



GREG CHILCOTT TAKES WIR REINS; DAN JOYCE ELECTED 2ND VP. PG. 6



DECONTAMINATION SITE USED TO SANITIZE COUNTY VEHICLES. PG. 8



GFOA OFFERS IDEAS ON HOW TO BALANCE THE COUNTY BUDGET. PG. 10

NACo BOARD CANCELS 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

NACo will hold a remote Annual Business Meeting July 20 in lieu of the Annual Conference in Orange County (Orlando), Fla.

The Board of Directors canceled the Annual Conference May 14 in its first-ever remote meeting, following the cancellation of the Western Interstate Region Conference in Mariposa County, Calif.

A variety of concerns driven by the continuing novel coronavirus pandemic motivated the cancellation.

There is yet no telling when concerns might be alleviated regarding holding mass gatherings in Orange County.

"They want us to come, but they have been very, very supportive and understanding in terms of all this discussion," said President Mary Ann Borgeson, adding that NACo was exploring options regarding returning to Orange County at some point.

The Florida Association of Counties had already canceled its June Annual Conference, which was also scheduled to take place in Orange County.

All Annual Conference reg-

See **ANNUAL** page 4



Nassau County, N.Y. Executive Laura Curran speaks during a food distribution event as part of Nassau's Community Food Distribution Initiative to combat food insecurity during the coronavirus pandemic. The county has held multiple distribution events feeding over 5,000 families by providing them with a week's worth of food supplies. See full story on page 5. Photo by Arthur Raslich, Nassau County photographer

Faces on the frontlines: Cass County Sheriff Jesse Jahner

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

A global pandemic doesn't stop the need for county services across the country, including law enforcement.

As sheriff of Cass County, the most populous county in North Dakota, Jesse Jahner is a face on the frontline leading both the sheriff's office and correctional facility during a situation that was hard to predict when he was elected.

For Jahner, one of 3,000 sher-

iffs in counties throughout the country, the coronavirus pandemic has complicated his job, changing his day-to-day routine and the way he operates to serve the community. Here's a look at how COVID-19 has changed his days on the job:

Mornings

To prepare for his day, Jahner's first task in the morning is the same as his pre-pandemic routine. He checks his email to review calls and reports made by his patrol staff



Jahner

from the night before. "That's my first course of business," he said. Jahner also spends his mornings reviewing information from the

See **JAHNER** page 3

House passes HEROES Act; Senate action uncertain

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act on May 15. As passed by the House, it would allocate \$187.5 billion in direct, flexible relief to counties

of all sizes.

This legislation follows four previous bipartisan supplemental packages addressing the impacts of COVID-19 that have been signed into law and expands on provisions in P.L. 116-136, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

In a call with several mem-

bers of Congress last week, NACo CEO/Executive Director Matt Chase highlighted the recent Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report for April, which reveals that local governments have lost over 800,000 jobs (see story, Page 7).

"Without the HEROES Act,

See **HEROES** page 2

HEROES Act moves to the Senate, provides funding at county level

From HEROES page 1

it will be much worse," Chase said.

"We are hearing from our county administrators that if Congress does not act before Memorial Day, we will see far worse jobs numbers into the future."

Chase called for bipartisan action and support for additional aid to local governments.

"This is happening at a time when the demand for county services is skyrocketing while our revenues are plummeting," he said.

Counties face a combined \$144 billion fiscal impact from the COVID-19 pandemic through 2021, in addition to potential loss in property tax revenues and other cuts.

The over 1,800-page HEROES Act includes many provisions that would impact county governments through a new Coronavirus Local Fiscal Relief Fund.

The funding could also be used for lost revenue.

The U.S. Senate has already



indicated it will not consider the bill given the \$3 trillion price tag and the President has threatened to veto it.

NACo continues to work with its federal partners in both Congress and the administration to secure direct funds for counties of all sizes that are facing unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19.

Throughout NACo's advocacy efforts around COVID-19, the association has followed the following five principles for bipartisan action:

- Ensure counties of all sizes receive direct and flexible fiscal relief under a new round of federal COVID-19 aid
- Add "lost revenue" along with "expenditures" as eligible activities for existing CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund and any new federal fiscal aid
- Support 50 percent split for counties and 50 percent split for cities and other municipalities as part of a new round of federal COVID-19 aid for local governments
- Allocate county portion based on population formula, with a minimum allocation per county
- Provide public accountability safeguards that still empower state and local officials

to address the COVID-19 pandemic broadly, based on local economic, health, safety and workforce needs

While the HEROES Act's new state and local fiscal relief funds are the most significant aspects of the legislation for counties, the bill includes many other provisions of note for local governments, and, if enacted into law, would:

- Allow inmates to access Medicaid 30 days prior to their release
- Increase Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) by 14 percent from July 1, 2020 through June 2021
- Place a moratorium on Medicaid Fiscal Accountability Regulation (MFAR) until the end of the public health emergency
- Increase (temporarily) payments to hospitals serving a disproportionate share of

low-income and uninsured patients

- Waive the 25 percent local match requirement for FEMA funding under the Emergency Disaster Declaration
- Make county employers eligible for CARES Act payroll tax deductions
- Suspend the \$10,000 cap placed on state and local tax (SALT) deductions for FY 2020 and FY 2021
- Provide an additional \$5 billion for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for local communities by the current formula
- Increase SNAP benefits by 15 percent
- Provide \$9.6 billion in emergency funding for the Social Services Block Grant, half of which states must pass through to local governments or community-based organizations


OTHER RELIEF LEGISLATION PROPOSED INCLUDES:

- Direct Support for Communities Act (S. 3632, H.R. 6748) uses a similar formula, and would also provide direct funding to all of America's counties.
- The State and Municipal Assistance for Recovery and Transition Act (SMART) Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) would provide \$80 billion in flexible funding to counties of all sizes.

HEROES ACT WOULD CREATE A NEW CORONAVIRUS LOCAL FISCAL RELIEF FUND

- Funding would flow directly from U.S. Treasury
- Funds could be used for COVID-related expenses, to replace lost revenues not projected on Jan. 31 or to respond to negative economic impacts of COVID-19
- \$500 billion for states
- \$375 billion total for local governments
 - \$250 billion within 30 days of enactment to all municipalities and counties
 - **\$125 billion of that directly to counties of all sizes, based on population**
 - **\$125 billion of that to municipalities using a combination of the CDBG formula and population**
 - \$125 billion to local governments one year after the date of enactment
 - **\$62.5 billion of that directly to counties of all sizes, based on population**

- Authorize an additional \$11.5 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants that enable state and local governments to finance housing and health-related services for people currently experiencing homelessness
- Provide \$50 million to support local farmers, farmers markets and other local food outlets impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions and temporarily waive matching requirements
- Provide \$15 billion for highways and \$15.75 billion for transit

See a full summary of the HEROES Act here: <http://www.naco.org/heroes-analysis>. 

SNAP/STATS



MEMORIAL DAY:

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO DIED SERVING IN THE MILITARY.

WAR	DEATHS
Civil War	498,232
World War II	405,399
World War I	116,516
Vietnam War	90,220

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs

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Sheriff Jahner: Providing public safety is number one priority during pandemic



An officer at the Sheriff's Office in Cass County, N.D. takes the temperature of a colleague to monitor for possible fevers consistent with COVID-19 symptoms.



A member of the Cass County Sheriff's Office wipes down a computer inside a patrol vehicle as a precaution against the coronavirus. All photos courtesy Cass County Sheriff's Office

From JAHNER page 1

Cass County Jail, which he described as the "backbone" for the county's criminal justice system.

