo, supervisor, King George County, Va., makes a point during the NACo Board Forum.** Photo by Leon Lawrence III



**Doug Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, talks to NACo members March 4 about emerging trends in state legislatures.**



**NACo First Vice President Mary Ann Borgeson chats with County of Hawaii Councilmember Valerie Poindexter.**



**Patrick Mullen, director of Utah’s Opportunity Zone Planning and Implementation, talks Opportunity Zones.**





Blue Earth County, Minn. Commissioner Colleen Landkamer (right), a former NACo president, at an extreme weather workshop.



Pasco County, Fla. Commissioner Kathryn Strakey talks about international investment in your county.



The United States Army Brass Quintet performs March 4 at the beginning of the General Session.



(l-r) Douglas County, Colo. Commissioner Abe Laydon chats March 4 with Alamosa County, Colo. Commissioner Darius Allen.



Suffolk County, N.Y. Sheriff Errol Toulon Jr. speaks at a Capitol Hill briefing March 5 on health care in county jails.

Hall County, Neb. Supervisor Pamela Lancaster, chair of the Community Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee, listens to a speaker during the committee's meeting March 2.







Kellyanne Conway, assistant to the president and senior counselor, speaks with NACo President Greg Cox March 4 at the General Session.



Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), speaks to county officials March 5 at a Capitol Hill briefing on health care in county jails.



County officials stand for the opening ceremony at the March 5 General Session.



(l-r) Ramsey County, Minn.'s Jennifer O'Rourke, Aide Ethan Osten, Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo, enjoy a performance by the Capitol Steps March 4. Also at the table are (center) Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman; to the right is former Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor "Gerry" Hyland. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



(l-r): Second Vice President Judge Gary Moore, judge-executive, Boone County, Ky., First Vice President Mary Ann Borgeson, commissioner, Douglas County, Neb., President Greg Cox, supervisor, San Diego County, Calif. and Immediate Past President Roy Charles Brooks, commissioner, Tarrant County, Texas. Photo by Lana Farfan



Coconino County, Ariz. Deputy County Manager Lucina Andreani and Pinal County, Ariz. Supervisor Todd House, participate March 2 in the Resilient Counties Luncheon: Addressing On-going and Emerging Threats Due to Adverse Weather Patterns.



# Counties, Congress still looking for infrastructure fix

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Since his victory speech in November 2016, President Trump has touted plans to rebuild American infrastructure. More than two years later, nothing has materialized, though talk in the Capitol swirls around the opportunity for a bipartisan infrastructure bill in 2019.

All the while, the national gas tax has remained at the level set in 1993, fuel efficiency has increased, some vehicles have gone hybrid or electric and freight truck weight has increased.

During a March 5 briefing on Capitol Hill, county officials and members of Congress outlined some of the needs local governments have for a new infrastructure bill and the ways to generate support for new financing.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), a longtime supporter of a gas tax increase, would like to see each congressional district play host to informal discussions about the need to invest in infrastructure and likely find a new way to raise revenue for the highway trust fund to pay for projects, including a possible user fee for electrical vehicles or vehicle miles traveled fee.

House Transportation Com-

mittee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) and ranking member Sam Graves (R-Mo.) testified March 6 in front of the House Ways and Means Committee to outline funding options.

“Where you can listen to local residents, chambers of commerce, local truckers, local unions and local officials and what you want Congress

“If we listen to and work with the American public, this is within our skill set.”

to do,” Blumenauer said, noting that 35 states had passed gas tax increases in recent years to deal with their own declining coffers.

“If we listen to and work with the American public, this is within our skill set.”

Blumenauer served as a Multnomah County, Ore. commissioner for eight years.

“Do not allow someone to tell you they support infrastructure unless they’re prepared to tell you what they will do to finance it,” Blumenauer said.

“It’s unrealistic for you to assume, at the state or local level, responsibility for projects that are multimodal, multiyear and in some cases multi-state; you need that federal partnership.”

Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.), a former Essex County, N.J. freeholder, agreed.

“You’re fixing the bridge, you’re filling the pothole, so it’s our obligation to support you in getting that done,” he said.

The lack of a long-term highway bill has frustrated county governments.

“It’s very hard to plan multiple years with a continuing resolution,” said Gary Moore, NACo second vice president, Boone County, Ky. judge executive and former chairman of NACo’s transportation steering committee.

“One thing I’ve found about a tax increase is that is people can see what they are paying is actually returning to their community, they’re seeing infrastructure improving because of additional revenue, they’re more likely to understand and support it.”

Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.), who served eight years as a DeKalb County commissioner, criticized the Trump administration and GOP-held Congress for passing tax reform before addressing infrastructure needs.

“It was a classic bait and switch,” he said.

“The tax bill made infrastructure financing more expensive due to the changes and treatment of municipal bonds and property taxes. The tax code drastically reduced the amount of federal funding available for domestic spending.”

He was optimistic about DeFazio and Graves’s testimony as a first step toward progress on a new transportation bill.

“We hope the president recognizes this bipartisan cooperation and signs legislation that will help our county and state governments address their infrastructure needs in a meaningful way,” he said. **CN**

WORD SEARCH

TULARE COUNTY, Calif.  
Created by: Rachel Looker

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



Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) speaks to NACo members during a March 5 Capitol Hill briefing on the need for a new surface transportation bill. Photo by Denny Henry

- AGRICULTURE:** Tulare County is a top producer of agricultural products in the United States.

**CENTRAL:** Tulare County is located in central California in the heart of Central Valley.

**FERTILE:** The land in the valley floor of the western half of the county is very fertile.

**KAWEAH RIVER:** The first Americans visited the area that is Tulare County in 1800 and first settled near the Kaweah River.

**MANUFACTURING:** More manufacturing plants are being added to the area.

**MARIPOSA:** Mariposa was one of the largest counties when California became a state and was later divided. The southern part became Tulare County, which was divided again to create four additional counties.

**MOUNTAINS:** Mountain peaks from the Sierra Nevada range are more than 14,000 feet in the eastern half of the county.
- OUTDOORS:** The county has all-season outdoor recreation including hiking, water skiing, snow skiing, fishing and boating.

**PUBLIC LANDS:** The county is primarily made up of public lands such as the Sequoia National Park and National Forest.

**SHIPPING:** The county has substantial packing and shipping operations.

**TULARE LAKE:** The county was originally named for Tulare Lake, a large, freshwater lake.

**TULE:** The name “Tulare County” comes from the tules, a plant that grows in wet areas.

**VISALIA:** Visalia is the county seat and the gateway to Sequoia National Park.

**WILDERNESS:** The eastern half of the county is primarily public lands and includes the Mineral King, Golden Trout and Domeland Wilderness areas.

**WET:** There were many wet areas in the county before the land was cultivated.

# BLM continues streamlining, addresses grazing



**Brian Steed, Bureau of Land Management deputy director for policy and programs, speaks March 2 to the Public Lands Steering Committee.** Photo by Leon Lawrence III

**by Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The Bureau of Land Management is continuing its efforts to update its operations, streamline processes and possibly reorganize how it regionalizes the country.

Brian Steed, BLM's deputy director for policy and pro-

grams who exercises the authority of the director, offered general observations about that process to the Public Lands Steering Committee March 2.

"We've been working very hard to be more responsive to counties and local government," he said.

The BLM is reviewing its

grazing policies, in part because a court ruling that protects the sage grouse interferes with current regulations. Steed thinks grazing could be a tool in removing invasive species and fuel for wildfires. On the other side, wild horses continue to overgraze large parts of the interior West. The BLM counted roughly 83,000 horses

in 2018 before that year's foals were born, which Steed said upped estimates to 100,000.

"Those horses are above carrying capacity on the lands," Steed said. "I can take you places in Nevada where you can find areas eaten down to the ground. We're losing soil, native species and springs," and they cost up to \$5 a day to feed.

