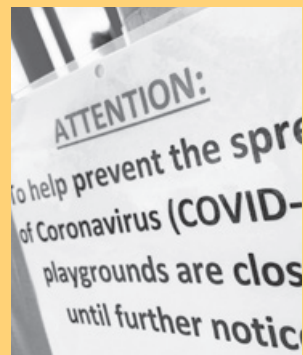


SPOTLIGHT ON:
STATE POLICY
TRENDS

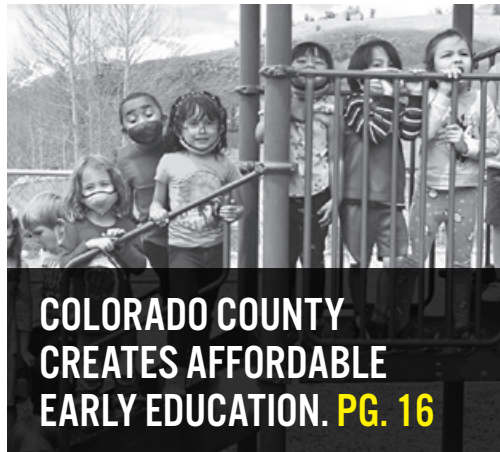
Mental health
funding shifts
from county
to state. Pg. 9



County
public health
authority
under fire in
15 states.
Pg.10



The good,
bad and ugly
of statehouse
actions.
Pg. 12



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

VOL. 53, NO. 11

JUNE 28, 2021



Firefighters from the Queen Valley Fire District in Pinal County, Ariz. alongside U.S. Forest Service crews battle the Telegraph Fire in Arizona earlier this month. Photo courtesy of U.S. Forest Service

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

High above the mountains in Pitkin County, Colo., a new technology that uses cameras and artificial intelligence (AI) may be aiding in the county's

response to wildfires. "It's very different from most camera wildfire detections that are out there today," Pitkin County Telecommunications Manager Jeff Krueger said. "Most camera systems are typically looking at either

fire detection with visual or infrared cameras. This deployment takes it a step further." Pitkin County commissioners are considering the pilot project which utilizes AI tech-

See FIRE page 2

Biden and
bipartisan
group reach
compromise on
infrastructure

by **Jessica Jennings**

President Biden endorsed a compromise June 24 from a bipartisan group of 10 senators, led by Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), that would provide \$973 billion over five years, including \$579 billion* in new spending, for the nation's physical infrastructure assets, including all modes of transportation, water systems, water storage, power grids and broadband networks.

Significant investments would also be made in improving the resiliency of these assets and remediating environmental contamination sites. The framework includes a list of sources that could be used to generate some of the prescribed new spending, which notably does not include any increases to taxes or transportation user fees.

"We are encouraged that President Biden and lawmakers from both political parties are a step closer to addressing major infrastructure across America," NACo Executive Director Matt Chase said.

"The framework laid out in the bipartisan compromise on an infrastructure package would help counties rebuild our nation's infrastructure and economy."

"Counties play a major role in maintaining critical infrastructure," he noted. "We own 44 percent of the nation's road

See DEAL page 4

Nearly 2,000 expected at first
NACo conference since COVID-19

by **Mary Ann Barton**
editor

NACo is making last-minute preparations to hold its first hybrid Annual Conference

July 9-12, offering both in-person and online participation, welcoming members to Prince George's County, Md., near the nation's capital. "We're really excited to welcome county officials from across America to this great site, along with our fellow partners, our corporate sponsors and many other friends," said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase. "It's been a tough 15 months dealing with COVID and we're excited to reunite with each other, cele-

brate our successes, share lessons learned and prepare for the future. Nearly 2,000 NACo members will convene both in-person and online for policy steering committee meetings, workshops, panel discussions and small-group networking at the Gaylord National Harbor Hotel and Conference Center in Prince George's County, Md., located about 10 miles from NACo's office near Capitol Hill

See CONFERENCE page 3

New wildfire detection system uses artificial intelligence to identify fire location

From FIRE page 1

nology to provide real-time intelligence that detects, verifies and classifies wildfire events.

The goals of the project are to provide actionable information regarding smoke column conditions, fire rate of spread and a fire’s behavior.

The system uses a standard visual camera with some near-infrared capability to look for smoke and changes in smoke patterns. This not only identifies if there’s a potential fire, but also where the fire is located.

“It’s using artificial intelligence algorithms to do that,” Krueger said.

The county has 10 communication sites on mountaintops ranging from 9,000 to 12,000 feet in altitude.

“Integrating the Pano cameras along with our county communication infrastructure



Commissioners in Pitkin County, Colo. are considering implementing the Pano camera system which uses AI technology to detect changes in smoke patterns and identify fire locations.

just seems like a logical next step for wildfires,” Krueger said.

He said the launch of the

pilot project is in response to an overall trend throughout western states, where counties are seeing increased dry conditions and damaging wildfires.

Pitkin County is currently experiencing a drought after a heat wave and below average snowpack from last winter.

“We’re just seeing an explosion in wildfires in terms of number but also in terms of size,” he said.

Pitkin County implemented Stage 1 fire restrictions because of the extreme drought conditions.

“That’s the earliest we’ve gone into Stage 1 fire restrictions that I’ve seen since living here,” Krueger said.

Counties throughout the Midwest and West are experiencing unprecedented drought conditions as wildfire season approaches.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, counties in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, Oregon and Washington are experiencing “Exceptional Drought”

conditions, the worst on the scale.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown (D) declared a drought emergency in Klamath County due to the severe drought conditions.

“We’re having domestic wells go dry. We have no water for most of our irrigation projects for agriculture,” Klamath County Commissioner Donnie Boyd said.

Boyd said the county and other agencies throughout the state are concerned about fire conditions within the Klamath Basin as well as in the rest of Oregon and western region of the United States.

“It’s the worst I’ve seen for 30 years,” Boyd said.

The state is looking for additional funding to help with wells that are affected by the drought and aid the agriculture and ranching industries, according to Boyd.

With droughts come wildfires, which have already started to spread.

The Telegraph Fire is one of 20 fires active in Arizona and

burned nearly 180,000 acres throughout the state as of June 21.

“The Telegraph Fire has been a real ebb and flow kind of situation,” Pinal County Supervisor Stephen Miller said. “We eventually think we have it close to containment and then all of a sudden the winds come from a different direction and then we’re back down percentage wise.”

Miller said it’s been two weeks since the fire started burning.

“It’s devastating the landscape that’s been scarred by the fire,” he said.

Before the Telegraph Fire started, the county and state of Arizona experienced severe drought conditions. Miller said the monsoon season last year was not as active as normal and there was limited moisture last winter.

“When we have good snow and good rain, when the snow melts, it runs down and goes into the reservoirs. This winter, it snowed, but there was no runoff because the ground would just suck the moisture into the ground so consequently our reservoirs had very little runoff into them this year,” he said.

Miller is eagerly anticipating monsoon season, which starts in July.

“I hope we get a real active year to help squash some of these dry conditions and allow our men and women to get a handle on these fires,” he said.

However, with the monsoons come erosion, flooding and flash flooding.

“It’s kind of an accumulative problem,” Miller noted. “Just because the fire gets put out then we have another problem in another two months or three months with the watershed. We’ve got some challenges in front of us.” **CN**

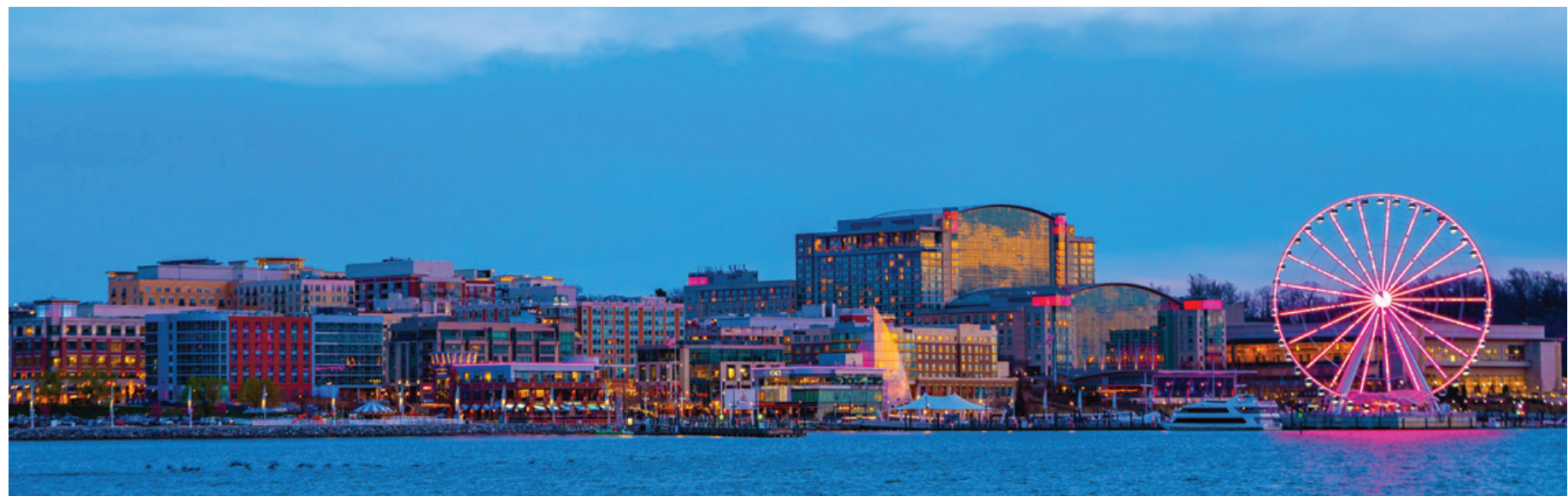
SNAP/STATS

COUNTRY’S WORST BRIDGES

STATE	PERCENT OF STRUCTURALLY DEFICIENT BRIDGES
Rhode Island	22.3 percent
West Virginia	21 percent
Iowa	19 percent
South Dakota	17 percent
Pennsylvania	15.3 percent

Source: Federal Highway Administration

First Annual Conference since pandemic to be held in Prince George’s County, Md.