This is where his morning slightly differs from six months ago. He reviews how many individuals have been booked into the facility as well as information on potentially symptomatic inmates.

"If we do get the virus inside our [jail] walls, that could cause us to shut the doors and of course we don't want to do that because then we can't provide that safety piece to the public," he said.

Throughout the morning and even during the day, Jahner consistently checks with his jail staff to ensure the facility is running normally, has capacity and is following protocols and procedures that he set in place to protect inmates from COVID-19.

Afternoons

As his day continues, Jahner attends a daily command staff briefing held each afternoon to ensure his office is properly responding to the fluid situation with the virus as more information from the Cass County Health Department and the CDC becomes available.

"As we get new information every day, we're constantly adjusting our procedures and making sure that we're staying up with that current information," he said.

From Jahner's perspective, the virus has altered the daily operations at the sheriff's office from two perspectives: The field side and the corrections side.

Jahner oversees many precautions on the field side, which includes the patrol division, investigative division, street crimes division and narcotics division.

The coronavirus has proved challenging when it comes to field operations, he said, with officers following social distancing guidelines and trying not to become exposed or expose members of the community to the virus.

"It's been somewhat of a struggle for us because at the sheriff's office, we really want to be proactive and really want to be involved in our community activities," he said.

Jahner also enforces additional precautions for his staff, which include taking their temperatures daily, completing a questionnaire which asks about COVID-19 symptoms and wearing personal protective equipment such as N-95 respiratory masks, eye protection,

rubber gloves and gowns when necessary.

"We are just constantly monitoring and making sure we're being vigilant in monitoring people's physical conditions and then monitoring how we're interacting with the public," he said.

On the correctional side, which involves the Cass County Jail, additional precautions begin at the intake process. Jahner instructs officers, who are wearing personal protective equipment, to scan the temperatures of individuals entering the facility and ask them questions about coronavirus symptoms before moving them to an isolation pod.

Medical staff monitor inmates for several days before they are moved to the general population and if it is suspected someone may have the virus, they are tested at a local medical center.

Evenings

With every day bringing different challenges, Jahner said he may work his regular hours one day and may not return home until 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. the next day.

"It really just varies," he said. "It's not a consistent schedule by any means."

Depending on what hap-



Sheriff Jesse Jahner and his colleagues at the Cass County Sheriff's Office wear masks during the COVID-19 outbreak.

pened throughout his day, Jahner takes extra precautions when returning home or back to the office, specifically after visiting the jail.

"I'm leaving that facility going straight home and making sure that I don't interact with people or expose other people to what I have been exposed to that day," he said.

Before the pandemic hit, Jahner was making his rounds visiting a new community every week to meet with citizens, eventually hoping to rotate throughout every community in Cass County.

"That's been very restrictive now and that's been hard for me because going out and interacting with our public, talking on a regular basis is really how we

adapt and really how we gauge our law enforcement presence," he said. "Not having that interaction every week has been a little bit challenging for me. It's been hard. It's something that I really miss right now."

At the end of each day, Jahner said he reviews what areas his office can improve on to keep Cass County citizens safe.

"I just really want to relay the message that although the pandemic is going on," he said, "we are still very much there for our citizens and public safety is going to be the number one priority in anything we do."

NACO's We Are Counties Campaign puts faces on the frontline services counties provide. For more information, visit naco.org/wearecounties. **CN**

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NACo virtual membership town hall scheduled for July 13

From ANNUAL page 1

istration fees and hotel reservations made through NACo's housing process will be returned to registrants, with no action needed on their part.

Business meeting attendees will vote for NACo's second vice president candidates, currently Grant County, Okla. Commissioner Cindy Bobbitt and Will County, Ill. Board Speaker Denise Winfrey.

NACo's Nominating Committee will meet July 18, the Credentials Committee will meet July 19 and the elections for expiring Regional Representatives seats for the Northeast and Central regions will be held July 21.

The business meeting, set for July 20 at 2 p.m. ET, will be open to all NACo members, who must complete a free registration process and complete their credentialing process. A week before the business meeting, July 13 at 4 p.m. ET, NACo will hold a virtual membership town hall, which will include a forum for second

vice president candidates, an overview of proposed bylaws amendments, a review of policy resolutions and a status report on voting delegate credentials totals.

Two weeks ahead of the business meeting, the NACo website will display all member counties, credential status and proxy status.

Proxies have been updated to allow electronic authorization.

Credential forms will be mailed to the chief elected officer of each member county and the clerk of the policy Board, a minor clarification to action the Board took in 2013.

The NACo Bylaws Committee and Board are proposing several changes to clarify and streamline the election credentials and voting processes.

In December 2019, NACo members voted on bylaws changes that allowed the organization to move long-term reserves that had been reserved for building expenses to allow for investments that support, enhance and protect long-term

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING SCHEDULE

July 13, 4 p.m. ET: Membership Town Hall

July 18: Nominating Committee

July 19: Credentials Committee

July 20, 2 p.m. ET: Annual Business Meeting

July 21: Northeast and Central Regional Representative Elections

Also see: www.naco.org/Annual

stability, capacity services and operations of the association, allowing NACo more financial flexibility to deal with crises.

"These important changes to the bylaws allowed NACo to provide for the organization in the event of a sudden financial need," said Past President Greg Cox, chairman of the Bylaws Committee.

"Did we have a lot of foresight or what? We could not have known then what we know now: That this fund would be implemented just four months

later with the coronavirus."

Meanwhile, additional policy resolutions beyond the 125 approved by the Board at the 2019 Annual Conference and the 36 interim resolutions passed at the 2020 Legislative Conference will be considered on an emergency-only basis after being vetted by policy steering committee chairs and NACo's executive committee.

With challenges related to travel and large gatherings across the country, NACo is expanding access to its High Performance Leadership Academy, the 12-week online professional development program designed primarily for frontline county employees.

"We expected that perhaps a lot of counties wouldn't have the time, but the opposite has been happening," said NACo Chief Financial Officer Anna Amselle.

"We're looking at some of the other ways we can get some of the 1,700 other counties that haven't taken advantage of the scholarship, into the program." **CN**

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

• **Kerwin Henderson** has joined NACo as justice program manager. Prior to joining NACo, he worked as a freelance consultant for the U.S. Department of Justice and a senior associate at KPMG LLP. He earned a master's degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati and a bachelor's degree from Quincy University.



Henderson

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Food distributions combat hunger during pandemic

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

With 30 million Americans filing for unemployment because of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are facing another challenge that comes with losing their jobs: Putting food on the table.

"There's nothing more important than providing food," Essex County, N.J. Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, Jr. said. "People have to eat."

In Essex County, a diverse community made up of both suburban and urban areas including Newark, DiVincenzo said the county's unemployment rate is always higher than the national average.

"We have people in Essex County who are hurting very much," he said. "Not only do we have homeless, we have people who are laid off. We have people who have been laid off for the first time probably ever in their life."

To help county residents who are struggling purchasing food, the county is holding a series of emergency drive-through food distributions.

During the first distribution, the county partnered with Community Food Bank, an anti-hunger organization. DiVincenzo and his staff placed over 2,000 boxes of food — the equivalent of 40 meals per week — in the trunk of each recipient's car.

Each box contained canned fruit and vegetables, spaghetti, shelf-stable milk, soup, tuna fish, oatmeal, peanut butter and other items.

During the first distribution, they had to turn cars away.

"At that time when I was there at the site, I knew that we had to continue this program," he said.