The BLM has undertaken a review of the 2015 sage grouse plan after some states were upset with the process, even though they liked the outcome. The draft plan for Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Nevada and California and the records of decision would likely be released in March.

The bureau, along with the rest of the Department of Interior, is trying to reduce the time it takes to process requests and the size of documents, including a cut to 150 pages in a document versus 300, the time it takes to publish documents in the Federal Register (39 days

versus 4-6 months in 2017).

The same has gone for processing permits for drilling leases. During FY 2018, the BLM processed 4,527 permits, an increase of 1,500 from 2016. The backlog has been pared down to 176 days versus 257 in 2016.

The BLM is also working to get the authorities to streamline the timber production process.

"We produce more forest than we harvest," Steed said.

A year after the Department of Interior's watershed-based reorganization was struck down, the department continues to figure out how it will regionalize. Steed said that the state director system will be retained, based on public feedback.

The department's new proposed regions would consolidate different agencies to help reduce conflicts between different regions. Congress has "blessed" the reorganization, Steed said. **CN**

## Prepare now for disasters: 'The buck stops here'

**by Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

It was standing room only March 2 at the NACo Legislative Conference Resilient Counties Luncheon: "Addressing Ongoing and Emerging Threats Due to Adverse Weather Patterns." Over the past three years, on average, 25 percent of all counties received at least one major presidential disaster declaration due to devastating wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes or other natural disasters.

Broward County, Fla.'s Jason Liechty, senior environmental project coordinator, Environmental Planning and Community Resilience Division, told the audience about preparations for rising sea levels.

"I could stand here for six hours and tell you what we're doing about it," he said.

Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore said county officials should feel a sense

of urgency — before disaster strikes. "What I want to do is take each one of you by the shoulders and shake you," said Gore, who chairs the NACo Resilient Counties Advisory Board.

"Focus on this now, because if you have to focus on this while you're in a crisis, and you haven't even had your PIO go through training and they're writing press releases instead of posting warnings for residents to get out of their homes, you're going to be in a tough position as a local leader, because the buck stops here."

County officials need to engage with local residents when it comes to preparing for disasters, he noted.

"We're dependent on private landowners — but everybody expects the government to do it."

"...Funding [for disaster mitigation] takes forever — we don't have forever," said Sono-

ma County, Calif. Supervisor Susan Gorin, who also told the audience about projected rising sea levels along the California coastline and more extreme weather patterns.

"There's a reason why the doors were opened here [to accommodate such a large crowd], this issue affects every single county," she said. "It's time for NACo to do massive

lobbying for the funding of planning, experts, forecasting and working with the local jurisdictions to prepare our infrastructure for when, not if, this happens." **CN**



**Broward County, Florida's Jason Liechty senior environmental project coordinator, looks on as Claudia Nierenberg, deputy division director, Climate and Societal Interactions Division, NOAA Climate Program Office, speaks to NACo members March 2 at the Resilient Counties Luncheon: Addressing Ongoing and Emerging Threats Due to Adverse Weather Patterns.** Photo by Denny Henry



# Smarter Counties workshop uses ‘Design Thinking’

by Diane Duff

Developing better interactions between citizens and government requires a human-centered approach to problem-solving. Often referred to as “Design Thinking,” the process itself focuses on the experience of the person — “the user” — needing to access a program or service. Gathering diverse perspectives about possible user experiences generates more, and ultimately, better ideas for transforming service delivery. And while intensive, the approach allows teams to work faster and test out their ideas in smaller venues, thereby making mistakes less expensive.

NACo turned to trusted corporate partner IBM to introduce Design Thinking during a two-part Smarter Counties workshop at the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference. While relevant to nearly any county program or service that interfaces with citizens, this high-level workshop introduced Design Thinking by presenting hypothetical situations drawn from Sonoma County, Calif.’s actual experiences helping its displaced citizens in the aftermath of the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires.

IBM’s Global Business Services Design Strategist Chris Magdelain and Global Design Lead Mark Stewart divided the workshop participants into teams and led those teams through a set of exercises designed to help them focus on the perspective of a hypothetical person facing a specific situation.

First, teams had to predict the feelings, thoughts and reactions of someone confronted with a scenario similar to the Sonoma fires. For example, what might “Sarah,” a 24-year-old single woman, in her first job, living in an urban county and experiencing her first emergency, say, do, think or feel in that situation?

After defining an array of



**Participants brainstorm during a NACo Legislative Conference workshop exploring how county services can better work together, especially during disasters.** Photo by Hugh Clarke

possibilities, each team developed ideas about what she might need to address her

concerns. Based on those needs, teams began to develop ideas of what “Sarah”

would want to be enabled to do, identifying solutions through a growing under-

standing of her likely problems and challenges.

“Design Thinking provided Sonoma County a roadmap to Access Sonoma, their rapid response solution, allowing them to better serve displaced residents, but also created a new model of operations, allowing them to see how Multi Discipline teams could empower caseworkers and the community through a more holistic approach to care,” said Mary-Sara Jones, Industry Leader, Health and Human Services, Global Business Services, IBM.

Access the study here: <https://www.naco.org/sponsor/ibm>.

*Duff is director of Corporate Relations in NACo’s CSI.*

## Forest Service chief touts firefighting tools

by Charlie Ban  
senior writer

The farm bill and omnibus funding bill passed in 2018 gave the U.S. Forest Service a variety of new tools to combat wildfires.

Vicki Christiansen, recently confirmed as chief of the Forest Service after several months in an interim role, outlined those tools to the Western Interstate Region’s Board Meeting March 3.

Nearly 41 percent of forest land under federal management is at moderate-to-high risk of catastrophic fire or insect infestation, according to Christiansen.

“This can’t be business as usual,” she said. “We have the conservation challenge of our time in America.”

The omnibus bill’s fire funding fix creates a disaster fund starting in FY 2020 that the Forest Service can use, rather than borrowing from non-fire accounts, which has been done in 12 of the previous 15 years.

“A broad coalition came together, from the forest products industry to the conservation community, recreationists



**Vicki Christiansen, chief of the U.S. Forest Service, addresses the Western Interstate Region Board of Directors March 3.** Photo by Leon Lawrence III

and hunters and sportsmen alike,” Christiansen said. “They realized we were in a freefall with our budget.”

“With the rising amount of fire on the landscape, the Forest Service’s constrained budget more and more was going to fire and less and less going to the active management on the ground to be proactive,” she noted.

Internally, the Forest Service has been reviewing its processes, looking for what to update.

“They’re not contemporary and they don’t match the business needs of today,” she said. “We are not trying to cut any corners. We want to continue to be good stewards of our environmental assessments and our decisions,” she said.

“But quite frankly, we put

on too many layers and it’s unnecessary, and more resources are going into planning and analysis when we can switch those resources and get more work done on the ground.”

She added that high value timber policies, for example, are 40 years old and don’t match the market.

“We can be more relevant to match the work that needs to be done on the ground,” she said.

The previous 10-year stewardship contracts have been increased to 20 years, which Christiansen said was more in line with the state of the timber industry.