From CONFERENCE page 1

in Washington, D.C.

On June 15, NACo staff toured the hotel and conference center to prepare for the conference. “We’re adopting appropriate public health protocols, we’re maximizing our use of the space and we’re making sure this will be a safe, yet fun and interactive experience for everybody,” Chase said.

The Annual Conference will be the association’s first large-scale, in-person conference since the 2020 Legislative Conference held in Washington, D.C. just before in-person meetings were shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has killed more than 602,000 people, including some county officials and members of their families.

This year’s Annual Conference will take place in Prince George’s County, which is located along the Potomac River, near Washington, D.C. and across the river from Fairfax County, Va.

“I would like to thank the chair of the planning committee and the president of NACo for selecting our county to host this important conference. I would also like to thank all of the NACo leadership, staff and members for your hard work over the past year, especially as we dealt with a pandemic that none of us anticipated,” said Prince George’s County Executive Angela Alsobrooks.

After a day of meetings on the first day of the conference, Friday, July 9, attendees will enjoy the Opening Celebra-

SPEEDREAD

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, MD.

FAST FACTS

- Founded:** April 23, 1695
- Named for:** Prince George of Denmark
- Home to:** Joint Base Andrews, U.S. military air base and President’s Air Force One; NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
- Total area:** 499 square miles
- Population:** 909,327
- Municipalities:** 27

tion: “Best of Maryland on the Waterfront,” showcasing the county’s finest local specialties, music and traditions, as we say “Welcome back, hon!” in true Maryland style.

At the General Session on Saturday, July 10, NACo and attendees will celebrate frontline workers’ toil against COVID and remember those who lost their lives during the pandemic in a performance by singer John Ondrasik (aka Five for Fighting), whose hits include “Superman” (It’s Not Easy).

The Annual Business Meet-

ing, where delegates from member counties will vote for a new executive leadership team and new policy positions for the American County Platform, will take place Monday, July 12, at 1 p.m.

New this year will be a series of small meetups scheduled throughout the conference, where county officials will have a chance to talk informally one-on-one.

On Saturday, July 10, at 7 p.m., county officials from New York and others from the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) will dis-

cuss their recently published book, “Our Darkest Hours,” about how county officials handled the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will receive a complimentary copy of the book.

There will be varying degrees of virtual participation, depending on what type of meeting is taking place. Tech support from NACo staff will be available for all participants who need it.

Pocket printed conference guides will be available at the conference and members can also download the NACo Annual Conference app, which will contain all the information you need to know, including a detailed schedule, specific meeting agendas, locations of meetings, exhibitor listing, access to networking with other attendees and more.

If you downloaded a previous Annual Conference app, you need to delete that and search for the new app in your phone’s app store. You will log in with your first and last name and the email address with which you registered.

A NACo exhibit hall will open the first night of the conference, Friday, July 9, from 5-7 p.m., with about 60 exhibitors in attendance this year, showcasing products and services important to counties. The exhibit hall will be open Saturday 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon. A federal agency expo is set for Monday from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon.

To learn more and register for the conference, visit: NACo.org/Annual.

ATTENDEES: LOOKING FOR DINING AND TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION?

DINING

- National Harbor:** <https://www.nationalharbor.com/dine/>
- Alexandria, Va.:** <https://www.visitalexandriava.com/restaurants/outdoor/>
- The Wharf (Washington, D.C.):** <https://www.wharfdc.com/restaurants/>

TRANSPORTATION

- National Harbor shuttle bus:** <https://mgmnationalharbor.mgmresorts.com/en/restaurants.html>
- Water taxi:** A water taxi leaves from the National Harbor marina and stops in Alexandria, Va. and The Wharf in Washington, D.C.: <https://www.cityexperiences.com/washington-dc/city-cruises/potomac-river/water-taxi/>

SHUTTLE BUS

Q: Where does the National Harbor circulator pick up and drop off?

A. It picks up/drops off at bus stations on Waterfront Street (next to the Tasting Room) and St. George Boulevard, Tanger Outlets (by the merchant wall on Oxon Hill) and MGM National Harbor on Monument Drive.

Q. What is the cost?

A. It is \$5 for an all-day pass. The driver will give the rider a voucher/receipt that can be used until the last run if the ticket was purchased on the circulator. If they prepaid from the app, they can show the QR code they received.

Q. How/where do you buy a ticket?

A. You can pay cash or credit on the circulator or at the Chariots for Hire office in the St. George garage, located at St. George Boulevard and Waterfront Street.

Q. What are the circulator’s hours and how often does it visit each stop?

A. 11 a.m. - 4 a.m. daily. There will be up to three shuttles running at a time during busy times.

Q. Is my ticket valid for a certain time?

A. No, it can be used until the last run. However, all passengers must have a seat. There is no standing room.

Agreement marks first step to passing bipartisan infrastructure package

From DEAL page 1

miles and nearly 40 percent of all bridges. We are also involved in the vast majority of public transportation systems and a third of all public airports.”

“We particularly commend the president and bipartisan group of lawmakers for ensuring the next infrastructure package will help to bridge the digital divide, which will increase our economic competitiveness and connect our residents,” Chase said. “Broadband connectivity is more important than ever. Americans in every corner of the country rely on high-speed every day, including at work, school, at medical appointments and more.”

Significant investments would also be made in improving the resiliency of these assets and remediating environmental contamination sites. The framework includes a list of sources that could be used to generate some of the prescribed new spending, which notably does not include any increases to taxes or transportation user fees.

Elements of the Senate’s surface transportation reauthorization, including funding for roads, bridges, rail and safety that have been advanced by their respective committees of jurisdiction would become a

part of the final package.

The Senate-passed water resources bill, S. 914, the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021, would also be included. While lawmakers still need to develop the remaining legislative text, this is a critical first step by Congress to pass a bipartisan infrastructure package that has eluded the immediate predecessors of the current administration.

The framework would be paid for, at least in part, through a variety of tools and mechanisms, including:

- Utilizing American Rescue Plan state and local funds for broadband
- Closing the IRS tax enforcement gap
- Repurposing rejected or unused supplemental COVID-19 unemployment insurance relief funds
- Repurposing unused COVID relief funds from 2020
- Reinstating Superfund fees for chemicals
- Allowing states to buy and sell toll credits to generate new revenue or to use toward match requirements
- Auctioning the 5G spectrum
- Utilizing financing tools, such as public-private partnerships (P3s), private activity bonds (PABs), direct pay bonds and asset recycling

TOP LINE SPENDING LEVELS INCLUDE \$313 BILLION FOR ALL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AND \$266 BILLION FOR OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE SECTORS BROKEN DOWN IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:	
SECTORS	AMOUNT
Roads, bridges and major projects.....	\$109 billion
Public transit.....	\$49 billion
Passenger/Freight Rail.....	\$66 billion
Airports	\$25 billion
Ports and Waterways	\$16 billion
Electric buses	\$7.5 billion
Electric vehicle chargers	\$7.5 billion
Safety.....	\$11 billion
Reconnecting Communities	\$1 billion
Infrastructure bank	\$20 billion
Water	\$55 billion
Broadband	\$65 billion*
Environmental remediation.....	\$21 billion
Power	\$73 billion
Western water storage.....	\$5 billion
Resiliency improvements	\$47 billion
TOTAL	\$579 BILLION

*GOP release lists \$45 billion.

Leveraging private sector investment through P3s, PABs and other innovative financing methods is the largest pay-for, projected by the Republican release to result in \$100 billion.

The deal follows months of negotiations that yielded little progress, including with Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.). The definition of infrastructure, an appropriate level of investment and how to pay for a package have continued to divide Democrats and Republicans in Congress until this week when the President conceded to a smaller infrastructure investment with one condition: It must be in tandem with a reconciliation package that funds the remaining provisions of the American Jobs Plan.

How this will impact the eventual fate of the bipartisan agreement is unclear, though it could certainly complicate its path forward if Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) chooses not to endorse the bipartisan framework to prevent reconciliation. **CN**

Jessica Jennings is an associate legislative director, Transportation and Infrastructure, in NACo’s Government Affairs Department.



finally!

NACo swag is now available online!

naco.org/store



ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

- **Ophelia Bitanga-Isreal** has joined NACo as senior program manager for diversity, equity and inclusion. She was previously principal and managing member of Integridad Consulting and senior program officer for the Hawaii Community Foundation.
- Program Manager **Jack Morgan** participated in a webinar panel on “Revitalizing Energy Communities” for University of Illinois Extension.
- Morgan and Associ-



Bitanga-Isreal



Morgan

ate Legislative Director **Adam Pugh** traveled to Sussex County, Del. to celebrate conservation efforts there in partnership with the Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program.

- Executive Director **Matt Chase** presented at the New York State Association of Counties.
- Associate Research Director **Jonathan Harris** presented Counties 101 and NACo 1010 to a group of students from Hunter College.



Pugh



Harris

Supreme Court upholds Affordable Care Act

by **Blaire Bryant**
and **Sarah Gimont**

The United States Supreme Court dismissed a case June 17 challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by a vote of 7-2.

California v. Texas considered whether the individual mandate became unconstitutional when it was repealed in the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017* and, if so, whether it can be severed from the rest of the ACA.

While the Court did not address these underlying questions, the justices ruled that the plaintiffs in the case — led by Texas — did not have standing to sue.

The ACA's individual mandate required individuals to obtain health insurance or face a tax penalty.

However, the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017* effectively re-

pealed the individual mandate, reducing the tax penalty from \$695 to \$0.

This shift led to a challenge from the state of Texas and others who argued that because the mandate was set to zero, it could no longer be considered a tax and was therefore unconstitutional.

The plaintiffs further argued that if the individual mandate was unconstitutional, the rest of the ACA was.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that Texas and its partners did not have the standing to bring the lawsuit forward, effectively upholding the legal grounds for the law for the third time since its passage in 2010.