DiVincenzo is taking the free food distributions throughout Essex County and has held distributions in various communities with the plan to hold 10 in different locations. For the rest of the distributions, the county is purchasing food through vendors like Shop Rite and being reimbursed for the spending by the CARES Act.

"The people who were there say, 'thank you,' but you can see the look on their faces," he



Miami-Dade County Chairwoman Audrey Edmonson stands behind a table during a free food distribution event for residents as part of the county's efforts to provide food for those in need during the coronavirus pandemic. Photo courtesy of Miami-Dade County

described. "They're very much appreciative of what we're doing, but they don't want to be there. They'd rather be working and providing their way."

In Nassau County, N.Y., County Executive Laura Curran launched Nassau's Community Food Distribution Initiative to combat food insecurity issues on Long Island outside of New York City.

To hold the distributions, Curran set aside federal money that's reimbursable through the CARES Act to buy food to support Island Harvest, a non-profit with food banks and food pantries.

The county partnered with the organization to set up distribution sites to hand out food items which included meat, yogurt, dairy, fruit and vegetables, canned food and pasta — enough food for a typical family for one week.

Each distribution covers around 900 to 1,000 people, with one site even seeing 1,300 recipients with individuals standing in lines snaking around several blocks.

The county has held drives at multiple locations with plans for more.

"We're feeling the economic devastation here," she said. "We have a lot of small businesses...

a lot of mom and pop shops that can't operate right now and people aren't working."

In Nassau County, SNAP applications tripled in April compared to April 2019, according to Curran.

"It's going to take a long time to recover so the more the government can help get food to people, get resources where they need to go, that's why we're here," she said.

In Florida, officials in Miami-Dade County are sponsoring various food distribution events to help those dealing with food insecurity.

Chairwoman Audrey Edmonson partnered with two organizations, FarmShare and Feeding South Florida, to hold free food distributions as well as deliveries for county residents in need.

During the distributions, recipients drive through the opening of a gate where volunteers instruct them to pop their trunks, Edmonson said. The food is placed in their trunks with items including frozen beef, canned goods, bread, cheese, orange juice, fresh fruit, raisins and vegetables, among others.

"You name it, we have been serving it," she said.

One food drive distributed



Essex County, N.J. Executive Joseph DiVincenzo places food in a recipient's car during a food distribution event. County photo

meals to 500 families and delivered 120 meals. Another fed 700 families and completed 50 deliveries, according to Edmonson.

For deliveries, county trucks and county employees bring boxes of food to the elderly and disabled who have called and expressed concerns over obtaining food.

"I want to do these deliveries as often as we can because we do have elderly who are shut in and have not been leaving their homes and they have to eat as well," she said.

Edmonson said she noticed a difference with current food distributions reaching a different demographic of middle-class recipients.

"You have people who have been living check to check," she said. "Even if they had another month's worth of funding to pay

their bills, they're out of those funds now and that's why you're seeing the different categories of people coming in."

Edmonson's colleague Commissioner Joe Martinez has also sponsored food drives throughout the county with South Florida and Farm Share. For his first distribution, over 1,200 families received food.

"We are noticing that if we put the flyer out for a 9 a.m. start to the distribution, some people are lining up in their vehicles at 1 a.m., 2 a.m. with children," he said. "The indication of that was that people were hurting really badly."

Martinez emphasized the important role of county officials who are familiar with their districts and aware of areas facing food insecurity.

"It's ground level roots helping out," he said. **CN**

Western governors pivot on community development

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Ravalli County, Mont. Commissioner Greg Chilcott assumed the presidency of NACo's Western Interstate Region, while Malheur County, Ore. Judge Dan Joyce was elected second vice president in a remote WIR Board Meeting May 13, in lieu of the cancelled WIR Conference scheduled for Mariposa County, Calif.

Jim Ogsbury, executive director of the Western Governors' Association, updated WIR attendees on the status of "Re-imagining of the Rural West," the WGA initiative undertaken by WGA Chairman and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum (R).

"The initiative's findings and recommendations will inform our work in this space for years to come," Ogsbury said.

Ogsbury noted that the forced cancelation of a March workshop in Wasco County, Ore. and subsequent remote meetings saw a boost in partic-

ipation, garnering 170 attendees, compared to the 60 who had planned on attending the in-person meeting. WGA has been conducting workshops to gather information for a final report, which will be presented in June. Previous workshops were held in North Dakota, New Mexico and Idaho. With the in-person workshop cancelation, WGA pivoted to create webinars, along with adapting the material to reflect the challenges posed by the pandemic.

"The programming is almost exclusively on COVID impacts on rural communities," he said, though the changes forced by the pandemic reflected many conclusions.

The initiative will focus on what governors can do to enhance economic opportunity, create entrepreneurial ecosystems, encourage rural communities as a place to do remote work and develop existing rural workforces. The effort will dovetail with a previous WGA initiative on workforce development.

The report's findings will represent a pivot in conventional thinking.

"For a generation, economic development meant one thing — creating jobs," Ogsbury said. "And now it means something more than that — it means creating attractive communities that the entrepreneur or the remote worker can bring his or her job to."

"Rural development efforts should prioritize those investments that enhance quality of life and there's no formula or cookie cutter approach," he noted.

That is not to say job creation is not important.

"We want to know how we can help rural communities to leverage their natural assets to participate fully in the global economy," Ogsbury said.

The pandemic's forced closure of schools and limited medical interactions have underscored the need for better connectivity, for solutions such as distance learning and tele-

health, said Ogsbury. Public investment in high-speed internet service is necessary where private providers have failed.

"Broadband is no longer an amenity, it is an absolute necessity," he said.

The report will also address community building, touching on leadership, water, food, healthcare, housing and placemaking.

"Community is possibly the most important pillar with respect to sustaining living rural communities," he said. Beyond the obvious qualities for a good place to live, he noted, "it's also access to the arts and sports and less tangible qualities like leadership, civic pride and opportunity for engagement."

In the next year, WGA will launch the Western Economic Prosperity Roundtable to follow themes of change among Western governors.

"For a generation, WGA policy was almost exclusively focused on natural resource issues," he said. "In recent years,

governors have adopted resolutions to economic issues and ecosystems, healthcare, trade, cybersecurity, broadband connectivity. So the Economic Prosperity Roundtable will be a mechanism that we'll use to perform work in the economic development space."

"This should be especially salient to counties because we're going to invest this platform with economic expertise, and the competence to work more data issues and analytics. This will better position us to work with the counties to collaborate on the development and promotion of socioeconomic data."

Though WGA has not done much work with tribes in the West, that is changing, as governors get more involved in the cause of missing and murdered indigenous women. The organization is assembling a coalition of state-tribal liaisons to identify that and other common issues of cross-boundary interest, though WGA doesn't have policy yet in that area. **CN**



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More than 800,000 local government jobs lost in April

by Jonathan Harris
and Zitao Wang

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) May 8 released its monthly jobs report for April, revealing a loss of more than 800,000 local government jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit every sector, causing a total loss of 20.5 million jobs and an unemployment rate of 14.7 percent. These economic shocks are impacting county governments with unprecedented challenges. Counties are furloughing workers, pausing non-essential capital projects and reworking devastated budgets while maintaining a commitment to providing key services to residents.

County governments employ more than 3.6 million workers — more than one out of every 100 people living in the United States works for a county. Although not every job in the 800,000 jobs lost in the local government sector was from a county government, this loss represents a major impact to the U.S. labor market and demonstrates the fiscal impact of COVID-19 on counties.