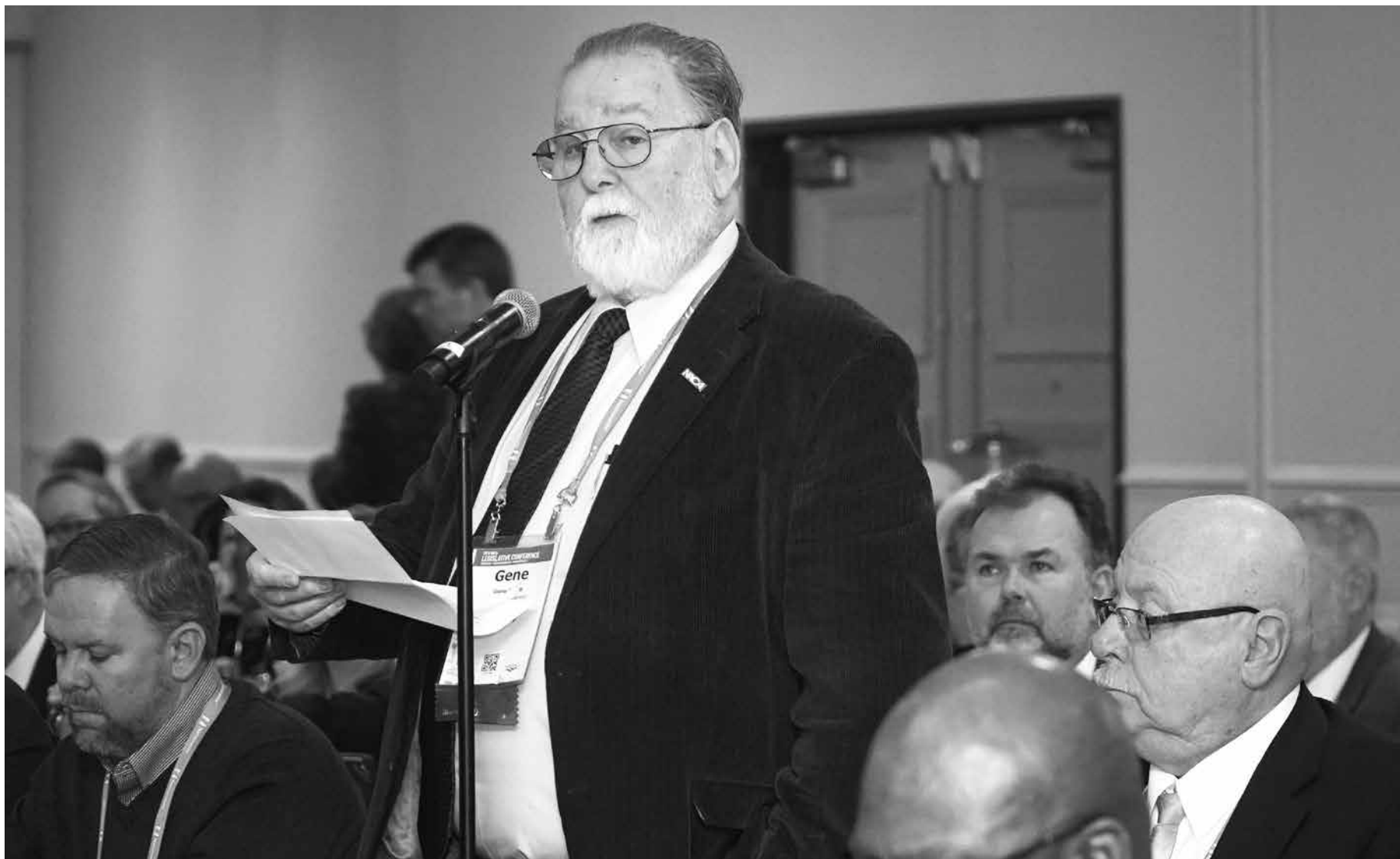
The farm bill has expanded Good Neighbor Authority so that the Forest Service can enter into contracts with counties and tribes and has increased the service’s ability to carve out categorical exclusions on lands subject to fire, insects and disease.

This year’s Western Interstate Region Conference will be held May 15-17 in Spokane County, Wash. and the 2020 conference will be held May 13-15 in Mariposa County, Calif.





# Board adopts new policies ranging from immigration to lack of cell phone service



Gene Smith, county administrator of Iron County, Mich., takes the microphone during a discussion of interim policy resolutions. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

**NACo's Board of Directors approved 26 interim policy resolutions at the Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. These interim policy resolutions will supplement existing NACo policy until NACo's 2019 Annual Conference.**

## COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### FY 2020 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**ISSUE:** Support FY 2020 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 FY 2020 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than \$3.8 billion in Commu-

nity Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than \$1.5 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); \$2.6 billion for Homeless Housing Assistance grants, including at least \$270 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Section 8 project-based and tenant-based contracts; and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

### Economic Development Administration Reauthorization

**ISSUE:** Support appropriations and reauthorization of the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the U.S. Congress to appropriate funding and reauthorize the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) as follows:

- Provide at least \$304 million in appropriations annually for EDA to support economic assistance programs.
- Focus on EDA's core infrastructure and economic adjustment programs – public works, economic adjustment assistance and partnership

planning. Congress should also authorize additional funding investments for special initiatives so as not to steer funding away from EDA core programs.

- Encourage regional collaboration by rewarding and incentivizing local governments, businesses and communities to participate in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process. The CEDS process brings together stakeholders to develop regional strategies and goals.
- Elevate EDA's role as an integrator of federal economic development planning programs and formalize EDA's role as the federal government's lead integrator for economic development and central facilitator for interagency

collaboration and resource integration.

- Expand EDA Disaster and Recovery Relief Eligibility. EDA has a significant role to play in post-disaster relief and long-term recovery assistance for impacted communities. In areas where a major disaster or emergency has been declared under the Stafford Act, EDA grant recipients should be eligible for up to 100 percent of the cost of the project.
- Strengthen EDA's National Technical Assistance program for small and distressed rural communities to allow greater access and leveraging of federal, state, local and regional economic development programs.

*See POLICY page 27*





# Coal export facilities shouldn't preempt local authority

From **POLICY** page 26

## Opportunity Zones

**ISSUE:** Support the issuance of guidance and regulations from the U.S. Department of Treasury on the newly created Opportunity Zones tax benefit.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the U.S. Department of Treasury to provide guidance and regulations on the newly created Opportunity Zones tax benefit that prevent abuse, promote developments that support and provide public benefits and encourage collaboration with local jurisdictions and stakeholders.

## Support Legal Migration to Strengthen Local Economies and the Workforce

**ISSUE:** The role legal immigration plays in our nation's workforce and local economies.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress and the administration to enact legislative and regulatory proposals that provide improved and efficient legal avenues for immigrants to enter the United States and contribute to the workforce and local economies.

## Streamlining State Licensing Procedures for Military Spouses

**ISSUE:** The men and women who serve in uniform, and their families, experience hardships following a move when seeking employment due to licensing procedures.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the U.S. Department of Defense to implement the provisions of Public Law 115-91 to fully reimburse military spouses for costs they incur in transferring professional licenses and certifications from state to state. Further, counties should do all that they can to support the U.S. Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Labor and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership in encouraging states to stream-

line the process for granting reciprocity for military spouses who must relocate from state to state in support of our men and women in uniform as they provide for the security of our nation.

## ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

### Revise the Process to Assess Benefits of Federally Funded Water Infrastructure Projects

**ISSUE:** The process for conducting cost-benefit analyses for flood control projects does not properly acknowledge the value of agricultural land or socio-economic factors.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) and the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to add a quantitative indexed value to life-safety, agricultural land value and the impacts of crop flooding, protection of

low income communities and environmental benefits to determine the benefit of federal investments in flood control projects. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to authorize the Army Corps to implement the 2013 Principles, Requirements and Guidelines to allow rural communities to fairly compete for federal funding by considering non-population-based criteria for water projects.

### Compensatory Mitigation In-Lieu Fee Programs

**ISSUE:** Ensuring that mitigation programs occur in the watershed or region where the impact occurred.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to give preference to mitigation projects funded by in-lieu fees for compensatory mitigation in the local watershed where the fee was collected in consultation with local officials.

## Support Development of New Coal Export Facilities

**ISSUE:** Natural resources are an economic driver in many communities and new export facilities would deliver an economic boost.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports the development of new coal export facilities in the United States, as long as it does not preempt state or local authority.

## FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### Restore Tax Incentives for Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems

**ISSUE:** A portion of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) prevents fire sprinkler systems and other interior building improvements from qualifying for a limited period of full expensing as well as an accelerated depreciation

schedule.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to allow qualified improvement properties (QIPs) to be eligible for bonus and accelerated depreciation as intended by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

## HEALTH

### Reduce Disparities in African American Child Deaths

**ISSUE:** African American children die at disproportionate rates across the United States, impacting families and communities.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports federal legislative efforts to fund local initiatives to reduce African American child deaths through collective impact models and targeted, community-based programs to reduce risks.

See **POLICY** page 28



Jefferson County, Kan. Commissioner Richard Malm takes the microphone during a policy discussion. Photo by Leon Lawrence III





# NACo: Legal immigration levels should not be reduced

From *POLICY* page 27

## Fund and Improve Rural Emergency Medical Services Needs Grants

**ISSUE:** Rural fire and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies currently struggle to fund their EMS operations.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to fund the SIREN grants at \$20 million for FY 2020. The SIREN grants will provide funding for rural fire and EMS agencies to recruit personnel, procure emergency medical supplies and provide EMS training classes. Only public and nonprofit agencies are eligible to receive these funds.

## HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

### Minimize the Negative Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Families and Children

**ISSUE:** The need to carry out enforcement of immigration law in a manner that does not increase reliance on local social safety-net services or increase administrative costs for counties.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the federal government to carry out its enforcement of immigration law in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on families and children and does not increase reliance on local social safety-net services or create new demands and administrative costs for counties.

### Oppose the Proposed Rule Further Restricting the Ability of States to Request Waivers to Modify Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Work Requirements for Single Individuals

**ISSUE:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that would change the criteria and

calculations of state waivers for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges USDA to modify substantially the proposed rule on SNAP waivers. NACo supports the continued ability of states to request statewide waivers, as well as the current flexibility states have when grouping counties subject to a waiver. NACo supports greater flexibility to allow able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) to receive SNAP benefits as they find jobs, including increasing federal support and administrative flexibility in administering SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs. Finally, NACo supports a change in the waiver process to allow counties to apply for an ABAWD waiver if a state does not apply for a state-wide or partial waiver.

### Maintain Current Levels of Legal Migration

**ISSUE:** The health of our economy and communities and our economic growth as counties depends on a robust legal immigration system.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports legislative or regulatory proposals that at least maintain current statutory legal immigration levels and opposes any efforts that would significantly reduce legal immigration to the United States.

## JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### Pretrial Bail Reform

**ISSUE:** Reforming bail to reduce disparities in the pretrial justice system.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges support for a nationwide effort to make communities safer and ensure better outcomes for all by applying common sense solutions to widespread pretrial justice challenges. The goals are to: 1) help counties reduce unnecessary arrests by expanding the use of alterna-

tives such as citations or summons, 2) replace money bail with non-financial, less restrictive conditions, and restrict detention to only the most serious offenses in which, after a rigorous process, a court determines that no condition or combination of condition can reasonably assure appearance in court and public safety, and 3) reduce disparities within the pretrial justice system. NACo urges the federal government to support county efforts to explore disparity reduction in the pre-trial justice system through funding and technical assistance, including data collection and studies to identify successful reform solutions.

### Urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency to Conduct an Assessment and Develop an Improvement Plan on Individual Assistance Programs

**ISSUE:** Citizens, businesses and governments impacted by disasters should be afforded a simple process, clear guidelines and timely assistance to recover from a disaster.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to conduct a study on FEMA's Individual Assistance programs to measure the simplicity, clarity and expediency of applying for assistance and take appropriate actions to refine the programs based on results.

### Urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency to Clarify Debris Removal Guidelines for Private Roadways and Gated Communities

**ISSUE:** Citizens, businesses and governments that are located on private roads or within private gated communities and are impacted by disasters and should be provided a simple process, clear guidelines and timely reimbursement assistance to recover from a

disaster.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to clarify FEMA's debris removal reimbursement guidelines for private roadways and gated communities to simplify and expedite the process.

### Urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency to Coordinate with Local Government Stakeholders on After-Action Reports

**ISSUE:** Citizens, businesses and governments that are impacted by disasters should be provided a simple process, clear guidelines and timely reimbursement assistance to recover from a disaster.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate with local government stakeholders and residents on FEMA After-Action Reports.

## PUBLIC LANDS

### Support Using Domestic Livestock Grazing as a Cost-Effective and Viable Method for Hazardous Fuels Reduction

**ISSUE:** Allowing grazing as an acceptable form of active forest and vegetation management to reduce hazardous fuel loads.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** To protect communities and critical infrastructure, NACo urges the Trump Administration to instruct federal land management agencies to utilize domestic livestock grazing as a cost-effective and viable method of hazardous fuels reduction on public lands in the West. In accordance with Executive Order 13855, counties urge the administration to require agencies to reactivate all suspended non-use Animal Unit Months (AUMs) when requested by permittees, unless the agencies can produce

peer-reviewed, irrefutable scientific evidence that doing so would be detrimental to the range. Additionally, counties recommend that all grazing permits be treated as outcome-based in order to grant federal agencies greater flexibility to respond to conditions on the ground.

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

**ISSUE:** The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) is in the process of updating its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports revising NEPA implementing regulations to require federal agencies to regularly provide meaningful opportunities for states and counties to be involved in the NEPA process for planning and projects on federal lands that may affect the economy, society and culture of constituents. NACo asks that the CEQ work closely with state and local governments to revise the NEPA regulations.

### Wildland Fire Regulations and Policies

**ISSUE:** Federal regulations, policies and guidelines that allow lightning-caused fires to burn on federal lands at all times and that permit the use of prescribed fires, regardless of ignition source, on federal lands at all times.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports greater coordination between federal land management agencies and local governments in implementing wildland fire suppression policies and strategies, with the understanding that a blanket, one-size-fits-all policy is untenable on diverse landscapes. Federal agencies must work

See *POLICY* page 29





# Address cell phone coverage in underserved areas



Alameda County, Calif. Supervisor Keith Carson discusses a policy point at the NACo 2019 Legislative Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

## From *POLICY* page 28

with local governments to accomplish their land management goals, including wildfire suppression and risk reduction, and ensure such efforts do not jeopardize the health, safety and welfare of local residents.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

### Call for the Federal Communications Commission to Address the Lack of Cellular Phone Coverage for Unserved and Underserved Areas of the United States

**ISSUE:** Many areas of the United States, particularly in rural areas, are either underserved or not served at all by cellular phone carriers, preventing residents and visitors from accessing emergency services through E-911.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo

urges the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to direct additional funding for the build-out of additional cellular communications capabilities in the unserved and underserved areas of the United States through the High Cost Program administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

### Support Federal Legislation to Implement Next Generation 911

**ISSUE:** There is an urgent need to implement Next Generation 911 systems and services nationwide to ensure that members of the public and first responders (i.e., 911, police, fire, EMS) benefit from modern emergency communications services.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to pass legislation that affirms nationwide implementation of Next Generation 911 and provides funding to facilitate implementation across all states, U.S. territories, tribal

lands and the District of Columbia.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Regulating Air Ambulances Under the Airline Deregulation Act (ADA)

**ISSUE:** Air ambulance regulation under the Airline Deregulation Act (ADA).

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports policies to remove air ambulances from the definition of "Air Carrier" in the Airline Deregulation Act (ADA) and ensure other federal laws do not prevent states from regulating air ambulance billing rates to protect consumers from price-gouging and/or balance billing conducted by some air ambulance providers. NACo encourages Congress to direct a thorough and complete study of Air Ambulance operations to be conducted.

