

Congress advances farm bill

By Arthur Scott
and Eryn Hurley

House and Senate versions of the farm bill are headed to a conference committee where stark differences will be hashed out over the handling of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and cuts to conservation titles.

The House version, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), passed June 21 after weeks of uncertainty. The five-year, \$860 billion farm bill reauthorization package squeezed by on a 213-211 vote — the result of unanimous opposition from Democrats over significant changes to SNAP.

A week later, the Senate re-

See **FARM BILL** page 3



County officials from across the country will meet July 13-16 in Nashville (Davidson County), Tenn. for NACo's 83rd Annual Conference & Exposition.

Nashville hosts 83rd Annual Conference

It's the place of legends: The Grand Ole Opry. Hank Williams. Loretta Lynn. Earl Scruggs. Patsy Cline. Dolly Parton. Hank Williams, Jr. The Carter Family. Johnny Cash. Brad Paisley. Tim McGraw. Lady Antebellum. It's Nashville in Davidson County, Tenn. and for four days and nights it will be the site of NACo's 83rd Annual Conference starting July 13.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, and Eddie George, legendary NFL running back for the Tennessee Titans, will headline the general sessions.

Edelman has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. She has received over 100

honorary degrees and many awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings such as *Prayers for Our Children*; *I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children*; and *The Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small: Charting a Course for the Next Generation*.

George has carved a special niche for himself in the professional sports arena. He is only the second NFL running back to rush for 10,000 yards while never missing a start. In addition to the Heisman Trophy, George won several NFL Rookie of the

See **NASHVILLE** page 2

Final Thoughts

EACH YEAR, **COUNTY NEWS** INTERVIEWS THE OUTGOING NACo PRESIDENT FOR HIS OR HER REFLECTIONS ON THEIR TERM. **TARRANT COUNTY, TEXAS COMMISSIONER ROY CHARLES BROOKS** OFFERS HIS REFLECTIONS.

How would you describe your year as NACo president?

It is the capstone of my career in public service. It has allowed me to promote a cause about which I am passionate, "Serv-

ing the Underserved, Counties Addressing Generational Poverty," with a special emphasis on our children. I have traveled the country and met many wonderfully committed county leaders. And I am heartened by the level of skill and dedication that my colleagues across the country possess.

What was the most challenging part of your role as president?

Undoubtedly, the travel. Waking up virtually every morning in a new place, some-



Brooks

See **BROOKS** page 2

Affordable housing forum, land use planning workshop highlight annual conference

From NASHVILLE page 1

Year awards in 1996, and was the Tennessee Titans' starting tailback until 2003.

He has also become a celebrated actor. His most notable contribution to theater is his recent role as Billy Flynn in Broadway's *Chicago*. He has also appeared in several films: *The Best Man Holiday*, *7-10 Split* and *Into the Sun* and television roles: *Shooters*, *NCIS: Los Angeles* and HBO's *Ballers*.

On top of his acting career, he has added several businesses to his resume, the latest being the Edward George Wealth Management Group.

Participants who arrive July 12 before the official start of the conference, have an exciting array of mobile workshops that explore local solutions to issues ranging from preserving affordable housing to rebuilding cultural assets after a disaster to recreation opportunities for local waterfronts.

The Smarter Counties Forum (formerly Tech Hall) also kicks



off on Thursday. It will explore how technological innovation can tackle some of counties most intractable problems in the human services arena.

Policy steering committee meetings take over Friday's agenda. Members of NACo's 10 steering committees will be briefed by administration and federal agency officials as they deliberate new policy positions that will guide the association's advocacy efforts.

Saturday sees the first general session featuring Eddie George, legendary NFL running back, and also several high-value, spe-

cialized sessions that spotlight county communications strategies; ways to impact the social causes of health in a county; address substance use disorders; and make the fiscal case for juvenile justice reform.

Sunday, July 15, ramps up workshop offerings and features the Affordable Housing Forum, a must-go session for counties grappling with a tight, expensive real estate market for their employees and their residents.

Land use planning for large-scale solar arrays is the focus of one workshop, while another looks at emerging strategies in

addressing poverty. Other sample workshop topics include evidence-based policy decision-making, women and retirement, and growing local economies from within.

NACo's Annual Business meeting is also held during the Annual Conference. This year four candidates have announced their intention to run for the second vice president slot (see pages 8-11). The election on July 16 is preceded by votes on NACo's Policy Platform and resolutions.

Another general session closes out the day's formal activities with a presentation from Marian Wright Edelman and a bound-to-be entertaining singer/songwriter panel, discussing how they create their tunes and performing as well. Tom Douglas has written number one hits recorded by Tim McGraw, Lady Antebellum, Keith Urban and Miranda Lambert. His songs have been nominated for many awards, including the Grammy's, CMA Awards, the Oscars and the Golden Globes. In 2014,

he was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Natalie Hemby has become one of country music's defining songwriters, having written six number one singles and earning a Grammy nomination. She has written songs for Little Big Town, Sheryl Crow, Blake Shelton, Carrie Underwood, Toby Keith, Lee Ann Womack and Miranda Lambert.

Tim Nichols is one of the country music industry's most respected members. His number one songs have won countless awards, including a Grammy, and his music appeals to multiple generations of country music fans and artists. His top songs have been recorded by Tim McGraw, Ronnie Milsap, Patty Loveless, Faith Hill, Reba McEntire and Alan Jackson.

Bookending the conference are two fun-filled celebrations: the Opening Reception which will highlight the tastes and sounds from Tennessee's counties, and the Closing Celebration at the world-famous Grand Ole Opry House. **CN**

SNAP/STATS

MOST STRAWBERRY PRODUCTION IN 2016



STATE	Centum Weight*
California.....	28.78 million
Florida.....	2.2 million
North Carolina.....	144,000
Oregon.....	103,000
Washington.....	75,000
New York.....	30,000

* "centum weight" or 100 lbs.
Source: Statista 2018

Roy Charles Brooks reflects on his year as NACo president

From BROOKS page 1

times wondering just where the heck I am. But meeting each day with enthusiasm to meet new people, to show the NACo flag and to engage with others about county priorities.

What did you find most interesting or exciting?

The range of challenges facing our member counties and the similarities among those challenges in counties both urban and rural. I'm also excit-

ed by the creative approaches I've seen toward using county resources to meet these challenges and the resilience of the county spirit to keep rising every morning determined to make the new day a better one.

What are you proudest of?

Shining the light of NACo on our human infrastructure; the people we serve. I'm also proud to have excited the idealism of a new generation of county leaders who came to public service with a passion

to serve real people with real challenges caused by lack of opportunity, inadequate workforce skills, poor healthcare. I am proud to have been able to point member counties to best practices which they can use to address these concerns.

What advice would you give your successor?

Breathe!

What's next for Roy Charles Brooks?

I will continue to fight the

good fight every day to make our people stronger, our counties more effective and our nation worthy of the American dream.