The 800,000 jobs lost in local government includes 469,000 jobs lost (a 6 percent decrease) from county and city education systems, a natural result of school closings during the pandemic. The other 332,000 non-education jobs lost (a 5 percent decrease) from both county and city governments include job categories from law enforcement officers to healthcare practitioners, social workers, maintenance crews, construction workers, administrative support and more. For all government workers (federal, state and local), the unemployment rate rose to 9.4 percent — a massive increase from last April's (2019) government worker unemployment rate of just 1.6 percent.

Counties anticipate a \$144 billion impact to their budgets through the end of FY2021, including \$30 billion in increased expenditures and \$114 billion in lost revenue. As a result, many counties have already begun furloughing or laying off employees. In fact, over 60 counties — small, medium-sized and



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

large — have been forced to furlough or lay off up to 50 percent of the county workforce due to COVID-19 budget impacts.

More than 36.7 million people filed for unemployment insurance claims since mid-March. Due to the unusually high volume of claims, this estimate has the potential to be much higher once all claims have been processed. Furthermore, self-employed residents and contractors are ineligible for unemployment insurance, further depressing this statistic.

The leisure and hospitality industries have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a loss of 7.7 million jobs and an unemployment rate of nearly 40 percent in the sector. Many county economies that rely on tourism, therefore, are especially feeling the impact of the pandemic in terms of shuttered businesses, unemployed residents and lost county revenue. Sales tax revenue has dropped significantly — both what is collected by counties and what is collected by states and shared with local governments.

The unemployment rates for minority groups rose to an especially high level: 16.7 percent for African Americans and 18.9 percent for Hispanics, representing a stronger impact on counties with higher minority populations.

Across all groups, except for

African Americans, average salaries reached historic highs, a natural result of high unemployment rates in the lower-paid jobs. Average hourly earnings for the private sector increased by \$1.34, representing substantial job loss among lower-paid workers and causing concern for counties with particularly high levels of inequality.

Finally, “marginally attached workers” — those who are willing and able to work, but not actively seeking employment — increased by 855,000 in April, reaching its current level of 2.3 million. This increase reflects a great potential growth in the labor force when the country is ready to return to work and opportunities for employment again become available.

The economic strain of business closures and stay-at-home orders have trickled down to the county level.

Counties face revenue shortfalls, rising costs and tough decisions to balance budgets, including adjusting the size of the county workforce while continuing to deliver essential services to residents.

Check out the full April jobs report from BLS here: [bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empst.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empst.pdf). **CN**

Jonathan Harris is associate research director with the NACo County Innovations Lab. Zitao Wang is an intern in the department.

GET TO KNOW...

Jefferson County, Tenn.

Welcome, Jefferson County, Tenn.

Jefferson County is located in eastern Tennessee and is known for its scenery, historical preservation and downtown communities. The county seat of Dandridge is the second oldest town in the state and named for Martha Dandridge Washington, George Washington's wife. The county was established in 1792 by William Blount, the governor of the southwest territory.

Known as the Lakeside of the Smokies, Jefferson County has two lakes — the Douglas and the Cherokee — and easy access to the Smoky Mountains providing an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities. The county also offers residents and visitors a strong local arts scene with concerts, historic venues, art festivals and main street shopping.

The Bush's Visitor center is located in the county and explores the history of Bush's Beans, where visitors can walk through a giant replica of a baked beans can. The museum houses the original A.J. Bush & Company general store founded in 1897.

Decontamination site used for EMS vehicles

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

The last thing on a patient's mind when being transported in an ambulance is whether it has been disinfected. But for county emergency medical services (EMS) departments, this lands at the top of the list during a global pandemic.

The COVID-19 outbreak brings an array of challenges for efficiently decontaminating transport units to keep county residents safe while ensuring vehicles are available to respond to additional emergency calls.

Calvert County, Md., established a decontamination site for EMS vehicles that takes only 10 to 15 minutes to complete a full disinfection process.

"Early into the pandemic we identified a need to ensure that we could efficiently, quickly and thoroughly decontaminate EMS transport units," Public Safety Deputy Director Al Jeffery said.

The site aims to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 for first responders by decontaminating ambulances with a disinfectant that meets EPA criteria. After every transport, atomizing foggers, spray bottles and electrostatic sprayers spread the disinfectant throughout the ambulance, on stretchers, door handles, in the driver's cab area, and all other touch points both inside and outside of a vehicle including steering wheels, seats, carpets, floors and inside the patient care compartment.

"We had one of our fire departments do swab tests after decontamination and it shows it's 100 percent clean of any COVID-19 virus," Jeffery said.

Prior to the decontamination site, EMS workers would sanitize vehicles by hand after each transport. They would drop the patient off at the hospital, get back into the possibly contaminated unit wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and drive back to the firehouse to avoid exposing themselves.

"Imagine driving with their gloves and their gowns and their face masks back to the firehouse," he said.

When they returned to the firehouse, they would have to decontaminate everything by



A vehicle is decontaminated at the vehicle decontamination site in Calvert County, Md. where emergency services vehicles can be disinfected within 15 minutes to minimize COVID-19 transmission. Photo courtesy of Calvert County, Md.

hand with spray bottles, cloths and an alcohol-based sanitizer.

Jeffery said prior to the new decontamination site, the turn-around time from the hospital to the firehouse which involved decontaminating the unit, taking off PPE and properly disposing of it, EMS workers decontaminating themselves and then getting the unit back in service would take between two and three hours. The county has an average of 20 EMS calls per day.

"This lets us get that unit back in service in just about two and a half hours sooner so it's available for immediate service after that," Jeffery said.

The site is located next to the CalvertHealth Medical Center near the emergency department entrance and is open 24/7.

There is a tent for decontamination gear with trash receptacles for hazardous materials where crews can drop off equipment. A 25-foot camper houses staff during shifts and there are areas for crews to remove personal protective equipment and wait for vehicles to be sterilized.

The Department of Public Safety contracted with Pristine Inc., a Maryland-based company, to provide the decontamination service and has worked with CalvertHealth Medical Center to set up the site. The site has also been used for other county vehicles including police, fire, parks and recreation and department of public works.

"It's any vehicle where a COVID-positive employee or patient might have gotten into

the vehicle so we can ensure that that vehicle is decontaminated so we can continue to use it," Jeffery said.

He emphasized the difference between cleaning and disinfecting units.

"This is a decontamination process to kill any residual COVID-19 virus in the unit," he said. "Cleaning is a separate issue that the department still handles."

For other counties looking to establish decontamination sites, Jeffery advises getting multiple quotes from companies.

"The cost of this contract wasn't built in anybody's budget so we're identifying budgetary money to pay for this," he said.

Looking for a long-term solution, Jeffery sees decontamina-

tion units being built into all firehouses throughout the county.

"My planning section and logistics section will come up with a plan on how we can accomplish this type of decontamination in the firehouse," he said. "There's ways to do that — put in new gear and a type of decontamination equipment so when they get back, they can decontaminate their unit there."

While this may take longer than 15 to 20 minutes, Jeffery said it would cut down on the cost and create a permanent solution to ensure units are disinfected.

"It would ensure our units are decontaminated, ready for use and safe for not just the public to use, but our first responders to use," he said. **CN**

Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award

The new Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award program, presented by CivicCMS, will launch June 1, the company announced.

The program is designed to shine a spotlight on a growing national problem: The decline in the availability of people willing to serve as civic volunteers in their counties and municipalities. This problem has more significance today than ever before.

Research conducted in 2018 by the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland, showed the percentage of citizens volunteering in rural areas dropped for 12 straight years beginning in 2003, from a high of 30.9 percent that year to 25.3 percent by 2015.

CivicCMS, part of the CivicPlus platform of integrated technology for local governments, is underwriting the Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award.