County governments are key administrators of the health care safety net and are often providers of last resort for vulnerable populations who gain access to coverage under the

ACA.

The ACA strengthens the federal, state and local partnerships for the Medicaid program and provides states with the option to expand coverage to low-income adults without children.

Medicaid expansion also helps counties deliver better care for justice-involved individuals, qualifying them for access to necessary treatment and reducing the risk of recidivism.

NACo will continue to work with Congress and the administration to implement and advocate for improvements to the ACA that allow counties to meet the health needs of their residents best. **CN**

Blaire Bryant is an associate legislative director and Sarah Gimont is a legislative assistant in NACo's Government Affairs Department.

CN JOB MARKET

COUNTY MANAGER

PITT COUNTY, N.C.

Salary: Salary commensurate with experience

Application deadline:

July 30, 2021

The County Manager is appointed by a nine-member Board of County Commissioners. The Manager serves as chief administrator for 22 departments of county government with 1068 full time employees. The county's annual operating budget is \$281 million. Pitt County, designated in 2020 as an All-American County by the National Civic League, is located in the central portion of the Coastal Plain. Pitt County is approximately 90 miles east of Raleigh, NC with a population of 180,742. The City of Greenville, home of East Carolina University, is the county seat.

Minimum qualifications for the job include: Masters' degree in Public Administration or related field with considerable experi-

ence in governmental policy and procedure including thorough knowledge of State law governing County Administration; or an equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required skills, knowledge and abilities. Prefer strong interpersonal and communication skills with broad experience in public finance, personnel administration and commitment to planning.

Pitt County offers a competitive salary and benefits package. Salary is negotiable commensurate with experience.

Send resume, cover letter and salary requirements by July 30, 2021 to: Florida Hardy, Pitt County Human Resources Department, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, NC 27834 or to florida.hardy@pittcountync.gov.

Pitt County is an Equal Opportunity Employer

HOW TO APPLY: visit us at: www.co.marathon.wi.us



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

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COLLABORATE

DELIVER

COMMUNICATE

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**SPOTLIGHT ON
STATE
POLICY
TRENDS**

STATEHOUSE: BOOM OR BUST FOR COUNTIES?

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Seemingly every legislator in Arizona found a new interest in 2021: Elections.

"We had far more election legislation introduced than in my 20 years in this job — far more," said Jennifer Marson, executive director of the Arizona Association of Counties.

"There's always a legislator who is your go-to person for drunk driving, there's one who is your go-to person for taxation, we had a couple who were election people but this year, everyone wanted to be known as the person who fixed elections," she noted. "It's been an election bonanza."

One bill proposed ousting the Board of Supervisors and the recorder and barring them from elected office if the live feed of the vote count went down.

Fortunately for counties, few found traction, but the issue wasn't confined to the Grand Canyon State.

While Arizona's painstaking audit of Maricopa County's elections garnered national headlines, there was a canopy of bills in statehouses throughout the country aimed at adjusting county-run elections.

While Arizona officials are safe from election blowback, the Iowa Secretary of State can now fine or remove county auditors if the secretary believes they've made a mistake.

"It's pretty disappointing," said Bill Peterson, executive director of the Iowa State Association of Counties. "Iowa has had a history of free and fair elections. Our auditors do a great job."

The Legislature also reduced the absentee ballot timeline for counties and shortened the window for early voting.

North Dakota counties came out unscathed, though, and perhaps better off.

"I think we had 40 different bills that would have done mostly terrible things to our election process and election

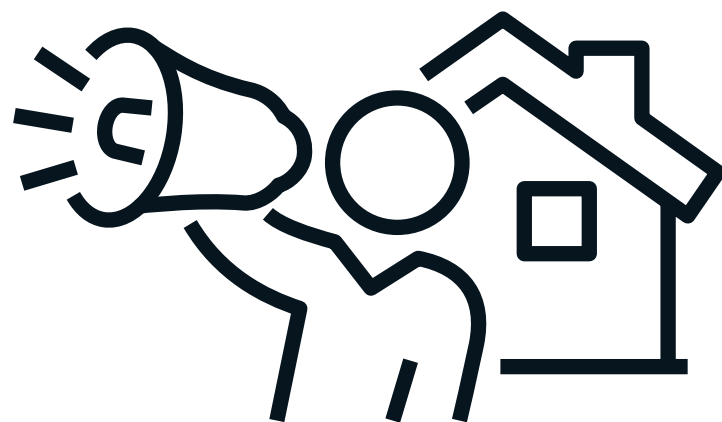
workers, but I think we came out of it with some improvements, actually," said Terry Traynor, executive director of the North Dakota Association of Counties.

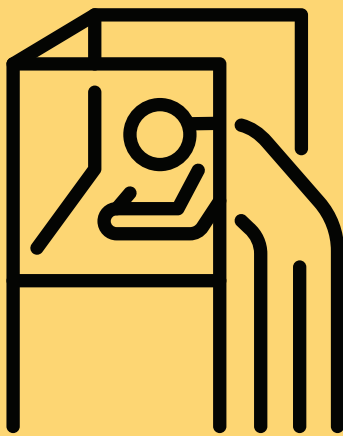
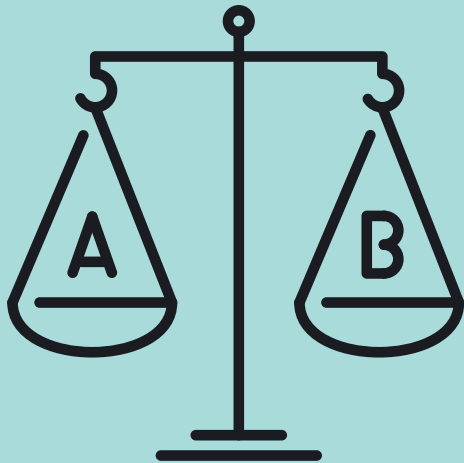
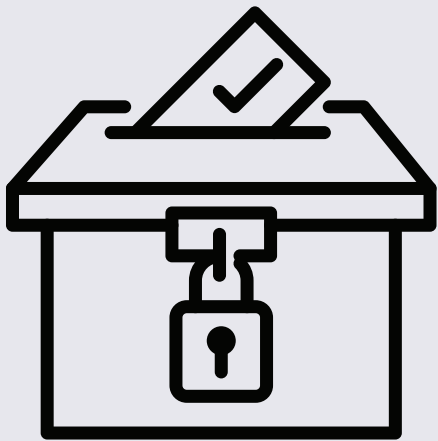
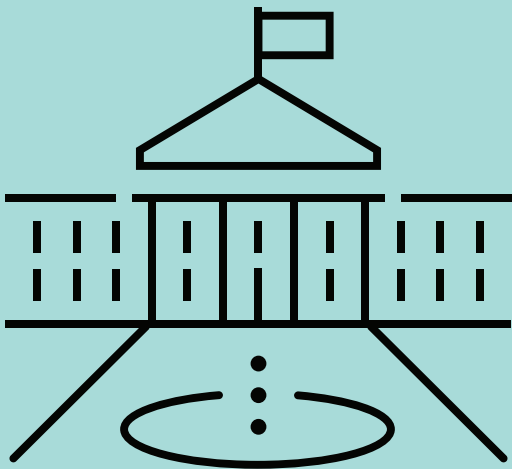
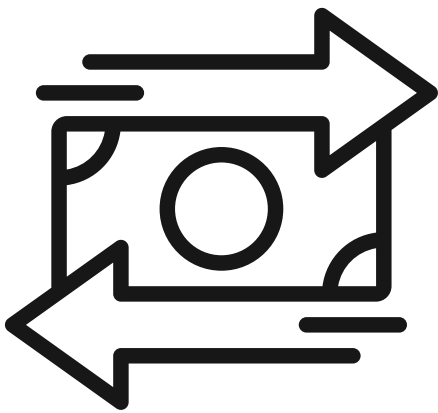
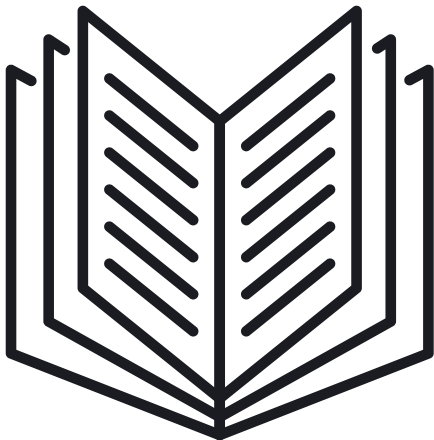
"A little more time for processing absentee ballots, no changes with the authority of local governments to run elections. The only restriction was being banned from taking funding from a national nonprofit group assisting with voting because of COVID, but only a few counties did that."

Pennsylvania counties are seeking changes to state law that will improve their ability to administer mail-in ballots, which were first made available to all voters in 2020.

They're hoping to also ensure they can participate in developing meaningful election law reforms that create positive, effective election policy clarifications moving forward, and craft language that allows counties to implement amendments with suf-

See ELECTIONS page 8





Counties see push and pull from actions by statehouse counterparts

From ELECTIONS page 6

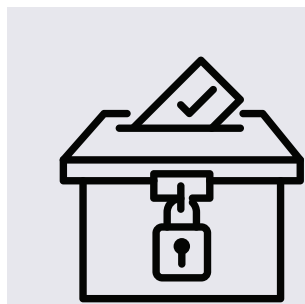
efficient time and appropriate resources to support any new requirements.

During the spring of 2021, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed an omnibus election bill making mail-in balloting and curbside voting a permanent feature of Illinois elections.

The law creates a pilot program requiring all election authorities to establish in 2022 at least one location where anyone in that county or municipality can vote on Election Day and grants permissive authority for county sheriffs to offer ballot booths within county jails. Cook County is currently mandated to do so based upon a law enacted in 2020.

States are exploring more than local control of elections. In Colorado, outcry over housing prices is prompting legislators to scrutinize county land-use practices, fees, inspection and costs.