Final thoughts?

NACo is a great organization that is relevant to policy formation in Washington and to policy implementation back at home. It has been my greatest joy to serve as NACo President.

Roy Charles Brooks
Hon. Roy Charles Brooks
NACo President

Senate bill closer in structure to current law; House would reform SNAP

From FARM BILL page 1

placed the House version with an amended package, passing a revised \$867 billion farm bill package by a more bipartisan basis 85-11.

While the Senate bill generally maintains the structure of current law, the House bill makes significant changes to most farm bill provisions. Specifically, the House bill would eliminate certain conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and cut the conservation title by \$800 million over the next 10 years. Under the rural development title, the House bill would create new authorizations for the secretary of agriculture to address emerging rural health crises and set speed standards for rural broadband loans.

The nutrition title of the farm bill, which includes SNAP

and accounts for roughly 75 percent of overall spending within the package, is expected to be the biggest hurdle for Senate and House negotiators to overcome as they look to come to agreement on a final bill. While major reforms to SNAP work requirements and eligibility standards were key for attracting support from House conservatives, particularly the Freedom Caucus, the Senate farm bill does not include the work requirements for SNAP found in the House bill, nor does it include language found in the House bill that would restrict SNAP eligibility to individuals with incomes no more than 30 percent above the poverty level.

The Senate bill does, however, include various measures aimed at reducing fraud within the program while expanding job training pilot programs. Additionally, the

Senate measure includes a one year reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program, a major priority for counties. NFIP provides flood insurance to property owners across the United States and sets floodplain management and risk mitigation policies that can have a major impact on counties and local taxpayers.

NACo helped draft bill text and amendments throughout both packages to preserve and promote key county priorities. Under the House bill, counties with regional jails could exclude incarcerated populations for program eligibility under USDA's definition of "rural." Additionally, counties could use USDA broadband loans and grants for middle-mile projects — currently prohibited under current law.

In the Senate, NACo worked with Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand

(D-N.Y.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) to create the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program, which would help counties strengthen the local economy through job accelerator partnerships with the private sector and institutions of higher education.

Another major priority in the Senate package is a provision to reinstate an undersecretary for rural development — a Senate-confirmed position, charged with overseeing a \$216 billion portfolio, that was eliminated in 2017. Additionally, the Senate package also codifies an interagency Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development to help leverage federal resources aimed at rural counties.

Both chambers included language that would expand the Strategic Economic and

Community Development Program, a major priority for counties, which incentivizes regional collaboration on rural economic development efforts.

With the current farm bill set to expire Sept. 30, the Senate and House must move quickly to finalize a package that can be supported by both chambers. With the Senate's final passage, congressional leadership must now appoint a conference committee to iron out differences between the two packages. Once a final package has been written, both chambers must consider and pass the conferenced bill before expiration of current law.

A comprehensive analysis of both farm bills can be found online at www.naco.org/farm-bill101. **CN**

Scott and Hurley are NACo associate legislative directors.



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DATE**

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**2019 NACo ANNUAL
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES **NACo**

LEADERSHIP EDGE

Partnering to Bring Hope to Rural Communities in Crisis

By Anne Hazlett

Assistant to the secretary for
rural development, USDA

In Mercer County, W.Va., a community gripped by the opioid epidemic, County Commissioner Greg Puckett spends more each month on his county jail bill than what he has budgeted for economic development in the entire year.

Greg is not alone. Our nation is in the midst of a crisis. And, while no corner of the country has gone untouched, rural communities have been particularly hard hit by this epidemic.

Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, we are sharply focused on increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life in rural America.

In carrying out that core mission, we believe that the opioid epidemic and the broader issue of addiction in rural communities is more than a health issue; this is a matter of rural prosperity because it is threatening economic development and changing the very fabric of small towns across our country.

From Michigan to Montana, the opioid crisis is increasing health care demands, draining social services, and putting substantial stress on limited emergency response and law enforcement resources.

This issue is also making economic development even more difficult for rural places like Mercer County that are already operating on slim budgets and struggling to attract new business.

The epidemic is hammering the competitiveness of rural businesses by hindering worker productivity and limiting the availability of qualified employees.

Lastly, the opioid crisis is impacting the next generation of rural leaders by tearing families apart and leaving children

in the chaos of temporary care.

I have seen this firsthand in my travels. Just last month, I visited with a plant manager in Kentucky who is struggling to keep his manufacturing plant running at full capacity because he cannot find enough qualified workers who can pass a drug test.

At any given time, he has 40 to 50 open positions — opportunities which go untapped primarily due to the growing challenge of drug use in his region.

In West Virginia, I met a judge who removed 175 children last year from families where a parent is struggling with drug use.

With only nine foster families in the county, he is now juggling children between makeshift shelters and hotel space in a neighboring county. And finally, in Illinois, a local elected official told me that drug calls into his city's emergency hotline are taking up so much response capacity that callers cannot get through with other emergencies.

Many of these anecdotes may sound painfully familiar to you in your own community.

As you stand on the front lines of this battle, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) stands with you as a partner in building an effective local response to this monumental challenge.

From coaching rural leaders to improve the quality of life in their communities through the Rural Impact County Challenge to taking on mental illness in the jail system through the Stepping Up initiative, we are grateful for NACo's leadership in tackling tough challenges.

As we look ahead together at the needs of rural communities in facing the opioid crisis, USDA seeks to bolster these efforts with resources for prevention, treatment and



Anne Hazlett, assistant to the secretary for rural development at USDA, take notes during a panel discussion. Photo courtesy of USDA

recovery as well as building upstream resilience through prosperity.

We have programs for prevention education, health care facilities and public safety infrastructure, and have given priority to applications that would address the opioid crisis in several of these programs.

These resources can be used to help leaders build additional treatment capacity and acquire vehicles and equipment. We also have funding for building distance learning and telemedicine connections that will help small towns connect to training and specialized medical care needs which are often otherwise not available in rural America.

Beyond these programs to assist in an immediate response, USDA has many resources to address crucial components of long-term prosperity in rural America such as housing, broadband connection and business opportunities.

To help connect rural leaders to these resources as well as the resources of our partners like NACo, we have established an opioids webpage on the USDA website.

There, local leaders can find information about funding opportunities, news updates, model practices and links to other agencies.

We recently launched an interactive opioid misuse resource map on the page to highlight resources for prevention, treatment and recovery from rural communities across the country.

As we build this library of resources, we need your help in lifting up what you have seen in your own county or state.

Please visit www.usda.gov/topics/opioids and click on "What's working in your town?" to contribute.

Lastly, USDA is building strategic partnerships and facilitating the adoption of models that have been effective on the ground.

In March, we kicked off a series of rural roundtables in Middletown, Pa.

The first event included Commissioner Ed Bustin, from Bradford County, Pa., a NACo member, who advocated for partnership and collaboration in the wake of this crisis.