The program will recognize the top 100 nominees who fill critical roles on county or municipal boards, councils and committees, serve as volunteer firefighters, EMTs, advisory

committees for libraries, recreation programs and more. The awards program is open to all counties, cities and townships with populations of 5,000 or less.

All localities served by the top 100 honorees will receive new CivicCMS websites (including a volunteer module to aid in future volunteer recruitment efforts) at no charge.

Localities represented by the top three national honorees will receive cash grants of \$10,000, \$7,500 and \$5,000 respectively.

Nominations will be judged by:

- the degree to which nominees' volunteer service has made lasting or meaningful impacts on the residents of their localities;
- the length of their service;
- the extent to which their service might be considered "above and beyond the call of duty";
- and, the extent to which their service would be recognized and valued by their peers and local government leaders.

The award program will be judged by Barton Russell Group professionals, each of whom

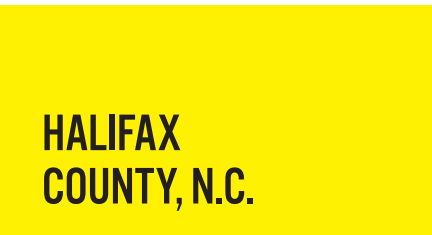
have been involved with designing, managing and/or evaluating leadership award and grant applications.

Joining NACo as co-sponsors of the award are the National Volunteer Fire Council, the National Association of Towns and Townships and Points of Light.

Nominators will be asked to describe their candidate's compelling story of local volunteerism and its positive impact on their community.

Winners of the award will be announced in the fall. For more information visit www.civic-volunteer.com.

The Barton Russell Group is managing the Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award. BRG has built several national award and grant programs including the Best Small Towns in America contest, the American Hometown Leaders Award and the America's Best Communities competition. BRG was founded by Bart Russell, a nationally recognized expert on "everything small town." One former U.S. president called him "the voice of small town America."



The county seal for Halifax County, N.C. features the Burgess Law Office. The original structure for the office was built in 1808 and passed through several owners until 1821 when acquired by Thomas Burgess, who served in the state House of Representatives and Senate. In 1916, the Daughters of the Amer-



ican Revolution purchased and restored the property with assistance from the county and the North Carolina General Assembly.

Peggy Phillips, the wife of former county manager Neal Phillips, designed the seal around the late '80s or early '90s to be used as the county's letterhead. There is no formal documentation officially adopting the seal.



The Burgess House is also known as The Constitution House based on a local tradition that members of the first state Constitutional Convention met there in 1776 to draft the state's first constitution.

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



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MONEYMATTERS

Strategies for Balancing the Budget

by Mike Mucha

As county governments begin to address large revenue shortfalls and significant gaps in their budgets, commissioners, executives, finance and budget staff and leaders from across every department in your organization will need to work together to consider both the short and long-term implications of budget reduction strategies.

GFOA has developed a 12-step guide to financial recovery as part of our overall fiscal first aid resources (available online at www.gfoa.org/ffa). These resources recognize the various stages of financial distress and highlight potential treatments that county governments can take. However, these treatments are not without risk. In solving the immediate budget crisis, leaders must make sure they also don't jeopardize their long-term financial stability or hurt the prospects for financial recovery.

In early March, when the pandemic first caused shutdown orders and forced many to work from home, governments had to take short-term action to reduce spending, manage cash flow and identify how to maintain critical operations. As the economy starts to re-open, and as governments begin to grasp both the depth and longevity of this financial crisis, more severe budget-balancing strategies will be necessary.

Not every government will be in the same situation, however. With county governments getting revenue from a mixture of different sources and with the different level of impact that COVID-19 has had on different locations, the required severity of budget treatments will differ. This article highlights several common fiscal first aid treatments and the risks to consider for each. Treatments are categorized by type but are presented in no particular order. GFOA also understands that every local government may have unique risk factors or situations in your community



to address so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to budget balancing.

Personnel costs

For many governments, personnel costs can make up 70 percent or more of total expenses, so any discussion about closing a large budget shortfall must include salary cost savings. Governments, however, can use different strategies such as freezing vacant positions, better managing overtime or address health care costs before considering more severe measures like wage freezes, hiring freezes, reduction in hours or ultimately layoffs.

Caution: With riskier approaches (furloughs, hiring freeze or wage freeze), governments risk driving away their more talented staff. The broad nature of these programs often results in productivity losses greater than cost savings, large drop in employee morale and tendency for staff to begin sac-

rificing organizational goals for personal or department gains.

Purchasing practices

Vendors and suppliers present another opportunity for savings. Governments can use this opportunity to renegotiate or rebid contracts, audit routine purchases, or eliminate non-essential contracts. However, the largest improvement that governments can make with purchasing practice is to strictly adhere to policy. Many governments have purchasing policies that require use of purchase orders, competitive bids or board approval. By routing all transactions through a purchasing process, spending can be tracked and staff can receive timely information to monitor the current budget situation. In times of financial crisis, it is essential that managers have current and accurate information for budget monitoring.

Caution: Purchasing policies

that require approvals should not overburden transactions with unnecessary approvals. Managers must be allowed to manage and putting unreasonable approval processes in place for all transactions will only increase the costs of operations.

Asset management

Capital projects and large asset or equipment purchases (including software) can present opportunities for savings and are likely very visible examples of current spending. Strategies like extending the useful life of assets, deferring maintenance or postponing projects can provide savings opportunities.

Caution: In the short term, these strategies can provide relief, but as a long-term option, they present significant risks. Extending asset beyond its useful life or deferring maintenance can lead to higher long-term costs or drop in service level from non-functioning equip-

ment. In addition, delayed projects may also delay opportunities for efficiency gains (for example from software modernization efforts).

Sharing resources

Governments have a tendency to operate as a collection of siloed departments. Significant saving opportunities can come from sharing more resources and greater collaboration. For example, unused equipment can be transferred to another department, inventory can be jointly managed or staff can transition to assist with peak work periods. In addition, governments may find opportunities to partner with other governments, non-profits or private organizations. For example, governments can work to borrow large equipment from neighboring jurisdictions rather than purchasing the asset or pursue managed competition opportunities for common services.

Caution: Turning over control to another entity or becoming dependent on another organization to provide services adds risk for service delivery. Governments should make sure to work on proper service level agreements or MOUs when sharing resources.

Revenue enhancement

For most counties, the primary cause of the financial crisis will be loss of revenue, not out of control expenses. While actions geared to increasing revenue may be more difficult, options do exist. Governments can work to ensure any federal or state aid that they are eligible for is claimed. Often, these programs have complex requirements and limits. Understanding these rules is important for compliance. Governments may also have opportunities to explore new options for increasing fee revenue or examine and improve existing billing and collection procedures.

Caution: More aggressive bill collection policies should be

evaluated with larger community goals in mind. The collection methods used in the private sector may not treat constituents in a way that reflects well on government, especially during an economic downturn when many people are vulnerable


To help in selecting budget treatment options, GFOA has developed a scoresheet that can be used to evaluate different options <http://www.gfoa.org/ffa-evaluation-criteria-checklist>. However, some strategies should be avoided or explored with extreme caution due to the potential for more damaging long-term effects.

Strategies to avoid

The following budgeting gimmicks should be avoided and can cause long-term consequences for your government that make financial recovery that much more difficult.