### Funding the Assistance to Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) Grant

**ISSUE:** Funding support for the Assistance to Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) grants.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to designate \$6 million in dedicated funds for the ALERT grant, administered by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

### Support National Voluntary Registry of Persons with Invisible Disabilities When Applying for a Government Issued Identification Document

**ISSUE:** Persons with invisible disabilities drive, work and play in our society and the recognition of such disabilities by law enforcement is paramount to everyone's safety.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the federal government to

support a nationwide, individual state driven model which allows persons with hidden disabilities to voluntarily register that they have such a disability when applying for a government issued identification card and/or driver's license.



## BRIGHT IDEAS ALAMEDA COUNTY, Calif.

# Honor Society Motivates Immunization Compliance

### PROBLEM:

Alameda County, Calif. kindergarten immunization rates were lagging behind other school systems.

### SOLUTION:

Incentivize immunization compliance by recognizing schools.

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Call it bumper sticker envy.

"My child is on the honor roll at Amelia Earhart Elementary School."

Any proud parent would be pleased to slap that on the family car. Although Alameda County, Calif. wasn't giving out bumper stickers to individuals, it found a way to turn recognition their way and encourage the schools to improve immunization rates for their students.

A few years ago, the county's low immunization rates didn't make sense. Alameda County's kindergarten immunization rates were always lower than the state average.

"We're a pretty urban county, we have a lot of access to care," said Amy Pine, director of the public health department's immunization section. "Access to immunization isn't a problem here — why are our rates lower than the state average?"

The issue wasn't what is being debated in several state legislatures right now, amid several measles outbreaks — personal belief exemptions that allow families to conscientiously object to immunization requirements.

"It wasn't pockets of over-educated, anti-vaccine people here, like we suspected," she said. "Our personal belief exemption rates were lower than



**Alameda County's certificates of achievement helped compliant schools feel recognized.**

other counties."

The answer could be found in the county's conditional entrance rates. A child may have the bare-bones immunizations, at the time to start school, but months later, they could be due for more, but just slip through the cracks.

"For example, they're due for two measles-mumps-rubella shots, but they have to be a month between the doses, so the child who received the first dose should be allowed to go

to school," she said. "They're up to date."

Alameda County's schools misinterpreted conditional entrance rules and allowed students to start on the condition that they get immunizations, and many just didn't. With the vast number of students entering school in the San Francisco Bay-area county, it was easy to lose track.

The health department tried doing one-on-one training, but that was time consuming

and costly. So, using publicly available data on immunization rates, the county created its Immunity Community Honor Society, separating schools into four levels of vaccine compliance and publicizing it in hopes of motivating schools to improve.

"We used school terminology and called them things like 'Honor Society,'" Pine said. "That's what made the biggest impact and barely cost anything. For principals, seeing how they compared to their peers was the most important thing."

The county sent the lists to principals and administrative staff with a cover letter explaining the intent of the conditional entrance rule and how schools could address the discrepancies.

"Life in public schools is hard, there's always transition, people who need to be trained," Pine said. "We don't have school nurses who are checking immunizations. It's probably someone who works in the front office who has to do it and doesn't even realize it."

In the first year, 40 schools were below 80 percent compliance in having all students current on immunizations. A year later, that was down to two schools.

"It wasn't anything people couldn't find out on their own if they were really motivated, but you can only look up one school at a time," Pine said.

The county sent certificates of achievement to schools with exemplary records.

"A few schools called to thank us and tell us nobody recognizes them for anything," Pine said. "It was a little gesture that went a long way."

*The Community Immunity Honor Society was named best in category for civic education in the 2018 NACo Achievement Awards. Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and enhances services for county residents? Apply for the 2019 Achievement Awards through March 25! To begin your application, visit [www.naco.org/achievementawards](http://www.naco.org/achievementawards). **CN***



## LEADERSHIP EDGE

# Small Details ... Never Are

by Tim Rahschulte, PhD

You may be familiar with, or at least have heard of, the book *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson. Carlson further explains in the book's subtitle that it's all small stuff. Therein lies the challenge. It's all small stuff, and small details never are small, insignificant or forgettable. Do you remember this old proverb?

*For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.*

*For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.*

*For want of a horse, the rider was lost.*

*For want of a rider, the message was lost.*

*For want of a message, the battle was lost.*

*For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.*

*And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

When it comes to details, the small ones never are small. All of them are important. Whether it be a product requirement, quality expectation, customer need, board member request, or part of a message to explain a vision, the details are important to ensuring results align with needs, goals and strategy. So absolutely sweat the small stuff, because it's all small stuff!

Just as small actions are never small when trying to accomplish big goals, small details never are. In fact, it's often the small details that really thrill people enough to tell their friends, exert extra effort and understand their role in something much bigger.

Harrison Barnes, the founder and chief executive officer of the Employment Research Institute, understands this rule. Not too long ago, he posted an article titled "Pay Attention to the Details." In it, he says, "One of the most important things you can do in your career, business, and life is pay

attention to details." Indeed! He described the value and importance of details and concluded, "Where people win in business, in their careers, and elsewhere is often in the small print." Those are the details! Details always add up, just as the proverb above illustrates. The nail of a horseshoe can lose an entire kingdom. The best leaders communicate this importance to enable people to see the importance of their roles and responsibilities to the larger whole.

To further illustrate the power of small details, let me introduce you to Mike, an academic friend and former rocket scientist. Seriously, he worked for NASA, and according to his business card, he's a "rocket scientist."

Mike's job was to understand things like the dynamic load pressure relative to twin supersonic plume resonance and the implications from such pressure. He also researched the implications of Mach wave emission from supersonic jets operating at high temperatures

and conducted a number of experiments to understand the impact that aeroacoustics friction at supersonic speeds had on aircraft material and the people inside. As noted, he's a rocket scientist!


The reason Mike is important here is his understanding of physics. To accomplish any big goal, you have to understand physics. Like me, you may not have an advanced degree in physics. Mike likely would say, "That's fine. Even without a degree in physics, you likely remember playing with dominoes as a kid." Again, if you're like me, your dominoes were all the same size and rectangular, and you enjoyed lining them up on end in a very even row (or perhaps with an occasional curve) before knocking one over and then watching the rest of them tumble one at a time when hit by the falling domino placed before it. That's physics!

The action and subsequent reaction of each domino is caused by mass in motion. The interesting thing about

this is that, based on the mass and motion, a single domino can topple another that's 1.5 to 2 times its size in its path. That's important because your actions are similar, and you need them to be so in order to achieve any goal or desired future state. The reason why is because no goal of yours can be achieved in a single action. Any big goal is accomplished by aggregating small(er) accomplishments over time and aligned to the next larger one. In other words, big things are only accomplished one small detail at a time, added up over time.

Think back to when you were a kid playing with the dominoes. Think about the vision or end goal to see the last domino fall. Before that occurs, you need proper preparation, a strategy, and a plan for how the dominoes will be organized. You also need alignment to assure one domino's mass in motion will hit its next target and have the energy to topple it over and into the next domino. Every

action of the domino will have a reaction. You have a similar effect as a leader. Your every action is affective — for better or worse. Whether you intend for it to affect or not, it does, and there's a subsequent effect. So, act accordingly: Prepare, plan, align, connect, and rely on your momentum (mass in motion) to accomplish smaller things that accumulate to much bigger things.

The best leaders look out for the details of the horseshoe nail. They know the kingdom relies on it, just as Mike knows of the catastrophic implications of a little friction at supersonic speed. You don't need to understand physics to be a great leader, but if you understand dominoes, you can appreciate and understand the need to sweat the small stuff. 