We have since held conversations in Nevada, Utah, Missouri, Kentucky and Oklahoma and

will go to Maine next month.

Through these roundtable events, we have gained a stronger understanding of the unique needs of rural communities in this battle and been able to learn from what is already working on the ground in rural America.

We are using this information to shape new initiatives and resource tools for rural communities. We are also sharing this information with other rural interests so together we can be a more effective partner to local leaders on the front lines.

At USDA, we believe in rural America and in the promise of small towns and the people who call them home.

With a passion for our mission, we are committed to being a strong partner to local leaders to defeat the scourge of the opioid epidemic.

Together, we can build healthy and prosperous rural communities now and for generations to come. **CN**

Anne Hazlett serves as the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture.

Mall reboots help counties' bottom line

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

Getting your ears pierced with your best friend, shopping during the holidays, getting that first job — they're all the kinds of things you might do at a shopping mall. But in some areas of the country, the way of life that loomed so large is falling by the wayside.

You will still find some areas where malls are thriving, but in other pockets of the country, they are either barely hanging on, being demolished or getting a reboot.

"Even though malls account for only 9 percent of our retail real estate, they're definitely the most high-profile — for local governments, these have traditionally been cash cows as tax revenue generators," said Garrick Brown, vice president, Retail Research, the Americas, for Cushman & Wakefield, a real estate research firm.

In 2017, nearly 8,500 stores closed, surpassing the number that occurred during the great recession. Closures in 2018 are expected to match or exceed that level, according to Cushman & Wakefield.

The types of brick-and-mortar retail businesses that are closing up in malls include consumer electronics, apparel, department stores, books/music/video and sporting goods. Stores that are on the upswing are dollar discount stores, discount grocery, off-price apparel, beauty or cosmetics, fitness and health clubs, fast food, coffee and fast fashion.

In addition to stores closing, fewer people are visiting malls. In 2010, there were 35 million visits to malls. Three years later, visits declined by 50 percent to 17 million.

About 300 "C-level" malls (less than \$300 in sales per square foot) across the country will go under in the next five years unless there is a "massive investment of capital," Brown predicted. "They would have to completely redesign the mall, make it more mixed-use.

And these mall owners, most of them don't have the capital to do that." Some malls will be OK, he noted, "if they're the only game in town."

Brown said some pockets of the country are oversaturated with malls and likens the situation to a cattle herd: "The herd was over-populated and those that were weak are already dying."

When a shopping mall goes under, counties can lose tax revenue, local jobs and a social hub where residents gather.

"Growing up, I worked at Springfield Mall," said Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor Jeff McKay. "I hung out at Springfield Mall. I vividly remembered the sense of civic pride it brought to everyone in our community and how great it was to have a thriving mall here in Lee District."

When the mall fell into disrepair, McKay worked "hand-in-glove" with the builder, county staff and all major role players to get them through the process and re-open as quickly as possible. The mall held a grand opening several years ago after a \$250 million renovation.

And there is more hope on the horizon. Ellen Dunham-Jones, an architecture professor at Georgia Tech University, said that the closing of

some suburban shopping centers is an opportunity to turn "unsustainable" areas into sustainable areas. Developers are finding new ways to use abandoned malls including turning them into churches, medical centers, nursing homes, office space and colleges, she said.

Another potential use: Affordable housing, Brown said. Shopping mall sites can and are being turned around by developers to "build an urban-suburban village with multi-family rentals and condos or a big health-care system. That makes a lot of sense." That's the case in Hinds County, Miss., where a traditional shopping mall has been turned into a "medical mall." The old Jackson mall now employs about 1,500 and some businesses in the mall stayed open to cater to the medical community.

There's talk that another Hinds County shopping mall, Metro Center, may soon house a local community college, said Tax Assessor Charles Stokes. "The good thing is, the mall is still on the tax roll. It won't go off unless it's torn down."

Stokes said he noticed that remaining and surrounding local businesses are renovating their spaces to attract students. "The businesses in there, not related to the mall — the coun-

*TOP 10 MALLS THAT PAY THE MOST IN PROPERTY TAXES:

Mall	Property Taxes
Mall of America, Hennepin County, Minn.	\$30 million
Tysons Corner Center, Fairfax County, Va.	\$21 million
The Galleria, Harris County, Texas.....	\$19 million
Sawgrass Mills, Broward County, Fla.	\$18 million
Destiny USA, Onondaga County, N.Y.	\$12 million
Ala Moana Center, Honolulu County, Hawaii	\$11 million
King of Prussia Mall, Montgomery County, Pa.	\$9 million
Del Amo Fashion Center, Los Angeles County, Calif.	\$8 million
Aventura Mall, Miami-Dade County, Fla.	\$5 million
South Coast Plaza, Orange County, Calif.	\$4 million

**Source: Commercial Cafe — Figures are rounded; from 2016*

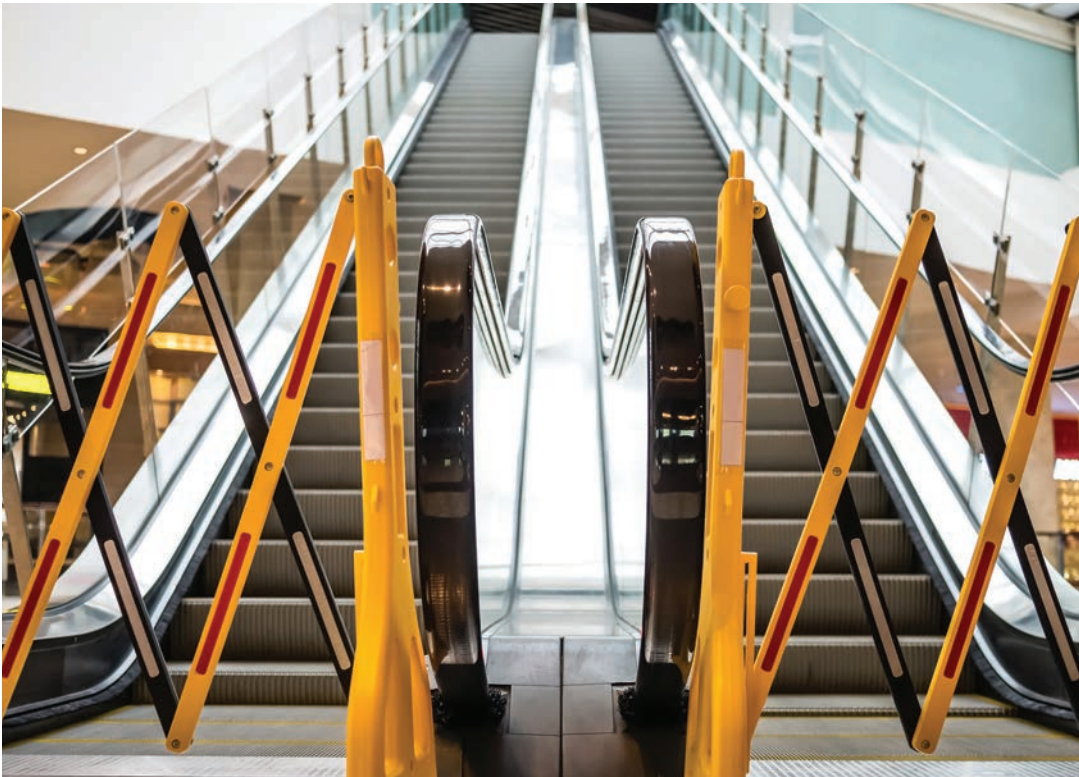
ty still gets income from them," he said. "It's better to do it that way then to let the building sit there empty and take the whole neighborhood down."