- **Dismantling internal controls:** The risk of fraudulent activity generally increases during financial crisis. While some efficiencies may be possible by reducing basic internal controls, it is not worth the financial risk.
- **Underfunding liabilities:** Failing to maintain payments for pension contributions and other future liabilities has long-term consequences. Not only does it add those costs to a future period, the government loses out on investment income, and often creates additional challenges for bond ratings and public perception.
- **Defaulting on debt payments:** In addition to violating your contract with investors, failing to pay creditors would make it all but impossible to borrow in the future.
- **Early retirement programs:** Early retirement incentives seem like a straightforward way to reduce more senior and higher paid employees. In reality, realizing savings is complicated and difficult. Governments must find ways to replace staff and deal with large loss in knowledge. At the same time, retiree costs are shifted to the pension system adding additional costs to the government.
- **Pension obligation bonds:** Pension obligation bonds are complex financing instruments

that involve converting pension liabilities to debt where proceeds are invested at a rate (ideally) above the rate on the bonds. However, if investment proceeds fail to cover the cost of the bonds, not only does government still have cost of pension liabilities, but now also has additional debt to repay. To be effective, this strategy requires almost perfect timing of the market. When not done correctly, this has led to some of the more well-known government bankruptcies over the past 15 years.

For more information or additional resources to assist please visit GFOA's resource centers for fiscal first aid (www.gfoa.org/ffa) and COVID-19 response issues (www.gfoa.org/covid19). This article has been adopted from GFOA's two recently released "Balancing the Budget" research papers available at www.gfoa.org/ffa. For questions, please contact research@gfoa.org. 

Mike Mucha is deputy executive director of the Government Finance Officers Association.

WORD SEARCH

SUMMIT COUNTY, Utah

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

- **COALVILLE:** The county seat of Summit County is Coalville, named for coal found there.
- **COURTHOUSE:** The Summit County courthouse was built from 1903 to 1904; it was the third courthouse for the county.
- **FILM:** The Sundance Film Festival is held in Park City, the largest city in the county.
- **GILBERT:** The highest spot in the county is Gilbert Peak, at 13,448 feet high.
- **HISTORY:** The county was founded in 1861.
- **MINING:** The area's first economic driver was silver mining; there are over 1,000 miles of tunnels under the ski slopes today.
- **NEWSPAPER:** The weekly *Park Record* was founded in 1880 in Park City, after silver prospectors flocked to the area.

- **OLYMPICS:** The county was home to ski and snowboarding events in the 2002 Olympics.
- **POPULATION:** The population of the county is about 42,000, although more than 500,000 tourists visit the area annually.
- **REDFORD:** Actor Robert Redford's Sundance Institute has presented the Sundance Film Festival, which attracts thousands to the county each January, since 1985.
- **RESERVOIR:** Echo Reservoir is a popular state park in the county and measures 1,450 acres.
- **SKI:** The county is home to numerous ski resorts.
- **SUMMIT:** The county got its name from its location in the mountains.
- **TROUT:** Trout-fishing is popular at the county's lakes, rivers and creeks.
- **WILDLIFE:** Summit County is home to moose, elk, coyotes, cougars, snakes, pheasant and deer.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

ZACH FRIEND

Board Member
Supervisor
Santa Cruz County, Calif.

Number of years involved in NACo: Seven

Years in public service: 17

Occupation: County supervisor

Education: BA with honors in history from the University of California, Santa Cruz; master's in Public Policy from Georgetown University

The hardest thing I've ever done: Try to explain to my 5-year-old son that Oreos aren't a food group.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: My grandfather, Alberta Hunter (jazz singer), MLK Jr.

A dream I have is to: Travel throughout Highway 61 and the surrounding areas in Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana and more — eating amazing food, meeting amazing people, seeing amazing small towns and enjoying amazing music.

You'd be surprised to learn that: I have been in bands that have toured and had songs on the radio, TV, film and written a book that became an Amazon bestseller on messaging and communications.

My favorite way to relax is: Spend time on a beach here in California.



Friend

I'm most proud of: My son. He's 5 and absolutely perfect in every way.

Every morning I read: The local paper of whatever town I'm in.

My favorite meal is: Anything with avocado. I'm from California, after all.

My pet peeve is: The mosquito. I struggle to see their value although they find great value in me.

My motto is: Our future is not yet written.

The last book I read was: *American Character* by Colin Woodard and *Highway 61: Crossroads on the Blues Highway* by Derek Bright (read them at the same time).

My favorite movie is: *Casablanca*

My favorite music is: Jazz, jump blues, indie rock (yes, I know it's an odd mix...)

My favorite U.S. president is: Abraham Lincoln

My county is a NACo member because: NACo gives a powerful and equal voice to the needs of counties regardless of size, location or national prominence.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done:

I was invited to a handful of Major League Baseball tryouts but as you can see it didn't quite work out...



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BRIGHT IDEAS | CHARLESTON COUNTY, S.C.

NASA Partners with County to Boost Economy

PROBLEM:

A lack of high-paying jobs for county residents with the cost of living increasing.

SOLUTION:

Use partnerships to connect companies to local businesses and larger contractors.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

What does NASA have to do with local government?

Charleston County, S.C. Deputy Clerk of Council Kristen Hess found herself frequently answering the question posed to her by friends and co-workers after the county partnered with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 2018.

After Charleston County staff learned of NASA's interest in connecting with local businesses at NACo's 2017 Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, county staff connected with NASA to discuss technology transfer opportunities. NASA recommended partnering with the Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama, which was looking to promote their space launch system and establish contracts with local vendors.

This led to Charleston County's "Launch with NASA" program, which promotes economic development and educational outreach partnerships to attract businesses to provide better wages, promote STEM careers and help connect governmental organizations.

The program launched with two inaugural events: Launch with NASA Small Business Forum and Launch Your School Year with NASA STEM Exposition.

Both events were simultaneously held at the Charleston Area Convention Center.

At the business forum, small businesses discovered technology transfer opportunities and



Students participate in the Launch Your School Year with NASA STEM Exposition at the Charleston Area Convention Center as part of the Launch with NASA program in Charleston County, S.C. Photo by Jen Matto

ways to contract with NASA as a supplier, subcontractor or service provider.

"We never planned for any of this," Charleston County's Chief Innovation Officer Kevin Limehouse said.

"We were just excited for the tech transfer stuff and then they said, 'Hey, what about this business expo?'"

With more than 250 attendees and exhibitors, participants explored opportunities to work with NASA and visit with other government agencies and defense contractors.

The program brought together both NASA's mission to connect with businesses and the county's need to increase economic and educational opportunities.

"What the business expo was offering to our citizens was for these local mom and pop shops to have the opportunities to have these big contracts with NASA or their contractors," Hess said.

In conjunction with the Small Business Forum, the Launch Your School Year with NASA STEM Expo took place at the exhibit hall next door and attracted more than 1,200 students.

Companies that participated in the business forum were also able to attend the STEM expo.

"There was so much energy and so much enthusiasm for the kids and the people who were the exhibitors," said Clare Petersen, executive assistant for the deputy administrator of Public Services.

'It created partnerships that never existed before.'

— Kevin Limehouse

"It really was just a very inspiring place and what we found was that the businesspeople were leaving their event and checking it all out and playing with the toys and interacting with the exhibits."

Students visited different booths and met with NASA staff, participated in STEM hands-on activities and heard from retired astronaut Donald Thomas, who gave presentations as students rotated in and out of the auditorium.

The goal of the expo was to reach students who might not otherwise know about STEM careers.

Hess helped plan the STEM

component of the event and coordinated both the business forum and STEM expo taking place at the same time.

"NASA liked the setup so much that they would start suggesting that be done at other events that they held throughout the United States," she said.

The STEM exposition was a collaboration among NASA's Marshall STEM Engagement, Charleston County School District's Career and Technology Education, local agencies, businesses, military branches and colleges.