*Tim Rahschulte is the CEO of the Professional Development Academy and chief architect of the NACo High Performance Leadership Program ([naco.org/skills](http://naco.org/skills)).*







## ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, Va.

**R**ockbridge County is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia and includes more than 100 cultural and historical sites. The county was named for the Natural Bridge, which stands at 215-feet tall and was once owned by Thomas Jefferson.



The bridge, featured in the center of the seal, is considered a "must see" by tourists near and far. The bridge and its surrounding property opened as a state park in 2016.

Rockbridge County is the birthplace of Cyrus McCormick, who created the Mechanical Reaper featured on the right side of the seal. He first demonstrated the mechanical reaper in 1831, which revolutionized the grain harvesting process.

The seal also includes Washington and Lee University's Washington Hall. The university was founded in 1749.

The Virginia Military Institute's cadet barracks can be seen below Washington Hall on the seal. The universities are central to the history of the county and played important roles throughout the country's history.

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

# MONEYMATTERS

## Modernizing Municipal Bonds

by Emily S. Brock

While the tax exclusion for municipal bond interest remained intact despite threats of elimination during the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) debate in 2017, the 116th Congress may continue to look at changes to the tax code that affect public finance. Providing the tax exemption to municipal bond investors comes at a cost to the federal government, though, so the exemption itself is always vulnerable.

The benefit of the municipal bond market should be no surprise to all state and local government officials. Tax-exempt bonds are the primary mechanism through which state and local governments raise capital to finance a wide range of essential public infrastructure projects. The volume of municipal bond issuance for the period from 2007 to 2017 amounted to \$3.6 trillion. The Joint Commission on Taxation tallies the total cost of providing the tax exemption at \$359 billion. If state and local governments lose the ability to use tax-exempt bonds and are compelled to issue taxable bonds an alternative, projects would be more difficult and costly to finance, which will have significant impact on our nation's infrastructure.

The 116th Congress began work in January 2019 to address their work product for the coming two years. This will undoubtedly include an intense interest in finding solutions for infrastructure and a critical assessment of the federal government's ability to provide a funding stream for infrastructure. Together with the Administration, the Democratic House and the Republican Senate will work toward advancing mutual goals, including plans that will address America's infrastructure.

Below is an overview of GFOA's positions on legislation that would help modernize the

municipal bond market and allow issuers to continue to improve and enhance our nation's infrastructure. GFOA encourages all county officials to discuss these proposals with your finance officers and advocate for refinement of these critical tools to provide for infrastructure.

### Federal tax policy and the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), which was passed by Congress and signed into law in 2017, made several changes to the tax code. Although the full tax exemption for municipal bond interest was retained, other changes noteworthy to issuers of municipal bonds include:

- The elimination of advance refunding.
- The elimination of tax credit bond programs.
- The reduction of the corporate tax rate and the elimination of some corporate, bank, and insurance tax incentives to purchase municipal securities.

According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), our nation's infrastructure earned a cumulative grade of D+.2 The 10-year funding gap between the \$4.6 trillion in infrastructure needs and public spending necessary to achieve a state of good repair is \$2 trillion. With direct federal support to state and local governments continuing to decrease, and the lack of a clear vision from Congress or the administration on a path forward for infrastructure, the importance of the municipal bond market cannot be overstated.

### Restore and advance refunding bonds

Issuers have saved substantial sums over time through the use of advance refunding, which freed up capital to use for other infrastructure needs

by allowing states and local governments to refinance existing debt with the greatest flexibility leading to reduced borrowing costs. In the absence of advance refunding, new market-borne financial products intended to achieve savings similar to those found previously have emerged.

Advance refunding represented 27 percent of municipal bond market activity in 2016 and 19 percent in 2017. In the previous sessions of Congress, bipartisan legislation was introduced to reinstate governments' availability to use advance refunding.

The elimination of advance refunding in the TCJA as a cost-savings tool for state and local governments has limited the options for refinancing debt, especially since interest rates will certainly fluctuate over the lifetime of outstanding governmental bonds (which in many cases is 30 years). As a result, state and local governments are now paying more in interest, a cost either passed on to citizens or paid for by reducing expenses in other important services areas.

**Proposed Legislative Change:** GFOA's primary objective for this 116th Congress has focused on infrastructure, to fully reinstate state and local government's authority to issue tax-exempt advance refunding bonds.

### Reinstate full subsidy payments of direct-pay subsidy bonds

Direct-pay subsidy bonds, like Build America Bonds (BABs), are debt securities (e.g., municipal bonds) issued by a state, municipality, or county to finance capital expenditures. In general, there are two distinct types of BABs: tax credit and direct payment. Tax credit BABs offered bondholders and lenders a 35 percent federal subsidy on the interest paid through refundable tax credits, reducing

the bondholder's tax liability.

The direct payment BABs offered a similar subsidy that was paid to the bond issuer. The U.S. Treasury made a direct payment to BAB issuers in the form of a 35 percent subsidy on the interest owed to investors. As a result of sequestration, issuers saw a consistent annual reduction in their subsidy payments.

**Proposed Legislative Change:** GFOA has supported issuers' access to capital, including through the form of direct pay subsidy bonds. The federal government should honor its commitment and Protect Build America Bond payments to issuers in case of sequestration (Section 6431(b)). Credit payments to issuers of Build America Bonds were not intended to be subject to budget sequestration; this would conform treatment of these payments to treatment of other tax credit payments.

### Private use limits

The core private use test for government bonds requires that no more than 10 percent of the proceeds a government's bond issue can satisfy the private needs. The only use that is not private business use is use by a state or local government (an individual not in trade or business, or the general public). GFOA has long supported restrictions on these types of financings because of their impact on the cost of borrowing for public purposes. However, a number of supplementation restrictions further complicate the rule, and we do not believe that arbitrary volume caps are an appropriate way to deal with the issue. Proposed legislative change will eliminate duplicative and burdensome rules and address our concerns.

**Proposed Legislative Change:** The government should repeal these supplemental restrictions that require



## the HR DOCTOR

With Phil Rosenberg



Spring is the season of hope, of joy, and of great expectations. It is the time of celebration that difficulties have been overcome and of looking ahead. This sense is reflected in our folklore and mythology as well as in our farming practices. Even our religions share a sense of hope and glory ahead. Call it Easter, Passover, the Hindu festival of “Devali” or by any other name, the underlying concepts are the same.

So, why not also in public administration? What a perfect season to introduce innovation and hope in the delivery of public services? Why not make the springtime the season of management and supervisory training and development opportunities, of planning for improvement or reforming HR practices, and much more!?

A metaphor for the spirit of the season rests in the U.S. Postal Service, notwithstanding its ongoing financial woes. These troubles periodically manifest in rate hike discussions, threatened elimination of Saturday deliveries, closures of local post offices (you know, the ones opened years ago amid a flourishing of congressional ribbon-cutting and posing for photos), and concerns for the threat of continued replacement of basic services by e-mail, UPS and FedEx privatization, etc. It still falls to the U.S. Postal Service to be an instrument in the arrival of news of momentous importance to each of us.

Here is a reprise of a well-received HR Doctor article from years ago to reinforce the point:

In our careers and in our lives, there are moments of key importance when news finally arrives that we have expected impatiently for a long time. The wait by the mailbox seems interminable.

The HR Doctor remembers



as though it were yesterday running to the mailbox every day as a high school senior waiting for a letter from UCLA. Then the letter arrived and I recalled being paralyzed for several moments. Do I open it? What if I haven’t been admitted? I have shared my hopes and dreams with friends and colleagues. I have waited for weeks and now the letter is in my hand. Do I open it now? I did. I stared at the letter in silence as I read the words “Congratulations on your admission to the University of California, Los Angeles!” If it had been bad news, I would have stared at it in silence in much the same way, though the later celebration and joy would not have been there.