Mixed-use developments are another way to revive a dying shopping mall. When Villa Italia Mall opened in 1966 in Jefferson County, Colo., it saw 725,000 people from surrounding states visit during its opening weekend. For the next 35 years, "Villa" as locals called it, was a social and commercial hub of the county. By 1999, the mall had lost 50 percent of its tenants. By 2001, it closed. Jefferson County's property tax

revenue from the mall by then was \$543,100.

After the 104-acre site underwent an environmental cleanup (it had also been the site of a dry cleaners and auto service shops), it was revamped as a mixed-use retail, office and entertainment space that now generates \$2 million in tax revenue each year for the county. Brown noted that one of his favorite examples of another mixed use development is in Collin County, Texas, home to The Shops at Legacy, a 2,600-acre planned community.

Some shopping centers are being used as part of a business that some say is part of the reason malls are in a death spiral. A former shopping center in Cuyahoga County, Ohio — Randall Park Mall — which thrived for 40 years, went the way of the wrecking ball a few years ago. Now, the site will be an Amazon fulfillment center. In another part of the county, Euclid Square Mall is also being turned into an Amazon fulfillment center. Workers at these centers will fill online orders for the types of goods that people once purchased at malls. Amazon has received more than \$1 billion in tax breaks across 129 communities including in some counties where they made multi-year deals to not



Supreme Court alters online sales tax landscape – what comes next?

By Jack Peterson

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *South Dakota v. Wayfair* that states and local governments can require internet retailers to collect sales taxes, even if the company has no physical presence in the state. The ruling promises to shake up the sales tax collection landscape, no matter what happens next.

Although *Wayfair* does not immediately open the door for collection of sales taxes on remote and online purchases by eliminating the “physical presence” standard, it sets a clearer path forward for states aiming to capture tax revenue on purchases from vendors based outside their jurisdiction.

Early signs indicate states will approach this new opportunity in different ways. In South Dakota, the state supreme court must now decide the case without the “physical presence” test in play. Other states such as New Jersey are already considering legislation to take advantage of this new opportunity.

Most states are debating how

to use this revenue — for new projects or to lower other tax rates. However, each state decision could be challenged by retailers in state courts. Questions will persist about what requirements might be overburdensome or what constitutes a “nexus” between a vendor and the state. (Some states have argued a certain number of purchases constitutes a venue — \$200,000 in sales. Others have made the case even for internet ads or the use of cookies on a webpage as “nexus.”

It could take time for states and local governments to start seeing additional revenue as a result of the *Wayfair* ruling.

Counties are also likely to be affected as the impact of the court’s decision on states becomes clearer. Many counties employ a local sales or use tax on top of the state’s sales tax rate. Ideally, when a state enforces collection of its sales tax, it will also collect and remit the local government portion. Some states and local governments have already joined the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement (SSUTA), which

helps streamline the collection process for governments and businesses and ensures that local governments capture their share of revenues.

Congress could step in at any point and solve many of these questions. In 2013, the Senate voted in a bipartisan fashion to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act, which codified the SSUTA, allowed for collection of these taxes and laid out protections for small businesses. Congress was close to attaching a similar bill to the March omnibus package, but the final legislation did not include such a provision.

As the dust from *Wayfair* settles over the next several months, the decision promises to give states and local governments access to previously owed but uncollected taxes. Now, counties should work with both their state legislatures and Congress to ensure that local sales and use taxes are included in any tax-related legislation approved at the state or federal level. **CN**

Jack Peterson is a NACo associate legislative director.

Record PILT payments coming to counties

By Jonathan Shuffield

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke announced June 27 that over \$552.8 million will be distributed to counties in 2018 through the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

This represents the largest total PILT disbursement to date since the program was first enacted in 1976. A full list of funding by state and county is available at www.doi.gov/pilt.

The PILT program provides payments to counties and other local governments to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of substantial federal land acreage within their jurisdictions.

Because local governments

are unable to tax the property values or products derived from federal lands, PILT payments are necessary to support essential local government services — those mandated by law — such as education, emergency services, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement and health care.

More than 1,900 counties in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Island receive PILT payments.

Since PILT payments began over 40 years ago, the Department of Interior has invested about \$8.5 billion dollars through the PILT program in counties across the country.

As Secretary Zinke stated in

his announcement, “These investments are one of the ways the federal government is fulfilling its role of being a good land manager and good neighbor to local communities.”

“PILT investments often serve as critical support for local communities as they juggle planning and paying for basic services, such as public safety, fire-fighting, social services, and transportation,” he said.

NACo applauds Congress and the administration for this record investment in the PILT program and for their support of America’s public lands counties. **CN**

Jonathan Shuffield is a NACo associate legislative director.

EPA to limit veto power over water permits

By Zach George

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who resigned July 5, released a memo June 26 restricting the EPA’s power to veto water permits. The action is a reversal of previous administrations’ use of the agency’s veto power and goes into effect immediately.

Under the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) issues water permits, known as Section 404 permits, for dredge and fill activities in “Waters of the U.S.” jurisdictional areas. These permits may be required for road and levee construction, beach nourishment projects, commercial building and land reclamation. However, CWA also gives EPA the authority to veto Section 404 permits it believes would be hazardous or harmful to waterways, which halts the project. As major owners, users and regulators of water resources and infrastructure, counties are often involved in the Section 404 permitting process.

Administrator Pruitt’s memo limits the agency’s veto use and requires regional offices to gain approval from EPA headquarters before attempting to block a Section 404 permit. Additionally, the memo directs the agency to undertake a public comment period before vetoing a Section 404 permit.

Since 1980, the EPA has used its veto power on 13 occasions, including two controversial vetoes under the Obama Administration. In 2011, EPA vetoed permits for a mountaintop coal-removal operation in West Virginia seven years after the Army Corps approved them, which was challenged in court. In 2014, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that EPA has the authority to retroactively veto Section 404 permits. In a separate instance in 2014, EPA rejected a Section 404 permit before an application was even submitted to the Army Corps for review. **CN**

Zach George is a legislative assistant.

Reinventing shopping malls

From MALLS page 5

pay property taxes.

Some malls reinvent themselves to fit desires of millennials and empty nesters. The first U.S. enclosed shopping mall, Southdale, opened in 1956 in Hennepin County, Minn.