"We find that the dominant narratives seem to be that local government regulations are creating challenges in affordable housing, and honestly that's really disappointing,"



said Gini Pingnot, director of external affairs for Colorado Counties Inc. "It seems to turn a blind eye to the cost of land, the cost of construction, the profit margin that occurs, the frenzy of the market driving prices up. What people seem to focus on is the infrastructure costs, the direct and indirect services local governments provide."

Pingnot's analysis of Colorado counties' conflict with the legislature over land-use could be extrapolated to other

topics in other states.

"The disconnect between local government leadership and citizens who want their community to look a certain way, which is why they have land use and zoning, and then the state legislature and the governor who are more disconnected from the energy that is occurring at the local level," she said.

"County commissioners are really in sync and having the state legislature insert themselves in some of these real-

ly strongly rooted land use practices that come from the community itself over time and create a tension we're all trying to avoid."

In some states, counties had to fight back against legislators who thought the American Rescue Plan's direct funding to counties meant the states could cut back on their revenue sharing.

Wyoming counties have a revenue-sharing agreement to replace past tax revenues that the legislature exempted, which they fight for every two years, including 2021.

"Our funding incoming is seen by some as a replacement for that funding source," said Jeremiah Rieman, executive director of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association. "This is not a one-for-one replacement."

Rural broadband access is among the top priorities for counties in many states, including Texas, where Gov. Greg Abbott (R) signed a bill June 15 that creates a broadband development office to establish a statewide broadband plan.

Just north of Texas, in Arkansas, a House bill there will establish broadband improvement districts.

As always, state restrictions on taxation, or in some cases budgetary control, represents a threat for counties to be able to fund their own operations as they see fit.

In Nebraska, some bills

have sought to restrict counties' control over property taxes, either restricting increases or reducing valuation bases.

Others have targeted inheritance taxes, which are some counties' only way of building reserves.

A bill signed by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) restricts a county government from reducing its police department budget by more than 5 percent.

"This is the first time in Georgia that the state has preempted our county governing authorities from having full control over budgeting for county services. This was done for political reasons," said Dave Willis, executive director of Advancing Georgia's Counties.

"It was a response to the national 'defund the police' movement and several cities that were considering lowering their police department budgets and moving funds to other services like mental health that they believed would have a more positive impact on crime prevention," he noted.

"When the state interferes with the local budget decisions, it erodes local control and the ability of county commissioners to be responsive to their constituents. We hope [the bill] does not set a precedent for future legislation where state elected officials disagree with the priorities of local elected officials and thereby try to override the local authority with state law."

Some counties are primed for big years, though. California's legislature is aiming for a \$12 billion broadband proposal, \$8 billion - \$12 billion for homelessness and \$5 billion for wildfire and drought remediation.

"We're going to make substantial progress on our top three priorities with dollars we have never seen before," said CSAC Executive Director Graham Knaus, "because there's so much money floating around." **CN**

Read more legislative moves on page 12.

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IOWA MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING SHIFTS FROM COUNTY TO STATE

**SPOTLIGHT ON
STATE
POLICY
TRENDS**

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

On June 16, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds (R) signed into law a bill that realigns mental health funding from county property taxes to the state.

The legislation, which includes other tax reduction measures, transfers funding to the state for Iowa's 14 mental health regions that are made up of Iowa counties.

The legislation provides funding for mental health services from Iowa's general fund and includes an "incentive growth factor" to potentially allocate additional funds to mental health regions.

As of July 1, 2022, funding for mental health services will be provided by the state. With the change, payments will be paid directly to the mental health regions.

Jamie Cashman, Government Relations manager for the Iowa State Association of Counties, said the governance structure for mental health regions has consisted of county supervisors, which will not change under the new legislation. However, he explained that discussions are currently being held as to whether regional employees will still be considered county employees with this change in funding.

According to Cashman, responses from county officials to the change have been across the board. He said some county officials are content with the state taking over the funding, but others have expressed concerns about the state keeping their commitment to funding these services.

Mills County Supervisor Richard Crouch has been a supervisor for nearly 20 years and witnessed previous shifts in mental health funding be-



The Southwest Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services building serves nine counties in southwest Iowa. Photo courtesy of the Southwest Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services

tween the county and the state. In 2013, he helped nine counties in southwest Iowa form the Southwest Iowa Regional Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS). The group of nine counties pooled their funds to support the region's mental health services.

"For the past eight years, we've been a region that has worked very well together," he said. "I'm not saying that the state funding won't work, but as a region, we knew where our funds were coming from."

He said his biggest fear with the change is whether the state will continue to fund mental health services to the extent needed currently for each region and provide the needed funding in the future.

"I had wished that they would have asked for a little more help from people who are going to have to make this work and going to have to put it

in progress," Crouch said.

Cashman said the major concern of the Iowa State Association of Counties with the legislation is the state's commitment to properly funding these services.

"Every time the state has made a promise to maintain funding and do so, well it rains some days, and they eventually go back on their word," Cashman said. "We're not fundamentally opposed to the change in how they fund it, it's the question of the reliability of the state of Iowa to maintain their promise and their commitment to it."

As one of the very last bills of the legislative session, he said there have also been concerns expressed about the rashness of the bill's passage.

"There's a lot of different things that they didn't consider that we're basically trying to hash out between the coun-

ties and the regions moving forward within this transition year," Cashman said.

Another concern for counties is the lack of funds they will receive in backfill funding for property taxes. Iowa previously passed a tax relief bill on commercial and industrial property taxes that counties would levy and receive a backfilled amount from the state to offset those dollars, which is now being phased out.

Now that mental health funding will no longer be a county responsibility, the shift should offset the dollars counties will no longer receive for commercial and industrial property tax.

Crouch said counties no longer receiving backfill funds will fall back on the taxpayers to fill the discrepancy.

"Did we really save a whole lot? Did we gain a whole lot? I guess that's a question time

will tell," he said. "We're going to have to come up with money to pay the backfill taxes that the state is not going to so it's going to be a game of 'see what happens.'"

One positive outcome of the shift in funding is the possibility for a growth factor for mental health services moving forward, Cashman said. Currently, counties have a cap on the amount of money they can levy on a property tax level. With the state funding these services, there is an opportunity for more funding for mental health in the following years, Cashman said.

"Our major concern, especially during this pandemic, is about our constituents, the need for services, especially because of COVID," Cashman said. "Mental health has never been magnified more than what we've dealt with over the last couple of years now." **CN**

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY: UNDER FIRE

It's been over a year since the United States declared a public health emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic and as case counts decrease, many states are proposing legislation that reimagines public health officials' roles during a pandemic.

A recent report by the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) found at least 15 state legislatures have passed or are considering legislation that limits the legal authority of public health agencies.

According to the report, legislation ranges from prohibiting mask-wearing to banning the use of quarantine and stripping local governments and health agencies of their abilities to respond to a public health emergency.

NACCHO Chief Executive Officer Lori Tremmel Freeman said the legislation is an "alarming trend."

"It just is another demonstration of how this pandemic has altered peoples' views of public health mitigation efforts," she said.

Certain bills specifically target public health officials on the county level.

One law enacted in Florida allows the governor or legislature to invalidate local measures that may restrict individuals' rights and place restrictions on local emergency orders.

Another proposed bill in Texas prohibits local governments from issuing orders that close specific businesses or industries and allows the state to terminate such measures.

Freeman described how most of the legislative actions seek to change the authority or introduce additional barriers to public health officials.

"Anytime that happens, you worry for how public health officials in their departments are going to be able to keep their communities safe and



healthy," she said.

Shifting public health authority also creates challenges when rapid decisions are required and when there may not be time to go up the chain of elected officials or state legislators who may not be in session, Freeman said.

"You're really talking about something as crucial as the difference between life and death in some cases by introducing more time that creates

barriers to issuing protective orders and people are at risk," she said.

In Montana, the legislature enacted a bill that prohibits its local boards of health from quarantining individuals who are not sick but are believed to be exposed.

"These are some of the originating public health mitigation measures that might seem simple, but have stood the test of time as working," Freeman said.

Another bill passed in Ohio limits local boards of health

from issuing isolation and quarantine orders, allowing the state department of health to override local decisions.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine (R) vetoed the bill, which legislators voted to override.

"[The bill] strikes at the heart of local health departments' ability to move quickly to protect the public from the most serious emergencies Ohio could face," DeWine said.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that local health officers cannot close schools following a lawsuit filed against Public Health Madison and Dane County's emergency order from August 2020 closing grades 3-12 in public and private schools.

"This decision hinders the ability of local health officers in Wisconsin to prevent and contain public health threats for decades to come," Public Health Madison and Dane County Director Janel Heinrich said in a statement.

"This ruling impedes our ability to respond to any disease that might impact students, teachers and school



Connor



Freeman

staff, and impacts family and friends beyond the walls of the school," she added.

Tennessee County Services Association Executive Director David Connor said there were 60 to 70 bills brought forward in the state legislature on pandemic-related is-

sues.

The state legislature passed one statute that changed the function of the state's six county health boards.

Out of the 95 counties in the state, six had established and appointed a county health board that had the authority to issue quarantine orders or make certain declarations. The remaining counties depended upon guidance and directives from the state department of health.

While in some cases the six health boards worked closely with elected county officials, Connor said there were instances of conflict.

"These are some of the originating public health mitigation measures..."

The passed legislation changed the role of the health boards to solely advisory functions where public health officials can make recommendations to elected officials, but do not serve as independent boards that can issue orders.

"They did that to avoid the possibility of a conflict between elected county officials and health professionals who are serving in appointed positions on a board," Connor said.

With numerous states enacting and proposing legislation limiting public health officials' authority, Freeman said local health departments are mobilizing to prevent or delay these bills from passing.

"I think that the bottom line here is that the long-term implications of some of these we just don't feel have been well thought out and they don't take into account the next public health emergency which will be on our heels," Freeman said.

Freeman said she anticipates legislative sessions in the fall or spring to include similar legislation.