The same feeling of impatience, worry, fear and hopefully joy is something we all experience. Sometimes, that concern is reflected when we visit a doctor’s office with a medical problem and we wait for the doctor to come in to the chilly, Spartan examining room to tell us the results of tests. Sometimes at work we wait for the results of the performance evaluation. Every appointed official has waited, either impatiently, nervously, or both, while the elected city commission, county commission or board of supervisors considers our recommendations and then says to the clerk “Call the roll!”

The same scenario replayed itself a generation ago in the Rosenberg family with two major events occurring in close proximity. Wonderful HR daughter Elyse, a county government Senior Management and Budget analyst at the time, applied for a promotion to manager.

We all strive to advance our career, even though it might mean leaving the comfort zone of a job we understand and working with people we respect, to risk the unknown of a new director, a new department, unfamiliar work and our first major supervisory responsibility. Am I doing the right thing? Will this work out? How do I excel in supervision? How do I handle my first staff meeting with new subordinates? Several years after that promotion was offered and accepted, Elyse and the rest of us look back on our careers and find that the answers to these questions were all inside of us already. We may have had self-doubts, but somewhere along the line a mentor or a sensitive executive understands that there is nothing to worry about except, to paraphrase the great HR Director, Franklin Roosevelt, “Fear Itself.”

The other “blessed event” involved wonderful HR doctor daughter Rachel. No matter how hard you work in medical school, no matter how respect-

ed you may be by your fellow students, the Attending Physician who grades you, or your patients, you simply cannot be a doctor — you cannot graduate — unless you pass the various state medical board examinations. These are two-day marathons — grueling, nerve-racking examinations — which can shatter a student’s confidence and leave you wondering if instead of being a doctor, perhaps you should consider a career as a greeter at Walmart. The monumental board examinations were taken and it took two months to receive the results. Every day the “HR Daddy” was dispatched out to the mailbox by his daughter who is involved doing clinical rotations half a continent away. “Has the letter arrived?” “I don’t think I did well!” “What if I failed?”

Needless to say, the letter arrived, ironically, while Rachel was on the telephone talking to dad about her day’s experience. I got to open the magic letter from the dreaded “Board of Medical Examiners” and got to say immediately, “It’s a Pass, Rachel! Not only is it a pass, it’s a ‘super pass’!” Perhaps it was wrong to open the letter while my daughter was driving home from a day at the hospital because the tears which followed made driving dangerous. How wonderful that they were tears of joy.

It may be something like medical boards or getting a promotion. It may be good news from the doctor or good news about other people you work with or care very much about. The situation is the same. Every one of us faces these moments in our lives when we “wait by the mailbox” — either literally or figuratively.

These moments of great importance are benchmarks in the progress of our careers and our lives. While we believe that joy is far better than disappointment, the HR Doctor wondered — but only briefly — how the HR daughters would have reacted if the promotion went to someone else or the board scores were disappointing. How we handle disappointment and failure is, arguably, more important than how we handle success.

The best bosses, colleagues, spouses and parents work through the process of recovery and growth out of disappointment with the ones they care about with equal passion and sharing as though it was joy rather than sadness.

Joy may not be as great a character builder as disappointment can be, but it is much more fun! The HR Doctor hopes that your time spent “waiting at the mailbox” produces equal joy to what has occurred repeatedly in our house. **CN**



# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



## ALABAMA

**MOBILE COUNTY** is getting creative to help **county employees get healthy**, the *Mobile Press-Register* reported. Employees who lose 10 pounds during a 10-week weight loss incentive program that recently kicked off will qualify for four hours of paid time off. They'll enjoy another four hours off if they maintain the 10-pound weight loss for six months. "It's a catalyst to encourage our employees to get healthier and we may be offering additional incentives," said Commissioner Connie Hudson. "I think the idea is to do what we can to assist employees to help have healthier lives." The voluntary program is open to part-time and full-time employees.

## CALIFORNIA

• **LOS ANGELES COUNTY**, in its first step to establish **local control** over 40 miles of flood control channels, recently voted to send a letter to their congressional representatives urging them to support a study that would look at how the county could take the reins from the federal government. The Los Angeles County Flood Control District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work together now to maintain water infrastructure throughout the county. But county officials say insufficient funding has hampered the federal government's ability to keep its segments up to county standards. Having

one entity in control could clear up the "considerable confusion" among riverside residents about who is in charge of what, said Sarah Rascon, urban river program officer for the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

• A new **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** public-private program offers relief to those who care for people with **Alzheimer's or dementia**, according to a report by CBS8.com. The new Respite Voucher Program offers family members and others a county voucher to cover half the cost of hiring a fill-in caregiver. Two local groups provide services and support, and split the cost with the county 50/50. The program is run by the county's Health and Human Services Agency.

## FLORIDA

• **FLAGLER COUNTY** attempted to move a group of **homeless people** away from a county library grounds to a county park but decided against it after protests on social media by people who lived near the county park, *The Daytona Beach News-Journal* reported. The county took the action after the city of Palm Coast notified the county that the wooded

site where the homeless were living needed to be cleaned up. The county library director showed reporters photos of homeless people sleeping in front of library entrances, drug paraphernalia found on library grounds and one of three \$800 chairs that had to be thrown out after someone urinated on it, the librarian told the *Palm Coast Observer*. County Commissioner Joe Mullins paid for security out of his own pocket after meeting with library staff; the county planned to take over security last week. While librarians said they "will be able to focus on our jobs for once," they added that they thought it was "a Band-Aid solution." The county is continuing to try to find answers.

## HAWAII

The **COUNTY OF HAWAII** is initiating a short-term program this month designed to help residents dispose of **unwanted vehicles**, KHON-2 reported. The Vehicle Disposal Assistance Program is aimed at helping people dispose of vehicles legally, to reduce the number of abandoned vehicles left on



public roadways.

The county will dispose of one vehicle per registered owner at no charge, paying the fee to a designated vehicle disposal contractor. The owner is responsible for towing. The county will try out the program until April 30 and may extend it if funding is available.

# GIRL

## INDIANA

A new **MARION COUNTY** program is designed to promote the **social well-being of girls**, according to a report by RTV6. The coun-

ty health department is teaming up with the public school and the Women's Fund of Central Indiana to launch the "Give an Hour" program. The 10-week pro-