It has undergone numerous renovations and is adding an athletic club (in place of a J.C. Penney) promising a “resort style” experience including a rooftop “beach club.” Plans call for adding multi-family housing and a DMV office.

“What Southdale is doing now, reinventing itself as a community space, as we look at the changing retail environment, it’s an appropriate course of action for a lot of these malls,” said Hennepin County Commissioner Jan Callison.

The “father of the American

mall,” Austrian architect Victor Gruen, designed Southdale. His original plans called for housing, museums and a big man-made lake — sounding much like the mixed-use shopping centers of today.

“He went out there in the ‘50s and saw all these tract homes with no center of culture and thought it was a wasteland” Brown said.

“All of his plans didn’t entirely get built. This biographer talked to him right before he died and asked him ‘How does it feel to be the father of the American mall?’ He said ‘If I’m the father of the American mall, I renounce paternity!’”

Today, Brown said, if a mall wants to survive, “you have to embrace everything the original designer of the first enclosed mall envisioned but never got realized in his lifetime.” **CN**

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MEET THE CANDIDATES

NACo Second Vice President Candidate Platform

Ray Jeffers

Commissioner, Person County, N.C.

I respectfully ask for your vote to become your next NACo 2nd vice president. Ten years ago when I came to Nashville for my very first NACo conference, I knew immediately that I wanted to be involved in this incredible organization. NACo has helped me personally grow as a public servant, and I am grateful that you have entrusted me to serve in several NACo leadership positions over the years. I am running for NACo 2nd vice president because I want to give back to NACo and all our fellow members, who work hard every day on behalf of counties.

I have had the honor to serve as vice chair and chair of NACo's Rural Action Caucus. I also spent four years serving on the NACo Board of Directors and continue to serve on the Board. In addition, I have served as president of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and chaired various steering committees at our state association. And, I am currently serving a third term as Person County commissioner in North Carolina.

Uniting to Make Progress

Through these experiences, I have developed valuable skills as a collaborator and unifier, which are necessary to bring together the varied views and interests throughout the country to make progress on the tough issues counties face. Yes, we are 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs, but we are one nation. I have a strong record of

finding opportunities to collaborate across county, state, and party lines and I'd like to bring that ability to NACo.

In North Carolina we have taken the mantra that we are 100 counties but we are also one state. I took this approach leading my state association, which is rich in diversity, and was able to successfully advance our association's issues and goals. I am eager to work together, promote mutual understanding of each other's issues, and mobilize all our members to move forward together as a nation.

Harnessing Rural-Urban Collaboration for Economic Development

As a rural candidate for NACo 2nd vice president, I offer a creative and constructive approach to economic development in both rural and urban counties. Being from a small, rural community with about 40,000 people, I know firsthand the challenges rural counties face, like gaps in internet access and population decline. But, I also know there is enormous potential for rural and urban counties to work together to leverage their unique strengths to promote economic growth for all.

Person County is located within 60 miles of North Carolina's capital city, Raleigh, and two other large urban areas. Through rural-urban collaboration, there are promising opportunities to attract companies that need skilled workers and space to



grow. Space is something rural counties can offer to accommodate new facilities. In neighboring urban areas, the population density offers a large workforce pool for companies to recruit talent. Taking a holistic approach and working together with rural and urban counterparts can boost employment across county and state lines.

As president of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, I established a task force on economic development and engaged in discussions with experts and county officials through a statewide listening tour and economic development symposium. Through this work, I learned that a lot of opportunities are possible if we combine the strengths of rural and urban areas.

I'd like to replicate this approach at NACo to uncover new opportunities to establish regional economic hubs in various industries and emerging sectors in all stages of production. I reject the concept of the rural-urban divide because it pits counties and regions against one another. Instead of focusing on our differences, I want to promote a new concept — the rural-urban combine. Just as a harvesting combine helps farmers maximize productivity, we can build partnerships that combine the strength of rural and urban counterparts, enhancing our

nation's economic potential.

Focusing on Farming

As your NACo 2nd vice president, I will also work hard to strengthen the agriculture industry, which represents a vital part of our economy. I come from a state where agriculture dominates. It is the largest sector in North Carolina, with an annual economic impact of \$85 billion, and it is woven into the fabric of our communities. It is also deeply personal to me. It is part of my heritage and it is our family tradition.

I grew up working on a tobacco farm, which was purchased by my great grandfather in 1919. I am proud of the longevity of my family's farm, which is approaching its 100-year anniversary. From a young age, I embraced the farming lifestyle. I served as president of the local chapter of Future Farmers of America and focused on agriculture education as part of my studies at North Carolina Agriculture & Technical University.

In 2003, our family farm was at a crossroads and we had to look at new ways to continue farming. Since then, I've taken on new projects to capitalize on the growing farm-to-table movement with niche farming and micro gardening. With so many things affecting the agriculture industry today, it's important for leaders to understand the way of life for our nation's farmers. I understand farming from a very personal perspective and this is what separates me from other candidates.

My personal experiences and insight as a member of a multi-generational farming family and rural commissioner make me an effective advocate for these issues. I am passionate about farm preservation and strengthening the agriculture sector.

As your next NACo 2nd vice president, I will fight for federal policies that strengthen agriculture and sustain the American family farming tradition.

Strengthening NACo Through Telling Its Story

In addition to promoting collaboration between rural and urban neighbors and advancing policies that support the agriculture industry, I will also prioritize efforts to retain and recruit NACo members. NACo's strength and influence are inextricably linked to the level of engagement of our members. The more we can succeed in encouraging counties to participate actively in NACo, the more power we will have to advocate for our federal priorities and provide counties with the support they need to thrive.

My plan is to enhance outreach to our existing members to increase awareness on the full range of the benefits NACo offers. I will also seek to mobilize existing members by asking them to share individual stories about how the organization helped them grow and deliver better services for their counties back home. These first-hand, positive stories will help entice new members to become involved in NACo and improve our effectiveness in advocating for county priorities.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to meeting you. More information is available on my campaign website: www.jeffersfornaco.com. I would be honored to have your support and respectfully ask for your vote for NACo 2nd vice president.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

NACo Second Vice President Candidate Platform

Larry “LJ” Johnson

Commisioner, DeKalb County, Ga



Entrepreneurship & Innovation. An innovative economy stresses entrepreneurship and innovation. In order to continue to grow our economy we must educate our workforce and entrepreneurs to meet the needs of the 21st century. This economy must increase manufacturing, farming and technology driven jobs for our counties. Our counties must economically think globally, act regionally and plan locally. I will use my international relationships and resources to set up business fairs at our Legislative Conference for us to interact with foreign countries who are interested in trading with our counties. This is a way to build strategic relationships that promote not only trade but other cultural opportunities. I will strengthen the partnership with NextGen so future voices are at the table to make our counties stronger. It is said that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats,’ and a rising tide of economic innovations lifts the boats of all.