"I don't think it's going to go away as easily as we hope even with the easing of the pandemic," she said. **CN**

**SPOTLIGHT ON
STATE
POLICY
TRENDS**

STATE LEGISLATORS 'HAVE TO WORK CLOSELY' WITH COUNTY COUNTERPARTS

SPOTLIGHT ON
STATE
POLICY
TRENDS

by Mary Ann Barton
Editor

Many of the folks walking the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C. were once state legislators or county officials. Those state and local officials who took their places back home just want them to remember one thing: Don't forget where you came from!

"I remember state legislators telling me, 'I don't know what happens to them when they go to Washington, it's like they go to some class on how to make state officials crazy,'" said National Conference of State Legislatures Executive Director Tim Storey.

"I think state legislators do

because of that. Of course, the nation's been dealing with it for two-and-a-half centuries. So, there was that catalyst for a lot of policy discussion and change, much of which got deferred until these sessions."

"And then of course the health pandemic crisis. And frankly there was a third megatrend, which was the economy seeming to fall off the cliff. And it did, right? I mean the GDP ground to a halt and unemployment spiked crazily mostly because of the service sector."

Slamming on the brakes, gunning the accelerator

"So you know states, they slammed on the brakes, like a

"While you're going to hear a lot about the divisive culture issues... there is a whole lot of work that gets done solving problems."

the same thing for local governments," he said.

"But they have to work closely together. My general sense is that, across the board, it's a very strong working relationship. It's far superior than the federal relationship with the states."

"When budget times are good, it makes those relationships a lot easier."

Three 'mega-impact' issues

According to Storey, there were three "mega-impact" issues that came into play for state legislatures after the roller-coaster ride that was 2020. "Twelve months ago, June of 2020, it was such a radically different world than where we are now in terms of policymaking," he said. "There were at least two mega-impact events with the George Floyd murder and the issues that came about

deer had run in front of the car, in terms of their budgets and state spending," he said. "It was like, 'freeze everything.'"

They didn't know what the next six or 12 months would look like. They locked it down. This was before they started to get the big stimulus payments from the federal government."

"Twelve months ago, the state budgets, which you know, that's the policy of states is passing the budget — they slammed the brakes on and now, here we are 12 months later and they're gunning the accelerator. States have sufficient funds to get back to where they were before and to initiate a whole ton of new programs."

An obvious reason is the large infusion of cash from the federal government, for both states and counties "and that is a huge part of the story," Storey said. "State revenues have recovered remarkably



National Conference of State Legislatures Executive Director Tim Storey



well. States are seeing revenue growth and they're mostly sales tax collections. And a lot of that is prompted by the stimulus checks that went out to individual Americans who then spent that money on all manner of consumer goods, staples and larger purchases — appliances and vehicles and recreational vehicles."

Election legislation grabs headlines

"The election issues have been a major, major item in the news," Storey noted.

"It's a big issue. But you know, elections are run by local governments. I noticed in a lot of the election bills, the state is funding everything, regardless. This is the second wave of election change, I don't want to say reform. On the election bills, the vast majority is on absentee voting rules, tightening requirements for ver-

ification, identification, that kind of thing. In some cases, changing the parameters of the hours and the days. It's happening primarily in GOP states although some Democratic states have also made changes to election laws and expanded mail-in voting and same-day registration. So that's one of the issues that has a direct impact on local governments."

Other big news, he noted, has been police accountability — "at least 35 states have done that," Storey noted.

"And that has a direct impact on local governments."

For counties with colleges in their midst, the "pay to play" issue, which allows student athletes to receive compensation for their own likenesses, could be a factor in recruitment issues.

California passed such a law in 2019 and 40 other states introduced similar legislation with 19 states passing similar legislation.

While Storey notes that election news often grabs the headlines, there are plenty of other non-divisive issues that state legislators on both sides of the aisle can agree on. Some of those include:

- California revised their licensing laws around fines for

barbers and other occupations, associated with COVID.

- Georgia legalized cell phone mounts on dashboards. "That might seem minor, but there are hundreds if not thousands of these things that gets hands down agreement," Storey said.

- New York started a new program for surplus food to go to food banks and hunger relief organizations.

- Ohio put in a property tax exemption for people with mental health and substance abuse diagnoses.

- Oklahoma increased their state employee benefits substantially.

- Virginia passed housing laws about discriminating against military families.

- Arkansas changed the laws around how local police transport intoxicated people.

"My point is, there are countless bills that get passed unanimously because they've been worked out and everybody agrees this is a solution to a problem," Storey said.

"While you're going to hear about the divisive culture issues, what really happens, and I'm sure in county governments as well, is there is a whole lot of work that gets done solving problems." **CN**

A LOOK AT STATE POLICY TRENDS FROM COAST TO COAST

Legislatures all over the country took a variety of actions affecting county governments, including:

- Many Colorado bills incorporate attention to diversity, equity and inclusion issues.
- In Florida, preemptions of authority to the state and away

from local governments were passed primarily in the areas of regulation of occupations and the ability to use a residence as a business and local authority over fuel or energy.

- Rural electric cooperatives have been given the authority to provide broadband services in the unserved or underserved areas of Georgia.
- The Idaho Legislature significantly reduced counties'

SPOTLIGHT ON STATE POLICY TRENDS

liability for the emergency medical costs of the uninsured.

- A Nevada bail reform effort will mandate initial court appearances within 48 hours, which will affect rural counties that typically have one judge. The Legislature decriminalized traffic offenses but civil fees will still fund court operations. Counties beat back an effort that would have cut them out of mining tax proceeds.

Indiana counties fought for local control of siting for wind and solar

projects

- New Mexico counties are open to millions of dollars more in liability after the Legislature put a \$2 million cap on damages per claimant, not per violation of state constitution by law enforcement.

Because the downturn in the oil market tanked North Dakota's budget, counties were on their own financially in 2020.


- The drought has particularly affected central and eastern Oregon, which has affected water rights issues and trickled down to wildfire and timber management. The House and Senate have passed a bill allowing camping on public property, which will open vast areas to homeless encampments without funding to provide services.

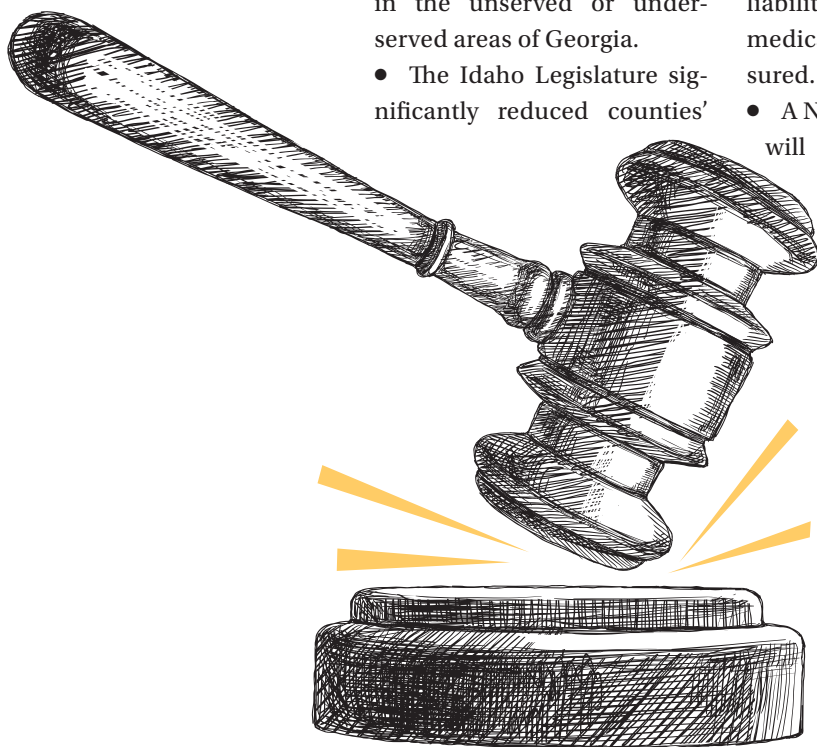
The South Carolina Association of Counties is pursuing a bill that would allow counties to impose both a local Capital Projects Sales Tax and Trans-

portation Infrastructure Tax. Current law requires a county to implement only one of these taxes. Having the ability to implement both simultaneously would allow counties, with the approval of their taxpayers, to respond to the growth needs of the county without the approval or oversight of the state.

- The pandemic's budgetary impact prompted the Washington Legislature to pass a bill allowing certain existing revenues to be used for broader expenses than they had previously been allowed, generally through 2023. The legislature failed to provide additional funding for trial court public defense services, despite a substantial growth in state revenues.

Wisconsin created a regional network of community behavioral health facilities.

- Various states have given elected officials more input into public health orders. *Read more about public health orders on page 10.* 




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Juneteenth becomes a federal holiday

by Isaac Naylor, NOBCO

The weekend of June 19 is, for many, a weekend known for parades and barbecues. The 19th of June, known as Juneteenth, marks the anniversary of slavery's abolition in the United States. However, the celebratory sentiment this year is spiked with tinges of anxiety over the current struggle surrounding voting rights and heightened racial tension across the country. Nevertheless, jurisdictions at various levels have aimed efforts at recognizing Juneteenth as a significant historical event, deserving of commemoration.

In the past year, county petitions to recognize Juneteenth as a holiday have cropped up across the country. One notable example comes from Cook County, Ill., where the Cook County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt Juneteenth as a county holiday. The proposal designates the day for community education in partnership with organizations



celebrating the contributions of Black Americans. The commemoration of Juneteenth has faced challenges elsewhere on the local front; however, there has been recent success at the national level. On June 17, President Biden signed the Juneteenth bill, creating the first new federal holiday in decades.

Juneteenth or Freedom Day celebrates the end of chattel slavery in the United States, specifically commemorating the announcement of General Order Number 3 by Union Army

General Gordon Granger proclaiming freedom from slavery in Galveston, Texas. Over the years, the date was shortened into one word: Juneteenth.