The county received contributions from various organizations to hold the event. Charleston County School District provided transportation for the students, the Charleston Area Convention Center provided two exhibit halls at no cost, the Sheriff's Office provided three officers to guard moon rocks displayed during the event and the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau covered costs for the hospitality events.

Deputy County Administrator for Finance Doug Wurster said the county only needed to use a small portion of eco-

nomie development money to fund the event because of sponsorships and registration fees businesses paid to attend the forum.

As part of the weeklong events, the county also hosted the NASA Prime Contractor Council Meeting where the Charleston County Economic Director presented to NASA's top contractor about the economic outlook for the Charleston area.

Thomas, the retired astronaut, visited schools in underserved communities to discuss his experience in space.

"NASA was the catalyst. It was a great thing and it brought so many people together and created partnerships that never existed before that should have," Limehouse said.


"It has perpetuated the county to continue to seek out new partnerships and work with people even more."

Because of the 2018 event's success with the Marshall Flight Center, NASA wanted to turn the county's planned 2020 event with the flight center into a NASA regional conference.

The event was planned for March, but was moved to March 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The conference itself is growing both in size and scope and we're so proud and happy for that and it's going to be everything that 2018 was and more," Limehouse said.

"I just don't think anybody realized how much NASA has to offer to local governments and to the schools and just how much they want to work with everybody," Hess added.

For any counties interested in learning more about Charleston County's NASA partnership, contact Kevin Limehouse at klimelhouse@charlestoncounty.org. 

Charleston County's "Launch with NASA" program is the recipient of a 2019 NACo Achievement Award in the Community and Economic Development category.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

• The **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a basic **income program for youths transitioning out of foster care**. The county will now provide youths with \$1,000 cash payments each month from June 2020 to May 2021, the *San José Spotlight* reported. The pilot program aims to provide stability for youths who are trying to find housing and jobs after they leave the foster care system. Mentors will check in with young adults through the program to discuss their finances.



FLORIDA

• The Sheriff's Office in **PI-NELLAS COUNTY** has created a dashboard to **check the capacity of beaches**, parking lots and bridges following their re-opening during the COVID-19 outbreak. The tool is available on the weekends and is continually updated, ABC Action News Tampa Bay reported. In some situations when beaches reach capacity, the sheriff's office has enforced closures to non-residents to ensure social distancing rules are being followed. Deputies continue to patrol the beaches during the week when the dashboard is not active.

• **ST. JOHNS COUNTY** launched a new program to support the local community by encouraging county residents to shop or dine in the county. The **"Shop and Dine St. Johns County"** program includes a new website with interactive maps and information on businesses and restaurants, 104.5 WOKV Jacksonville's News and Talk reported. Businesses can submit information online to be added to the program.

GEORGIA

DEKALB COUNTY is transforming its Summer Youth Employment Program into the **Virtual Career Academy** because of the coronavirus pandemic. The virtual program will pro-

vide career development, life skills and job readiness training for 850 young individuals who will receive \$9 per hour for learning online, *Patch* reported. The county partnered with DeKalb County School District, Georgia Piedmont Technical College and other public and private partners to establish the virtual academy.

HAWAII

KAUAI COUNTY's employees are seeing **changes to their work week**. Employees are now working 10 hours per day, four days per week to temporarily reduce government employee movement until the county's disaster proclamation is lifted or when schools resume, *The Garden Island* re-

ported. County employees will work 6:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and have Fridays off.

INDIANA

• **BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY** commissioners voted to spend nearly \$20,000 on two high-accuracy **temperature screening kits** for public buildings. The kits will set off an alarm if an individual enters a building with a high temperature, *The Republic* reported. The county will place one machine at the courthouse entrance and the other at the back of the county's government office building used by county employees.

• Through a new program in the **JACKSON COUNTY** Jail,



inmates are **sewing masks** for members of the community. The jail has received donations of supplies and sewing machines to make the masks. Other jail programs have been suspended because of the COVID-19 outbreak, WHAS 11 reported.

KANSAS

The health department in **SALINA COUNTY** is asking commissioners to participate



FLORIDA

• The **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY** Animal Services Department partnered with companies in Florida to hold a **drive-through pet food bank**. The county's third pet food distribution was held in partnership with Miami HEAT, Ultimate Software, the City of Homestead and Miami-Dade County Animal Services. Both the Miami HEAT and Ultimate Software donated \$10,000 to provide food for the county's pet owners. The pet food bank served 530 families and distributed almost 30,000 pounds of food. Photo by Flora Beal, Miami-Dade County Animal Services



CALIFORNIA

• **COVID-19 testing is now available** to all individuals who live or work in **NAPA COUNTY**. Those who are asymptomatic can be tested for the virus at a drive-through testing site at the Napa Valley Expo. One of the indicators for counties to start opening in California is that two people must be tested daily for every 1,000 residents, an equivalent to 280 people per day in Napa County, according to the *Napa Valley Register*. Those who wish to be tested must make an appointment online or over the phone. The testing capacity is 450 per day.

Photo by Barry Eberling, Napa Valley Register



in a **mosquito surveillance** pilot project through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Through the pilot program, the health department will collect, package and ship mosquitoes to the University of Kansas, the *Salina Post* reported. The state's Department of Health and Environment will report back to the county with information on what types of mosquitoes they are and any diseases they carry.

MICHIGAN

MACOMB COUNTY created a new **webpage with resources for businesses** that are re-opening following closures from the COVID-19 pandemic. The website includes information on re-opening guidelines, a directory of PPE suppliers and information on access to printable signs created by the county. Macomb County's Planning and Economic Development staff counseled 1,200 businesses and distributed more than \$900,000 through a grant program to local companies, ClickOnDetroit reported.

NEW JERSEY

- Frontline workers from a **BERGEN COUNTY** hospital received a **free car sanitization** courtesy of the county's sheriff's deputies. At a local carwash, the deputies sprayed personal cars with "fogging devices" that produce a disinfecting mist to help sanitize the vehicles, in hopes of preventing workers from bringing the coronavirus home with them.

- MERCER COUNTY** Executive Brian Hughes cautioned residents about **Internet scams** looking to prey on unemployed workers facing hardships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.

"With people looking for

job opportunities while sheltering at home, Internet employment scams have become more prevalent," Hughes said. "Please stay vigilant and do not fall victim to phishing campaigns and other unscrupulous activities."

The New Jersey COVID-19 Fraud Task Force, a joint federal-state effort to investigate and prosecute unlawful and misleading activities related to COVID-19, has provided recommendations to avoid common COVID-19-related scams. Residents are encouraged to report possible misconduct through a hotline established by the National Center for Disaster Fraud at (866) 720-5721.

NEW YORK

- CAYUGA COUNTY** has held **drive-through COVID-19 testing clinics** for essential workers and their household members. Essential workers include, but are not limited to, grocery store workers, convenience and hardware store employees, restaurant workers, first responders and healthcare workers.

- Healthy Food for All, a non-profit program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of **TOMPKINS COUNTY**, will partner with local farms to provide over **600 boxes of fresh locally grown produce** to residents in need, in the face of travel challenges, grocery store supply issues and health issues that could make shoppers high-risk for COVID-19 susceptibility.