Prevention. Prevention includes the continued development of communities that are walkable, vibrant centers that support people of all ages and abilities. This is a standard we must work to not only meet but exceed. A healthy, vibrant community has at its core, components that promote healthy living, as well as the arts. We have to become more strategic with our respective

With more than 16 years of government experience, I know what it takes to find solutions, navigate complicated government agencies and get things done.

‘Making The Heart Of America Stronger’ is not just a slogan to me, it is how I see NACo continuing to build upon the great foundation laid by the many outstanding leaders that have brought the association this far.

“We, each of us, have a commitment to our respective communities to help them achieve and remain on the cutting edge of the latest technological developments that can enhance service delivery in our counties.

“We must strive to learn from each other and utilize best practices to further innovate economic development.

As your 2nd vice president I will bring my knowledge, depth of experience, solid leadership, dedication and commitment to help continue to move NACo forward.”

-Commissioner Larry “LJ” Johnson

We are at a pivotal point in NACo history where experience and leadership matter. I am near completion of my fourth, 4-year term and just won a fifth term with 81% of the vote.

What I have heard on the campaign trail is that we need to have someone who will not only be fair but someone that will fight for all of us. My Master’s Degree in Public Health

gives me an edge in bi-partisan policy making because of my experience in dealing with opioids, poverty and knowing how to bring rural, suburban and urban counties together that have been proactive in fighting for PILT, SRS, Transportation, Health Disparities, Broadband Connectivity and Infrastructure improvements.

My platform includes World-Class Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship & Innovation and Prevention.

World-Class Infrastructure. World-Class Infrastructure includes a comprehensive transportation network that incorporates regional transit and 21st century technology. This also includes water supply issues which are at the forefront of many points of discussion amongst leaders around the country.

As an organization, we must focus our efforts on a global approach which includes crafting recommendations for congressional consideration for legislation that can serve to bridge the gaps that exist and not engender polarization.

This strategy also includes rebuilding our roads, shoring up and replacing bridges, establishing walking/biking trails, making our communities walkable through sidewalk installations and above all incorporating rail. Rail is a direct path to sustainable, environmentally friendly communities.

budgets and not simply balance our budgets by cutting arts programs designed for our citizens.

Additionally, counties that have large tracts of land owned by the federal government should be allowed a place at the table to take part in determining how the land will be utilized. I will also be an advocate for counties on common sense water regulations. The last thing counties need to do is pay a bunch of consultants to figure out regulations while economic development and green space use is held up.

I will work collaboratively with the Western Interstate Region, Rural Action Caucus and Large Urban County Caucus to make sure counties are at the table to have input on these critical quality of life factors.

Finally, **Education** is an essential piece to any strategy. I will advocate for increased educational opportunities for NACo members. I believe that we should, in our capacities as elected officials, work towards a leadership development program that provides accreditation to our membership, which includes a premier certification. As a commissioner in Georgia, the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) “Advancing Georgia’s Counties” has a certification program in which all commissioners must participate.

On a national level, we can work with well-known colleges and universities to establish a program, which grants credits toward a designated certification. This would greatly enhance the knowledge base of NACo members.

My experience also includes working for former President Jimmy Carter on a local project in Atlanta that focused on building communities.

Additionally, I have been appointed by eight NACo presi-

dents and those appointments include the following committees where I have also served as chair: Health, International Economic Development, LUCC (current chair), Healthy Counties and Health Disparities.

Please vote for me to be your NACo 2nd vice president that I may bring my vast experience and understanding of your needs to be your advocate on Capitol Hill and in your communities. I will not let you down, just ask the past presidents of NACo.

Vote for Larry “LJ” Johnson for your NACo 2nd Vice president. I am business minded and community focused with a human service heart.

I have linked and leveraged public and private partnerships locally, regionally, nationally and globally and have empowered people to improve their quality of life.

I have the most regional experience: I lived in Illinois (Chicago, Urbana-Champaign), Colorado (Greeley, Weld County) and Georgia (Decatur, unincorporated DeKalb County). Vote “LJ” all the way for a well-rounded, seasoned public servant who has lived in suburban, urban and rural settings. Let’s continue to make the heart of America stronger — together!

For more information call 404.941.0462, email larry-j2vp@gmail.com or visit www.LJforNACo.com.



MEET THE CANDIDATES

NACo Second Vice President Candidate Platform

Gary Moore Judge-Executive, Boone County, Ky.



When I made the decision to run for NACo 2nd vice president, it wasn't a decision that I made on a whim.

I thought about this carefully for a long time, had countless conversations with other trusted colleagues and family members, and I mapped out overarching ideas and key objectives that I would use to help NACo and all counties become stronger and more efficient should I be honored to serve in this capacity.

It's that focus and strategic planning that will serve at the heart of everything I do as your 2nd vice president — if elected. My desire to listen to other national leaders, state leaders and anyone at the local level complements that focus and planning. There may be no stronger component to a strategic plan than listening to other stakeholders.

Together, our experiences will help us grow and become a stronger, more unified NACo.

All organizations, NACo included, can benefit from clear direction and better planning. Our strategic plan, preferably a multi-year design that is led by the membership, will better communicate and direct NACo staff toward work that will elevate our organization to a higher status in Washington, D.C.

Under the current system, there are yearly presidential initiatives that are constantly pulling staff in a new direction every 12 months, and these initiatives do not apply to every county. It is priority No. 1 for me to streamline our services and initiatives with an all-encompassing strategic plan.

This plan will be built in a way that we can build on our successes and witness continued yearly growth with momentum so strong and powerful, it will never stop progressing.

This growth will, in turn, propel NACo to a higher platform on a national stage, and the idea of being a part of that excites me greatly.

When our federal administration and Congress think of the Big Seven (The Council of State Governments, National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, National League of Cities, United States Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, and the International City/County Management Association) they should think of NACo first. I won't be satisfied with anything less.

We are making great strides, but there is more work to do if we are going to achieve this goal. I would hope that our new multi-year strategic plan would help NACo achieve this status.

These goals, like most, are achieved through organization, listening, action and vision. I am eagerly looking forward to these challenges, and I will work diligently to help us get there.

NACo has amazing leadership in place, and the opportunity to serve with NACo's incoming President Greg Cox from California, current Second Vice President Mary Ann Borgeson from Nebraska and soon-to-be past President Roy Charles Brooks from Texas is another way for me to listen and learn from high quality

leaders. They will — no doubt — move NACo forward. As 2nd vice president, I will assist them and support their initiatives just as I hope my vice presidents will do in my term as president should I be so fortunate to serve.

While there are no two counties that are identical, we can learn from the accomplishments of others. It's also vital to NACo, our states and our counties that we learn and grow from any missteps previously made along the way.