However, slavery did not meet its demise with one order; it took a series of events to end the original incarnation of the institution. Although Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation outlawed the practice at the start of 1863, it only freed slaves in states that were in active rebellion against the Union. Slavery remained legal and was practiced in Union

border states, such as Delaware and Kentucky until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.

The abolition of slavery caused significant strife and tension between former plantation owners and the newly emancipated men, women and children. To support the transition, the U.S. military took action to sustain the freedom of four million homeless Black citizens by providing food and shelter, as well as armed protection from vengeful former slaveholders.

However, when federal troops abandoned the South by order of President Rutherford Hayes in 1877, most if not all Southern states passed laws known as Black Codes that, among other things, banned Black Americans from serving in public office and voting in elections. For some, present-day bills proposing changes in voter ID laws and redistricting are oddly reminiscent of the Black Codes of generations past. This year, 48 states have proposed 389 laws that tighten restrictions on early and absentee voting, many of which stand to impact the voting ability of communities of color across the country. As jurisdictions strive to honor the legacy of Juneteenth, let us also recognize suffrage as a cornerstone of emancipation and liberation for all. **CN**

For more information on Juneteenth and the importance of maintaining the right to vote for all, visit juneteenth.com and whenweallvote.org.



2021 NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD.

JULY 9-12

IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL








Changing 50 years of criminal records proves less than simple

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

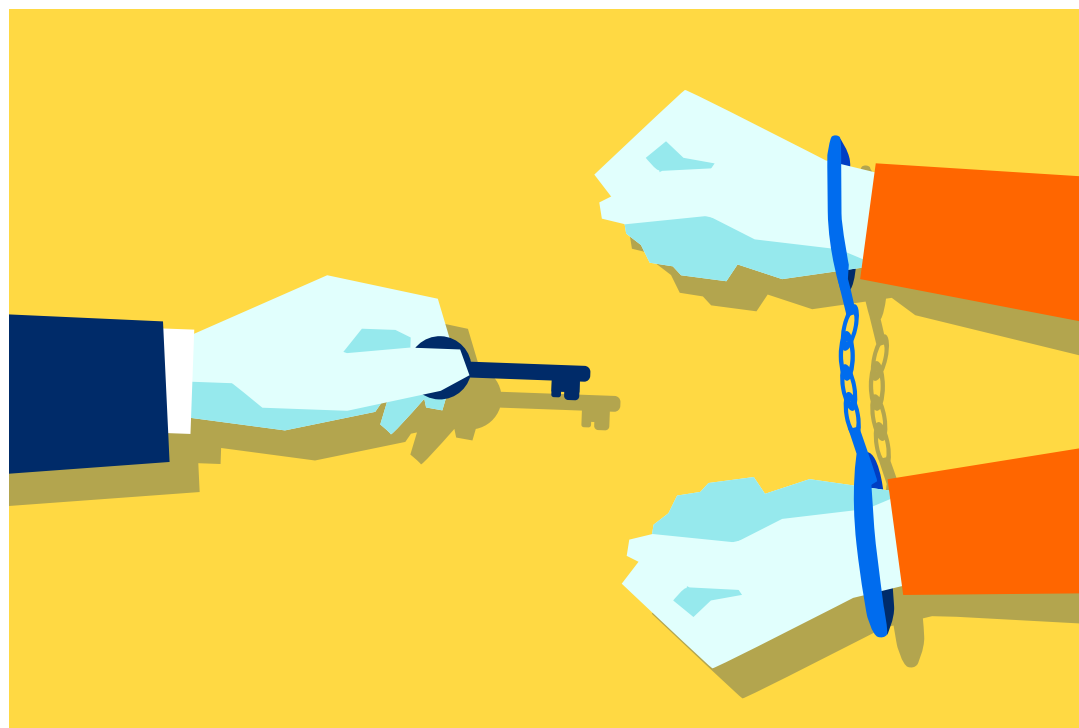
A Washington State Supreme Court decision on drug possession is forcing county court systems to examine 50 years' worth of criminal records, an effort that could cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

In *State v. Blake*, the court invalidated the state's simple drug possession statute — felony or misdemeanor — as a violation of due process and voided all convictions for anyone charged with possessing a small amount of any drug without intent to deliver. Counties run the trial courts in Washington, and will be responsible for paying significant financial obligations, vacating sentences, and resentencing cases. The decision is retroactive to 1971.

"Anyone who had a prior conviction rightfully is trying to get that off their record. I would too," said Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney Shawn Sant. "It's not an easy fix. We're just doing the best we can, but we have no estimate for how long this will be; we're trying to do it all as quickly as possible."

But Sant said simple possession is rarely the only charge facing defendants. The Washington State Department of Corrections estimated at the time of the ruling in February that fewer than 100 people statewide were incarcerated only on a simple possession conviction, but fewer than 2,600 people statewide are incarcerated on a simple possession conviction plus an additional conviction. And it's a time-sensitive issue, too.

"Counties are trying to make sure they're not holding anyone when they otherwise might be entitled to release under resentencing," Sant said. "I was in the middle of finalizing an officer-involved shooting case that had taken some time. I am just now finishing that up because these other cases, a person who was killed by officers, there's no pending person in custody. We had the constitutional interest of people who were in custody



for drug offenses, that shifted all of a sudden, so we had to really focus and start working with our office to make sure we're doing all we could to get those cases navigated."

Eric Johnson, executive director of the Washington State Association of Counties, said the financial costs could be daunting, let alone the staffing necessary to comply.

"The potential is for hundreds of millions of dollars in legal financial obligations that have been paid over the last 50 years to the court system, much of which went to restitution, treatment services or to the state, and a portion went to county general funds," he said. "We received \$86 million from the Legislature, which is a good starting point for the next year or two, but there's a lot that remains to be seen on how much this will cost in total."

The timing — courts are only starting to get back to pre-pandemic capacity — is also problematic.

"Jury trials are already backlogged because of the pandemic, so a choke point in the court system got that much more difficult to deal with," Johnson said.

Sant has already seen those complications arise.

"During COVID, we transitioned to a paperless environment because people were working out of the office and

file access was an issue," he said. "Most of these cases are going back in time prior to when we did that, so most of the cases are in paper files. So those are being pulled and provided to the assigned deputy who handled the case originally so they can look at it, figure if there's a reason to pursue another charge that might have been dismissed at the time of the plea in exchange of them pleading to a drug case."

For some counties, a guilty plea to simple possession was the cleanest path to sentencing.

"Sometimes these cases involve witnesses who aren't very cooperative or forthcoming, so rather than trying to force a trial on a potentially more serious case, we go for a possession plea," Sant said. "So now a county asks, 'Do we choose to charge that offender with the other crime now?'"

In Franklin County, the information technology department set up a website for people to request a review of their records, in hopes of cutting some of the administrative burden on prosecutors' and clerks' offices, which will remain heavy. Reviewing old cases takes essentially the same time and energy as screening a new case, but factors like timing and how many counties are involved also come into play. If the individual was sentenced

in a second county based on a first county's drug conviction, now they have a conviction in another county that is going to have to be remodified and they will have to wait until the first case is dismissed.

"This is like getting a new screening case, because support staff will have to pull all the records associated with a conviction, see if they've done time or did they get credit for some other case," Sant said. "Things could get really complicated if a person was in jail for a drug crime, but they were also prosecuted in a different county for something else."

"Rarely do we have just a drug charge."

So far, Franklin County has received requests to review cases going back to the early 1990s, though Sant has prioritized the most recent cases.

"The last five years are probably more critical because these might be people's only felony on their record. Frankly, in fairness to them, we want to prioritize that and clear it off their record if that's the only thing holding them back from jobs, housing, things like that. It could have a more adverse effect."

"If it's something that's 20 years old, I'm sure that person had probably moved on, they've probably even vacated that conviction if they have no other criminal history." **CN**



CHOWAN COUNTY, N.C.

The current Chowan County, N.C. seal was put into use in the late 2000s. The seal depicts the county courthouse which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark. The courthouse has been in use since 1767. The Georgian-style building is the oldest courthouse in North Carolina still in active use. President James Monroe visited the courthouse in 1819, accepting an invitation to a dinner in the assembly room on the courthouse's second floor.

The former Chowan County seal also included the county courthouse, but incorporated agricultural items including peanuts, cotton and corn which were phased out in the new seal design.



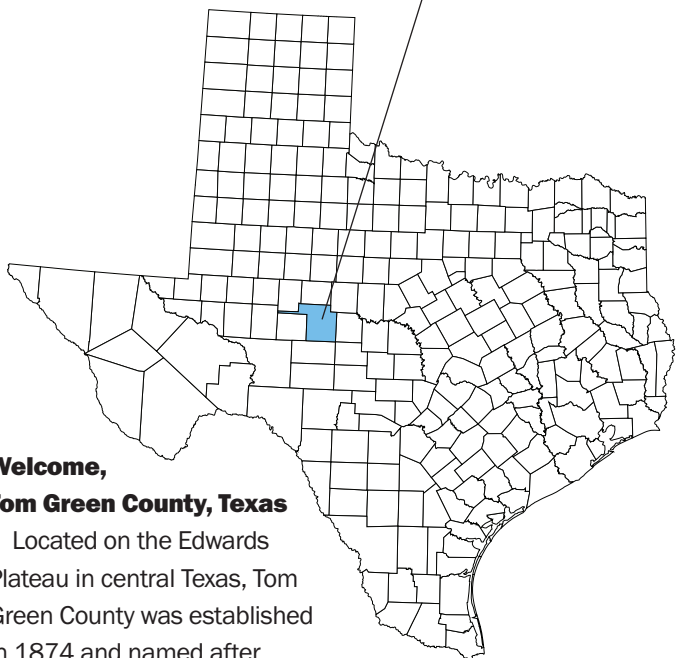
The seal depicts the county courthouse which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark.

The date of 1668 represents the year the county was created.

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

GET TO KNOW...

Tom Green County, Texas



Welcome, Tom Green County, Texas

Located on the Edwards Plateau in central Texas, Tom Green County was established in 1874 and named after Thomas Green, a soldier and lawyer who took part in the Texas Revolution and served as a Confederate brigadier general. The county currently has a population of 119,000 residents.