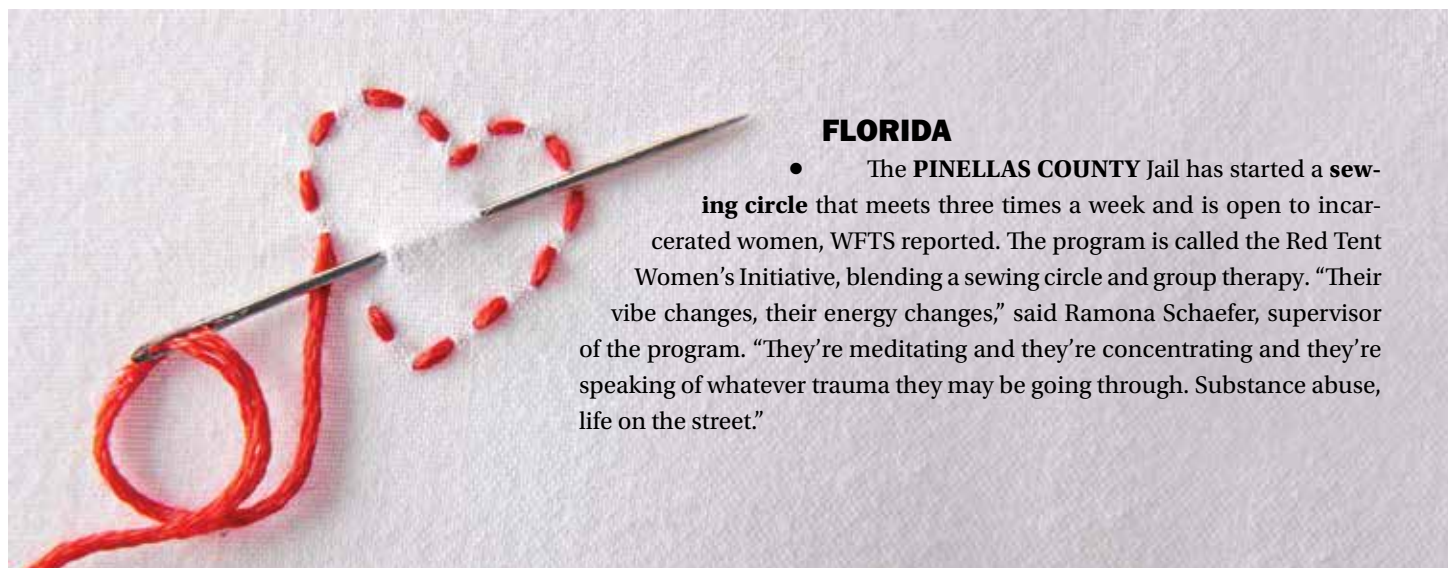
## ILLINOIS

**MADISON COUNTY**'s Public Safety Committee is expected to consider an ordinance requiring **pawn and second-hand stores** to participate in an online registry, *The Telegraph* newspaper reported. Under the proposal, businesses would register on a site and then enter information daily about items purchased or pawned. Currently, the county sheriff's office is spending time hand-writing or typing "pawn tickets" submitted on a weekly basis.

The proposed regulations would bring the county into

## FLORIDA

• The **PINELLAS COUNTY** Jail has started a **sewing circle** that meets three times a week and is open to incarcerated women, WFTS reported. The program is called the Red Tent Women's Initiative, blending a sewing circle and group therapy. "Their vibe changes, their energy changes," said Ramona Schaefer, supervisor of the program. "They're meditating and they're concentrating and they're speaking of whatever trauma they may be going through. Substance abuse, life on the street."





# POWER!



gram is school-based and promotes social and emotional well-being of young girls. The first pilot includes fifth and sixth-graders. “When we support young

girls with gender-specific programming they grow up to become strong, confident women and that’s beneficial for all of our society,” one programmer said.

compliance with state law, save police departments money and make it easier to track potentially stolen items. Secondhand or pawned items covered would include electronic equipment, jewelry, stamps and precious metals. Garage sales, yard sales and similar activities would be exempt. The county sheriff’s department said that thieves know they can bring items to the county because items are not tracked daily online as they are in St. Louis, about a 40-minute drive away.

## MONTANA

In an attempt to get control over the number of **stray cats** in the county, the **FLATHEAD COUNTY** Animal Shelter began a cat adoption service, cold calling entities they thought could benefit from having a cat to chase away rodents — in places like equestrian barns, hay businesses, dairies and other structures, the *Daily Inter Lake* reported. “When they are untamed, you can’t adopt them to someone who

is going to have them in their house,” said Cliff Bennett, director of the shelter. “So we had a whole new group of cats to try and help and help a new group of people to try and pair them up with.” It’s been a year since the service began and they’ve placed 120 cats. The shelter spays, neuters and resettles them, serving a much-needed gap in cat adoption services.

## NEBRASKA

The **SARPY COUNTY** Board approved a land purchase that will play host to a **mental health crisis center**. The Board cited an “unmet mental health crisis” while approving the \$1 million purchase. *The Omaha World-Herald* reported the center will serve as a short-term emergency provider where people voluntarily go to receive mental health and substance abuse assessments. It will provide law enforcement officers with a dedicated facility to bring people who don’t belong in jail or a traditional hospital. The county jail lacks mental

health and behavioral facilities and over the last six months of 2018, the county spent \$1.4 million to house inmates with mental illness.

Early estimates say the facility itself could cost between \$10 million and \$13 million, with projected yearly operating costs between \$2 million and \$2.5 million. A preliminary report suggests the facility would be available for use by all Sarpy County law enforcement agencies, as well as **CASS, DODGE, DOUGLAS** and **WASHINGTON counties**.

## PENNSYLVANIA

• Deputies in **BEAVER COUNTY** are getting new **Tasers**, replacing an aging inventory, but the department has said the devices, which have been in use since 2007, have been good for the department’s bottom line. Over an 11-year period worker’s compensation claims at the county jail have dropped 60 percent, since deputies started carrying them, *The Beaver County Times* reported.

• Citizens in **BERKS COUNTY** liked **colored lights atop the county courthouse**, which reflected weather conditions with different combinations but went out in 2013 when the roof was repaired. Although commissioners balked at replacing them because of the cost, they later found out that the LED lights would interfere with the county’s emergency communications system.

“I know there’s been letters to the editor and stuff on social media saying we should relight the courthouse but there needs to be recognition that the emergency radio system is much more important to the safety of people in Berks County,” Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt told *The Reading Eagle*.

## TEXAS

• **EL PASO COUNTY** is funding a new temporary staff position to help **coordinate migrant shelters**. The staffer will organize volunteers and migrant shelters when Immigration and Customs Enforcement

releases large groups of migrants nearby, and the \$20,000 salary will come from the \$100,000 county leaders had approved for immigration purposes. County leaders told the local CBS affiliate they hoped other organizations could contribute enough to boost the salary to \$50,000. The volunteer coordinator would also work with the Paso del Norte Foundation, United Way and the city of El Paso.

• **HARRIS COUNTY** voters will be able to exercise their right anywhere in the county on Election Day. Texas Secretary of State David Whitely approved the switch to a **County-wide Polling Place Program**, which stops limiting voters to the precinct assigned to them. Harris County’s 2 million registered voters makes it the largest county in the country to implement the program, KHOU News reported.

## WISCONSIN

• In a first for the Midwest, the **DANE COUNTY** Board of Supervisors passed a resolution urging the Legislature to **ban competitions that involve killing wildlife**. The board said competitions like these that kill predators don’t serve any legitimate wildlife management purposes, WMTV News reported.

• Seeking to avoid lawsuits, the **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** Sheriff’s Office will stop reporting to Immigrations and Customs Enforcement about **detainees’ immigration status**, a change from the previous administration, according to Wisconsin Public Radio. Sheriff Earnell Lucas established a policy ensuring that absent a valid judicial warrant, information would no longer be shared with ICE or hold inmates for an additional 48 hours after they should be released.

*News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior writers. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.*

## How to fund infrastructure

*From BONDS page 32*

a 5 percent unrelated or disproportionate test (Section 141(b)(3) of the code), the \$15 million per project limit on private business use on certain output facilities (Section 141(b)(4)), and the volume cap requirement for governmental bond issues with a nonqualified private business amount in excess of \$15 million (Section 141(b)(5)).

## Partnership financings

The current administration has proposed new programs that would provide incentives for public-private partnerships to help fund public-sector infrastructure needs. GFOA believes that the federal government should work in partnership with state and local government to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, with minimum disruption to these entities and the tax-exempt bond marketplace.

In addition, we always urge the federal government to hold public hearings on matters that affect local and state governments. While it is unclear if Congress will address these proposals, governments should be aware of potential financial tools that are or may be available and evaluate them to determine if they may be appropriate for your government.

This article has been modified from an earlier version published in Government Finance Review. Additional materials including GFOA reports on the following are all available on GFOA’s website at [www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org), including:

- Infrastructure funding in the new budget environment
- Tax-exempt municipal bonds and infrastructure: Over 100 years of building together
- Understanding financing options used for public infrastructure. [GN](#)

*Emily S. Brock is director of GFOA’s Federal Government Liaison Center in Washington, D.C.*





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