That's a concept anyone, no matter how old or experienced you are, should embrace. It's so important to grow from mistakes that it's routinely taught in our schools today to right your wrongs. That's why I will be diligent in always looking for a better way. I will not settle just because something is working well. What are the possibilities if something great can be even better? Exploring new opportunities is such a rewarding facet of growth.

I recognize that budgets and lack of funding are issues that will constantly impact NACo. I have learned from counties in other states about creative ways to fund projects.

Also, in the troubling and pressing world of opioid addiction, there are some very successful programs that other counties have implemented. We can't rest, however, until the opioid epidemic is more adequately addressed through improved education, preven-

tion, and treatment.

Fiscally, most counties are underfunded and, because of that, understaffed. It's yet another example of why we must learn from each other and share ideas. Everyone is trying to cope with fiscal concerns. As we come together nationally to share, this example will surely trickle down to the state and county level, and I know one state, in particular, is excited to answer the call nationally.

I've been blessed to serve five terms as Boone County judge/executive in my home state of Kentucky and recently, I was elected to a sixth four-year term beginning in 2019.

While I am thrilled by the notion of becoming a stronger leader through NACo, I am grateful to have learned so much from other elected officials, especially through my previous involvement in NACo and through the Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo).

Currently, I'm the first vice president for KACo, and Kentucky has proven to be a state that wants to find ways to help its 120 counties knowing that, in turn, other states benefit from a stronger Kentucky.

My colleagues in the Bluegrass State are committed to helping me join the NACo leadership team. In fact, Kentucky, just became a 100 percent membership state because it sees the increased value that NACo is delivering. In addition, once we complete our strategic plan and begin to implement it, NACo will be more attractive to the staffs and elected officials in counties across our country.

In my opinion, membership is tied to momentum and value. Our fellow members must see the progress and equally find their membership to be something of substance. NACo is driven by elected county officials. We must continue to survey the needs of the membership and then respond to them accordingly.

I pledge to work tirelessly to engage non-member counties and to provide them with NACo benefits that can't be ignored.

Additionally, I can relate to the economic and social diversity and the need for national support that NACo provides through my own experience with the Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana (OKI) Council of Governments, Cincinnati's Metro Planning Organization, which serves 2.2 million people in eight counties in those three states.

I was honored to serve as president of the greater Cincinnati council of regional government, and it was this experience that I gained the absolute respect for the creativity of the metro areas equaling the preservation of our agricultural and rural regions. Our NACo platform will be inclusive of all counties while considering their diversity of size, metro or rural, liberal or conservative, or the many other labels that often divide us.

It's time for me to give back by helping my fellow elected county officials and working to build NACo into an even stronger organization than it already is.

I have been attending NACo events for about 19 years. I have attended annual conferences, legislative conferences, and many leadership training programs. I have also chaired two different policy steering committees: Transportation and Energy, Environment, and Land Use, and I co-chaired the NACo-National League of Cities Opioid Task Force. I have attended many workshops and leadership training sessions like the NACo Harvard Exchange Forum in Cambridge, Mass. The interaction and the training that I have received have been priceless, and I would not be the judge/executive that I am today with-

See MOORE page 9



MEET THE CANDIDATES

NACo Second Vice President Candidate Platform

Barbara Sharief Commissioner, Broward County, Fla.

Hello NACo,

The National Association of Counties has a great foundation and strong leadership. I hope, with your support, to be a part of furthering the association as 2nd vice president. Since announcing my candidacy last October, I've attended conferences and peer exchanges that have given me the opportunity to share my platform and ideas with other commissioners nationwide. In addition, I have learned that while we may be different in size, we are all facing similar problems and we must continue to work together to find solutions. Specifically, we must do more for our veterans, drive economic prosperity, defeat the opioid epidemic and ensure mental health services for those in need.

As a mother of three children and owner of a home health-care company, I understand the importance of providing health equity in our communities. Our biggest challenge has been adequate funding for the opioid epidemic. The Nation's current opioid crisis knows no boundaries. It is affecting all our communities, large and

small, rural and urban, and, more importantly, it's affecting all our people – young and old, all races and ethnicities, and all social income brackets. NACo must continue to play a vital role in working with county leaders to conduct research, develop data, share information, and assist counties in finding and advocating for common-sense solutions to end an epidemic that is killing 115 Americans each day. We must work together with our federal and state partners to pass rational legislation addressing the epidemic: reduce the availability of prescription and illegal opioids; increase federal funding directed at our local communities; implement effective diversion and treatment programs and other criminal justice reforms directed at nonviolent offenders addicted to drugs; and expand insurance coverage for addiction treatment including greater access to mental health and substance abuse services.

At a recent Health Equity Peer Exchange in Louisville, KY, a small group of county officials discussed challenges faced when trying to provide affordable healthcare services,



housing, and other programs designed to aid underserved communities. We shared some solutions – training programs, additional funding for law enforcement, and other programs to help identify and assist individuals with mental health issues within our communities. We also discussed the importance of eliminating the stigma of homelessness and the “look” of public assistance housing. As elected officials, we must work harder and develop more effective strategies to build trust with our community partners to eliminate the increasing health inequality and cycle of poverty afflicting our counties.

My brother is a veteran and for me this is personal. We must continue to advocate for increased care, education and job placement for our veterans. Our veterans sacrifice their lives for us to maintain our freedoms and keep us safe at home. We must do more for them when they return from their service. As county lead-

ers, we must work with Congress to ensure our veterans receive the best quality health care America has to offer. We need to let our veterans know assistance is always available, they need not despair or face their struggles alone.

More than ever, veterans are struggling to find a job. We must encourage government at all levels and the private sector to improve job placement services and programs for our veterans. Finally, the Post-9/11 GI bill provides up to 36 months of education benefits to eligible veterans depending on time served. This benefit is generally insufficient to allow a veteran to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degree without incurring additional costs or debt. We must encourage Congress to expand the Post-9/11 GI Bill's post-secondary education benefits to ensure our veterans can get the degrees they desire and the jobs they seek.

As a native Floridian, with roots in farming and agriculture, NACo must continue to be the lead organization in restoring full funding for payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding for our western states. More than 62 percent of counties receive PILT funding for more than 653 million acres of federal lands. While attending the WIR conference in Sun Valley, Idaho, I was able to see firsthand the natural beauty associated with protecting and preserving federal lands

for public use. However, such federal ownership of public lands and other spaces comes at a price that is felt mostly at the local level. Therefore, I will continue to advocate strongly for increased federal funding for PILT.

Florida shares many things with our sister states. We have large, medium and small-sized counties, our economy thrives on agriculture, tourism and trade. We are one of the most diverse states in the nation. When I served as president of the Florida Association of Counties, I stood with and fought for the needs of all our counties, regardless of its impact to my home county of Broward — I will do the same as a leader of NACo.

I intend on working to continue NACo's success. I understand the importance of unity, and standing with you, my fellow commissioners, is what allows our organization to be the most recognized and most effective local government organization in Washington, DC. Do not hesitate to contact me and get to know me more before we celebrate in Nashville. I believe in my platform and I hope you will too.