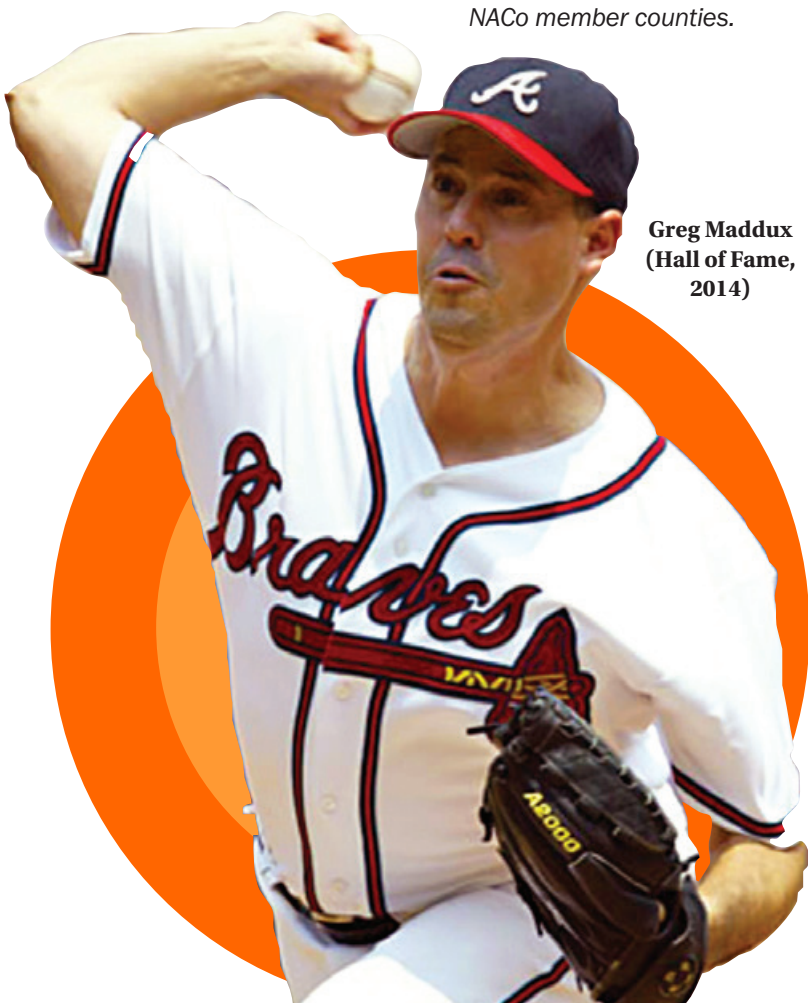
Tom Green County has a unique shape, with a narrow strip of land on its western border often referred to as the “panhandle.” A Texas state law requires all counties have a contiguous land route to the county seat. The strip of land connected neighboring Reagan County, which used to

be part of Tom Green County, to the eastern portion of the county. In 1903, residents living in the west side of the county voted to form their own county, leaving the connecting strip as part of Tom Green County.

The county seat of San Angelo is the birthplace of at least eight Major League Baseball players and is home to one of the first Hilton hotels.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.

Greg Maddux
(Hall of Fame, 2014)



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If you have any questions, please contact **Carlos Greene** at **770.881.0100** or cgreene@naco.org



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BRIGHT IDEAS | SUMMIT COUNTY, Colo.

Tax Initiative Fuels Early Education Program

PROBLEM:

A high percentage of working families creates a significant need for affordable and accessible quality childcare.

SOLUTION:

Provide monthly tuition credits for eligible families to ensure all children can attend preschool and are prepared to enter kindergarten.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

In a rural, ski resort community in central Colorado, the high cost of living mixed with low-paying jobs in the retail, restaurant, lodging and tourism sectors has highlighted the need for affordable childcare.

Around 72 percent of all parents with children under the age of 5 work outside their home in Summit County, Colo. Commissioners conducted surveys that found a top concern for county residents centered on the need for affordable and quality childcare.

Summit County Commissioner Elisabeth Lawrence said the county has a long history of supporting early childhood education.

The town of Breckenridge launched a tuition assistance program in 2007 with the goal of keeping working families in the community. The program proved to be successful and Summit County also wanted to provide universal pre-k for all 4-year-old children in the county.

The Summit County Pre-Kindergarten (SPK) Program launched as part of the county's Strong Future Initiative, which included a local property tax approved by voters in 2018.

The SPK Program provides the local workforce access to affordable preschool and childcare and ensures that all children are ready to enter kindergarten through participating preschool and childcare programs throughout the county. Childcare programs include preschool programs operated by the school district, commu-

nity-based childcare centers and family childcare providers.

"I hear from families all the time who say 'This has made the difference for us that we know that our child can go to preschool and that we can go to work and we're not having to choose between one or the other,'" Lawrence said.

The program serves 150 children and families who live and work in Summit County with many working in the retail, restaurant, lodging or skiing industries.

"We want to have local community members living, working, playing and raising families all in the same place and not having just a workforce of commuters," Lawrence said.

In its first year, more than 90 percent of the estimated eligible population of 4-year-old children participated in the SPK program.

"This was really important from an equity side to make sure that it wasn't just wealthy, white children who could go to preschool, but that all kids in our community, even those who come from very low-in-

come, working families especially representing many of our English language learners, were able to attend preschool as well," Lawrence said.

The program launched in

January 2019 through a collaborative effort with several non-profits and the Summit School District.

"We always really understood how important childcare is to keep our local economy going."

January 2019 through a collaborative effort with several non-profits and the Summit School District.

Early Childhood Options, a non-profit organization that serves as a childcare resource and referral agency and a hub for early childhood services, provides program management for the SPK program.

Early Childhood Options Program Director Catherine Schaaf said the main goal of the program is to ensure all children are ready to enter kindergarten and that families have access to preschool in their last year of childcare.

The program provides monthly tuition credits to fam-

ilies who meet certain criteria with credits administered on a sliding scale based on need ranging from \$47 to \$1,560 per month.

"The average tuition credit

is 80 percent of their tuition is paid for and families see a savings of about \$800 a month on that tuition," Schaaf said.

Early Childhood Options Executive Director Lucinda Burns said the program levels the playing field for children entering kindergarten and ensures everyone has access to a quality preschool experience.

"We always really understood how important childcare is to keep our local economy going," Burns said.

She said the program is geared toward enrolling children in already-existing childcare programs.

"It's really integrated across the whole county so that we

give families as much choice as possible but ensure a consistent level of quality across the board," she said.

In addition to helping families, the program has helped childcare centers remain stable through the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when children were not in preschool because of the pandemic, the county continued to pay the SPK funding because it was already collected as part of property tax collections for the year.

"That is what has made sure that those centers were able to survive through COVID," Lawrence said.

She added that all counties have a role in early childhood education.

"I really believe that counties have a role because if having working families in your county is important, then that's where counties can step in with this," she said. **CN**

Summit County's Pre-Kindergarten Program is the recipient of a Best in Category 2021 NACo Achievement Award in the Children and Youth category.



Children participate in the Summit County Pre-Kindergarten Program in Summit County, Colo., which provides monthly tuition credits to ensure all families can access affordable childcare.

WORD SEARCH

TRAVIS COUNTY, Texas
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

- AUSTIN:** The county seat of Travis County is named for Stephen F. Austin, known as the “father of Texas.”
- BATS:** The county is home to the largest urban bat colony in North America. Bat season is March through November.
- BLUEBONNET:** The state flower grows in Travis County each spring.
- CAPITAL:** The county seat, Austin, is the capital of Texas.
- CAPITOL:** Constructed from sunset red granite, the building is the largest state capitol in the country, at 360,000 square feet.
- CENTRAL:** The county is located in central Texas, 150 miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico.
- COURTHOUSE:** The county has had three county courthouses. The latest was built in 1930 and has undergone several renovations since then.
- FESTIVAL:** The county is home to the South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival which features music and film.
- GROCERY:** Whole Foods was founded in the county in 1980.
- LARGE:** When first established, the county was 40,000 square miles.
- LONGHORNS:** The county is home to the University of Texas and their Longhorns sports teams.
- MCCONAUGHEY:** Actor and local resident Matthew McConaughey is said to be considering a run for governor of Texas.
- RATHER:** Longtime journalist Dan Rather makes his home in Travis County.
- TECHNOLOGY:** The county is home to some high-profile technology firms including Apple, Dell, IBM and Samsung.
- TRAVIS:** The county was established in 1840 and is named in honor of William Barret Travis, commander of the Republic of Texas forces at the Battle of the Alamo.

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PROFILES IN SERVICE

RANDY ELLIOTT

NACo Board Member
Commissioner Vice Chair
Davis County, Utah

Number of years active in NACo: Five

Years in public service: Five

Occupation: Full-time commissioner and real estate investor.

Education: Utah State University with a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and working on a Master of Public Administration from the University of Utah.

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Two-year service mission to South Pacific nation of Kiribati— think bathing with bucket out of a well and sleeping with mosquito nets.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: Jeff Bridges, Thomas Jefferson and Wyatt Earp.

A dream I have is to: Sprinter van around North America, hitting the different natural hot springs.

You’d be surprised to learn that: I like being a commissioner.



Elliott and his family

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: Run for this office.

My favorite way to relax is: Swathing hay, as long as everything is going smoothly. If not, then that is also the most stressful thing to do.

I’m most proud of: My wife and four beautiful daughters.

Every morning I read: Local papers to see what they might have quoted me saying that isn’t what I really said. LOL.

My favorite meal is: Steak and potatoes.

My pet peeve is: Slow people in the fast lane.

My motto is: Work hard, play harder.

The last book I read was: *The Outward Mindset: Seeing Beyond Ourselves* from the Arbinger Institute

My favorite movie is: *The Count of Monte Cristo*

My favorite music is: U2 and Chris LeDoux

My favorite U.S. president: Harry Truman, as he started out as a commissioner, too.