MONTANA

A one-of-a-kind lounge in **CASCADE COUNTY** re-opened amid the COVID-19 outbreak after initially being denied by the county's health department. The Sip 'N Dip Lounge is famous for its mermaids — now **mask-wearing mermaids**— who swim around a tank and can be seen by patrons throughout the establishment. When bars and restaurants re-opened in the state, restrictions remained on pools. The lounge's owner contacted the county health department which denied the request to allow mermaids in the tank, KRTV reported. After reaching the governor's office, the owner was told that the mermaid pool could reopen as long as social distancing guidelines are followed— meaning one mermaid in the tank at a time. Photo by Tom Wylie, KRTV

- WASHINGTON COUNTY** Sheriff Sgt. Tim Carroll is teaching the county's first-ever **handgun safety class via video conference**. Until the pandemic, the only one way to get qualified to get a pistol permit was by attending an in-person class, typically held with 40 students, which are now on hold. Sheriff Jeff Murphy got permission from a county judge to hold classes this way, to prevent a backlog during the pandemic.

OHIO

CUYAHOGA COUNTY will

be holding a weeklong **virtual job fair** with Ohio Means Jobs. The coronavirus crisis has caused 120,000 people in the county to file for unemployment benefits. The county will also team with the nonprofit organization PCs for People to provide 1,000 job seekers with computers, hotspots and three months of internet access to assist during their job search. The county's SkillUp program will conduct online job skills training for the 1,000 people who receive computers to help them apply for jobs while being properly prepared for their work.

TEXAS

HARRIS COUNTY Commissioners voted to put \$15 million into a **coronavirus relief fund** for residents who are falling through the cracks of federal relief efforts. That money will be used to help poor families, undocumented residents and other targeted populations pay for rent, utilities and other needs, Commissioner Rodney Ellis told *Community Impact*. The fund will be managed by the Greater Houston Community Foundation and United Way. Ellis said he wanted to make sure relief funding was disbursed with an "equity lens" to ensure no one is overlooked in the recovery effort.

To be eligible for funding, an individual must be a resident of the county and must be living in a household making below 70 percent of the federal Area Median Income. Individuals are also eligible if they qualify for a number of federal assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid or the National School Lunch Program. Domestic violence survivors and foster children who have aged out of the system are also eligible.

WASHINGTON

Although **KING COUNTY** has issued a directive requiring face coverings be worn in pub-

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NEVADA

CLARK COUNTY Commissioner Lawrence Weekly held a **mail ballot drop-off parade** for the June primary. More than 100 cars swung by the post office on North MLK Boulevard to hand their envelopes to Weekly and other volunteers, so they could put them in the mailbox.

Weekly said he wanted to make sure everybody exercises their right to vote.

"I always do a get out early vote type event, and today makes no exception. We want to make sure even during this pandemic that all Nevadans take advantage of this opportunity," he said. "It's unfortunate that we have to go this route, but whatever it takes to make sure that we're safe."

the HR DOCTOR

by Stephenie Overman

If there's one thing managers are learning from the coronavirus crisis, it's that working from home doesn't work well for everyone.

Employees who have made that transition are working fewer hours per day than they normally do, with more than 30 percent of respondents saying that even during the hours they are working, they are less productive than usual, according to a survey of U.S. employees by Digital.com and the market research firm YouGov.

Almost 20 percent of survey respondents said that they are somewhat less productive than usual, and an additional 10.4 percent said they are much less productive. Most employees indicated that they were not working a full day, with 66.3 percent saying that they are getting less than 8 hours of actual work done while working from the home.

One of the main factors contributing to the dip in productivity, according to the researchers, may be the newness of the situation itself. Nearly 54 percent of survey respondents said this is their first time working from home. Added to that is the anxiety about COVID-19 and the fact that many workers had to make the change suddenly.

It can be difficult to spot signs of burnout in remote workers, according to business coach Mike Goldman. "You've got to look out for personality shifts when you're communicating with team members remotely. It's hard when you're not seeing employees in the hallways or in more casual

Coach Remote Workers to Avoid Burnout

conversations."

If an employee working from home seems to need less attention than usual "that may seem like a good thing, but it's not," said Goldman, who is author of the books "Performance Breakthrough" and "Breakthrough Leadership Team." "Sometimes there's a subtle personality change. Is the person more quiet than usual, normally collaborative but not now? You might see a change in frequency of contact. Are you not hearing from someone?"

When a manager notices differences like that, "you've got to jump on it. It's hard to do, it's not an easy conversation," he said, but any decreases in productivity or missed deadlines must be addressed. "It's easy these days to let people off the hook but you need to hold people accountable."

To hold employees accountable, without coming across as harsh during hard times, Goldman recommended continuously working to create an environment where people feel comfortable.

"People don't want to share that stuff. You have to show your own vulnerability. Show you are a human being. Share that you're having problems too. Admit that sometimes you're struggling," he said.

Being a good coach doesn't mean you can solve all of an employee's problems, Goldman continued. It does mean "being understanding, showing empathy but still holding people accountable. Approach someone and talk with them about what you see. Ask questions to get to the heart of the problem. Ask how you can help."

This concerned approach doesn't just pay off in the short run, according to Goldman. "It not only helps people get through this time — this is the



time when relationships are going to be made or broken. If you don't show empathy, when the unemployment rate goes down that person will be gone. You can make your relationship with your team stronger so that on the other side of all this people are going to be even more loyal."

Working from home doesn't have to lead to distraction and burnout. Eliminating the daily commute, as well as other work distractions, may help employees maintain or boost their productivity levels.

Erie County, N.Y. Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw boasted in a May 15 statement that "right now, our hard-working employees are getting more work done off-site than they are in our government offices."

The Office of Erie County Comptroller has 29 employees working in two divisions: audit and accounting.

An important factor in the office's success is that plans have been in place for a temporary shift to remote work if necessary, Mychajliw said, adding that officials thought "it would be a temporary office closure for a short-term emergency or weather-related incident."

Most of the work focused on improving technology so the entire office could work from remote locations. "As a result, the transition to working remotely due to the pandemic was virtually seamless," he said. "Our work productivity remains the same. As a matter of fact, some units are getting more work done working remotely than when they did sitting in the office."

In the accounting division, "vendor payments are being paid in a timely manner, as they always have been. Invoices we receive are being processed the following day. Cash investments are being handled every day," said Mychajliw. "Our workforce is very efficient. They are not missing a beat. Bills are getting paid. Work is getting done."

The audit division is currently in various stages of six audits, he said. In addition, templates for future work are being designed to standardize reporting and procedure. The office is revising the audit manual to better accommodate work from home and continues to handle whistleblower complaints. "Our hotline has received and processed as many complaints

at this point in 2020 as we have in all of 2019," he said.

Internal training is underway and meetings by conference call are being held to ensure employees have all the tools and training they need, he said, adding, "We are well positioned to continue our work in this productive way."

The office is so well positioned that Mychajliw said in his statement that "we should make it a permanent change within the walls of Erie County government. As we look to what the future may look like post-pandemic, the Comptroller's Office is prepared to continue working off-site."

He proposed selling the county's building where the office is located. "My office employees are doing phenomenal work under very difficult circumstances. They should be able to continue to do so. We should always be looking at ways to be more efficient and save taxpayer dollars," Mychajliw said. **CN**

Stephenie Overman is a writer who specializes in workplace issues and has written for publications including HR Magazine and Employee Benefit News.

King County allows face mask exemptions for those with disabilities

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lic, health leaders have included **exemptions for individuals with disabilities** who cannot wear coverings.

That includes someone who has a physical disability that makes it difficult to easily wear or remove a face covering; someone who has been advised by a medical profession-

al to not wear one; someone who has trouble breathing or cannot remove a face covering without assistance; or someone who is deaf and uses facial and mouth movements as part

of communications.

Approximately 33,000 King County residents have an intellectual or developmental disability that could affect their ability to wear a face covering.

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