My county is a NACo member because: The network we build and the power of being unified with all the counties.



My favorite music is:
U2

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

• Supervisors in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** voted to **create an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs**. The first-of-its-kind county office will serve as a hub to connect immigrants and refugees to essential and legal resources. Staff at the office will partner with the Public Defender's Office of Assigned Counsel for referrals for detained immigrants facing deportation, the *Times of San Diego* reported.

• Local law enforcement agencies in **SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY** partnered with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives to launch a program that **recruits women and minorities to careers in law enforcement**. The Law Enforcement Applicant Development (L.E.A.D.) program will include outreach efforts at community-based organizations to refer applicants to the program, KXTV-TV reported. Participants will be assigned a mentor who will assist during the hiring process.

INDIANA

HAMILTON COUNTY is partnering with the Hamilton County Community Foundation and Aspire Indiana Health to create a **Community Action**

Plan to increase accessibility and affordability of behavioral health services. A behavioral needs assessment will be conducted to assess community needs, resources and gaps. The assessment will involve state and local public health agencies, health systems and law enforcement partners to identify priority populations and health issues throughout the county, *You are Current* reported.

IOWA

POLK COUNTY is offering residents who are **fully vaccinated the chance to win up to \$50,000**. County officials will hold a lottery that will run during the Iowa State Fair. Those eligible have the chance to win a weekly prize of \$1,000 and a prize of \$50,000 every other week. Those vaccinated under the age of 18 can enter to win a \$5,000 scholarship also drawn every other week. The county is using federal pandemic response money for the winnings, *The Hawk Eye* reported.

FLORIDA

• Commissioners in **LEE COUNTY** approved a plan to **permanently use electronic tolling**. The county eliminated cash transactions in March 2020 when the pandemic started, instead using transponders or a pay-by-plate system for drivers without transponders. The plan



MINNESOTA

The public health team in **NICOLLET COUNTY** hosted **mobile vaccine events** to provide easy access to the vaccine for all residents. The public health department held vaccinations at fire halls, churches, local restaurants and outdoor festivals in an effort to reach all county residents who want the vaccine while targeting rural and underserved areas. A community health worker joined the public health staff to identify target groups and build relationships with underserved communities.

returns to the same tollway fee structure used before the pandemic which includes an administrative fee for drivers without transponders. Lee County Commissioner Brian

Hamman told WINK News that individuals working in the toll booths were able to find other jobs within the county.

MARYLAND

A new interactive dashboard in **BALTIMORE COUNTY** is providing **insight into police traffic stops**. The Traffic Stop Data Dashboard includes traffic stop data from 2017. The data contains the number of traffic stops by race, reason for the stops and outcomes of each stop. Developed by the county, the dashboard aims to examine policing practices and make recommendations on training, equitable practices, supervision and transparency, CBS Baltimore reported.

MICHIGAN

• Commissioners in **WASHTENAW COUNTY** approved a budget amendment allocating annual revenue from marijuana taxes to **racial equity-based programs and initiatives**. Revenue from marijuana taxes generates more than \$200,000 yearly, *All About Ann Arbor* reported. "We see it as fitting that these funds should be used to expand the work outlined in the county's racial equity policy and to further our work addressing the injustices and divestment that communities of color in our county continue to face," Commissioner Justin Hodge said.

See NEWS FROM page 19



FLORIDA

• **POLK COUNTY** deputies had an unexpected rider in the back of their patrol car when they arrived on scene to **apprehend a 5.5-foot alligator**. Deputies Hardy and Ferguson arrived at a home after receiving a call about the animal on a family's porch. The deputies restrained the gator, placed him in the back of a patrol car and relocated him to a more suitable home near Lake McLeod, WFLA reported.

From NEWS FROM page 18

- A pilot program in **WAYNE COUNTY** is looking to keep families together by providing some parents with **free legal services**. Qualifying parents needing assistance for housing, facing immigration issues, have guardian concerns or face substance abuse challenges can receive free legal services if their children are at high risk of being removed from a home. The program aims to keep children with their parents in instances where a legal matter can be resolved and prevent the removal of a child.

NEBRASKA

With half of the \$30 million judgment against it paid, **GAGE COUNTY** will get **help from the state** compensating six people wrongly convicted of a 1985 rape and murder after confessions by five were obtained through coercion. Gov. Pete Ricketts (R) has signed a bill providing \$4 million in state funding to the county. The county did not have the appropriate insurance to cover the judgment and has been paying the judgment with



a combination of property tax revenue, sales tax revenue and smaller insurance settlements.

NEVADA

With July 4 approaching, **CLARK COUNTY** is encouraging residents to register **illegal fireworks complaints** using a website, rather than calling 9-1-1. Website reports won't prompt police dispatch, but they will help document areas to inform future patrols.

NEW YORK

- With COVID-19 caseloads falling in **ERIE COUNTY**, football fans and concert goers will **no longer be required to be vaccinated**, as had been the policy since April 2021.



MISSOURI

The **JACKSON COUNTY** Courthouse looked a little different after its cooling system was shut down for repairs and officials **installed temporary air conditioning**. Long, white tubes hung out of the courthouse's windows pumping air into the ventilation system, KSHB reported. President Harry Truman commissioned the courthouse when he was the county chief executive in the 1930s. Photo courtesy of Andres Gutierrez/KSHB-TV



NORTH CAROLINA

Eight high school seniors graduated from **WAKE COUNTY's** first **high school EMT (emergency medical technician) class**. The county also has an EMS (emergency medical services) Apprenticeship Program for EMTs beginning in the summer after their high school graduation. The program enables them to work with the county and complete their associate degree in EMS at no cost. Once they complete the apprenticeship program, participants in good standing may continue their EMS careers with the county.

- In hopes of clearing a case backlog, drivers with moving violations in **SUFFOLK COUNTY** can **enter their guilty pleas and pay any fines online**. The Traffic and Parking Violations Agency program also allows motorists to fight their tickets by having a prosecutor review their case using the website. A court appearance is scheduled if the motorist rejects a virtual plea bargain, WHSU News reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

The **DELAWARE COUNTY** Council is shooting to acquire a 213-acre parcel that would become the **largest county-owned park**. The former school site was rejected by a township's Board of Commissioners twice in recent months. It is one of the last large tracts of open space in the densely populated eastern part of the county. Approximately 14,000 residents live within one mile of the property and an estimated 53,000 residents live within a two-mile radius.

VIRGINIA

- Early Virginia settlers counted tobacco as a cash crop, and now **ALBEMARLE COUNTY** plans to do the same. Following the General Assembly's passage of legislation that allows counties to **impose a tax on cigarettes**,



VIRGINIA

- The **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Board of Supervisors voted to license and pursue a trademark for a new **"Made in Fairfax" logo** that businesses could use to indicate that their products were made in the county. Reston Now reported that officials say the logo will be a useful promotional tool not just for the businesses that use it, but also for the county as it seeks to build a vibrant local economy.

Albemarle County officials are aiming for a 40-cent tax beginning in January 2022, the *Crozet Gazette* reported.

- Six months after its owners shut it down, the Southside **Speedway racetrack property** will have a new owner. **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** is buying the 41-acre site that is adjacent to its River City Sportsplex and will likely redevelop the property to add it to the sports facility offerings, *Richmond BizSense* reported.

WASHINGTON

KING COUNTY voters may have a choice to use **"ranked-choice voting" for county elected offices**. Similar systems are in place in Maine and Alaska. If the ordinance passes the Council, voters would get the final say in the November election and if approved, the change would take effect on Jan. 1, 2022.



WISCONSIN

In the midst of a **blood shortage**, in addition to a bag of gifts from sponsors, donors will receive free parking and admission to the **MILWAUKEE COUNTY Zoo**.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Have news to share? Contact cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.



Don't Forget to Print Everything!

Grants Managers and NGMA Give Advice On How to Manage the Influx of Federal Funding



The pandemic has transformed the flow of federal funding for county and municipal grants from the strength of a garden hose to the force of a fire hydrant practically overnight. It's overall a good news scenario: trillions of dollars in aid are available and more may be coming.

It may seem like too much of a good thing for county grants managers to contend with.

Alan Tiano, GPC, CGMS, Grants Administrator in Broward County, FL offered the following tips for making sense of it all:

1. Keep close contact with the county's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs if there is one. Otherwise, coordinate with Federal government relations professionals who may have an inside scoop about what funds may be ready for release.
2. Meet with all county departments to review possible projects and coordinate the applications, avoiding duplication of effort.
3. Keep in touch with the senior policy advisors at the agencies that currently fund your projects.
4. Use your professional networks and associations for ongoing information.

In addition, the **National Grants Management Association (NGMA)** is ready to help, with training, webinars, and ongoing education. **NGMA** President **Eric Russell**, CIA, CGAP, CGMS, MPA and Vice President **Scott Sheffler**, JD, LLM shared key advice on how to maximize the funding.

"I would say there are three things to be mindful of," **Sheffler** said. "The first is that there are so many new funding streams that you really have to track your funds by source and application, which is sort of the cardinal rule of all grants management. Every funding stream, you really have to manage separately or be prepared to manage separately."

"The second thing is that we live in a world right now of Federal law by website guidance. It's therefore critical to familiarize yourself with it, but also keep printed copies because it's changing and you can't go back to the old stuff unless you print out a copy and it's in your file."

"And third, I would say don't assume everything's a grant; evaluate the basic contours of the program, meaning questions as basic as 'do the cost principles apply?', 'do the administrative requirements apply?' and 'what is my scope of project on this funding stream?'"

"The other item that I would highlight and that's really big is the training side and understanding the specifics of the dollars and the programs," **Russell** said. "Where do you go to get that training? I think it's a combination of **NGMA** and similar organizations. There are continuing education opportunities through law firms, accounting firms, as well as any technical assistance or training that the Federal government provides. But organizations like **NGMA** are going to be the best source of ongoing training and education."

Talk to Your Grants Manager About NGMA Today!
Contact us at info@ngma.org and ngma.org or call (202) 308-9443