I ask for your vote to be your next 2nd vice president. Allow me to rock for you.

#BarbaraRocks

'Meet the Candidates'

From MOORE page 8

out our National Association of Counties.

I am seeking the office of 2nd vice president of NACo because I care.

I truly care about county government, and I care about

making a difference. My entire life and my work have been immersed in county government. I was blessed to practically grow up in a county courthouse as the son of a rural county sheriff, and those memories have never faded.

I have the resources within

my home county and within my state that will allow me to be an asset for NACo. It would be a blessing and a privilege to serve as your NACo 2nd vice president.

I humbly ask for your vote.

Retiring after 43 years: 'It was a blast!'

By Gail Whittaker

When Louise Stokes started working for York County, Va., in 1975 as a buyer, she was a one-woman show. "It was a new position in the accounting office," she said. "I worked closely with the county administrator and finance director to purchase all goods and services for the county. The departments were very small in number, and I compiled procedures for processing requisitions and purchases."

Being a one-woman show wasn't the only challenge she encountered: Louise was the longest tenured African-American female professional in the county when she retired June 29 after 43 years of employment. "When I was hired at the county, I did not see anyone in the office that looked like me," she recalled. "The atmosphere was quiet and dim for a period, but after a while things changed and people became a little warmer. There were only four other employees of color at the time and they were in our janitorial services area."

Growing up in the Bethel District, Louise attended James Weldon Johnson School System through the eighth grade. "After segregation laws were passed, I attended York High School and graduated in 1970," she said. She worked a short stint at Newport News Shipyard before joining the county workforce. Since that time, the county offices have become more diverse. And, Louise says, "I hope my legacy has helped others in just a small way."

Louise worked for eight county administrators and many Board of Supervisor members and has witnessed many changes over the years, including the huge impact advancing technology has had to the operations of the county. "In the early years, I had to hand-type stacks of purchase orders every morning that needed to be processed and



Louise Stokes

mailed," she said. "Then the county moved to a couple of different computer systems. And eight years after I was hired, the office expanded to add a Purchasing Agent and a secretary. We were on the move then! Later we assumed responsibility for purchasing school division items and we became a centralized function."

As she looks back on four decades of service, she is extremely proud of the positive customer service she was able to provide to the county departments and agencies and also to the community overall. "I worked hard to earn the confidence that I could meet the deadlines that the departments had and assist in making the process come full circle," she stated. "I look back and think of the items I've been responsible for acquiring: fire trucks, vehicles, playground equipment, furnishings for the Finance Building, York-Poquoson Courthouse, and both libraries — too many things to list!"

She will return in late summer-early fall 2019 when her last big item, the new Fire Station 1, is opened. After that project is completed, the ex-

pansion of the Yorktown Library will be on the county's plate, with Louise's work behind it all.

"I might not be there putting down the bricks and mortar," she said laughing, "but I'm there in the contracts and services that brought about these buildings, which will serve the community for many, many years."

As she got ready to leave, Louise couldn't help but look back at the many activities in which she's been involved while working for York County. "We had a softball team, bowling team, March of Dimes, talent shows — it was a blast! The best part of it all has been the coworkers, the extended families you spend time with more than your actual family," she said.

Next on her list? "I may write a book — 'Shadows of Yorktown.'" Knowing Louise, she'll shop for the best publisher with the best printing price you can find, saving you money when you purchase and read the book. It's sure to be a bestseller! **CN**

Gail Whittaker is a public information officer for York County, Va.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

LORI HUDSON LETZRING

Board Member
Community Relations
Manager
Hillsborough County, Fla.



LETZRING

Number of years involved in NACo: 13

Years in public service: 24

Occupation: Communications, public relations and media relations.

Education: B.A. in journalism/broadcast news, University of Memphis.

The hardest thing I've ever done is: Go on a medical mission trip to Kaugi Village, Meru, Kenya this past February. The needs are overwhelming, yet the people are so kind and grateful for any assistance.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner are: Edgar Allen Poe, Helen Keller and Captain Edward Smith (Titanic).

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Sang the national anthem at a Tampa Bay Rays baseball game.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: A live shot as a reporter inside of the global cage where the motorcyclists go around and around. I did the shot WHILE the motorcyclists were going around and around me!

I'm most proud of: My four children — Jacob, Nathan, Hannah and Joey.

Every morning I read: The Bible, especially Proverbs.

My favorite meal is: Anything Italian.

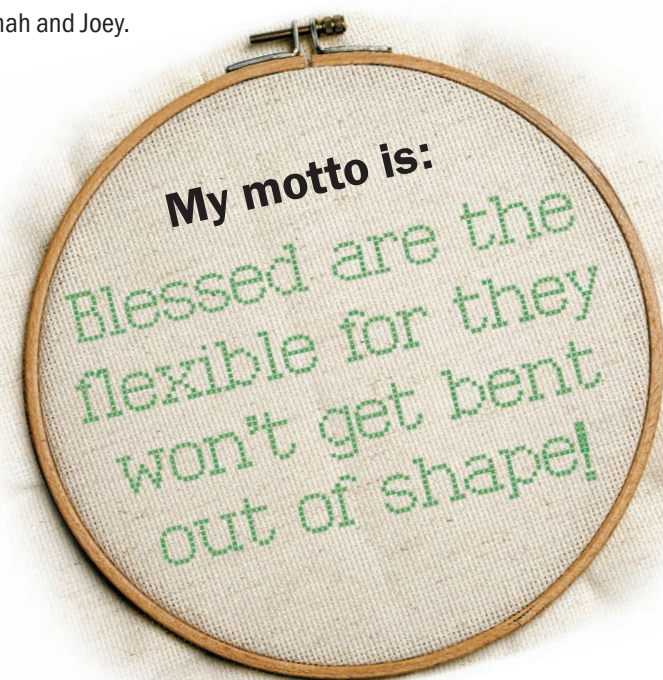
My pet peeve is: People who are quick to complain, but slow to help make things better.

The last book I read was: *Insight: Why We're Not as Self-Aware as We Think, and How Seeing Ourselves Clearly Helps Us Succeed at Work and in Life* by Tasha Eurich.

My favorite movie is: *The Wizard of Oz*.

My favorite U.S. president is: Theodore Roosevelt.

My county is a NACo member because: Counties are the frontline service providers to citizens and NACo supports and advocates for our needs so we can continue to effectively serve citizens at home.



BRIGHT IDEAS | MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz.

County Helps Residents on a Budget

PROBLEM:

Residents living on a budget are confused about how to “cut the cord” to cable TV and try new, less expensive devices to watch television.

SOLUTION:

Maricopa County, Ariz. holds workshops for consumers, showing them how to use new technology to watch TV and save money.

By Mary Ann Barton
senior staff writer

These days, people are watching fewer hours of TV and spending more time watching their wallets. With about 10,000 baby boomers retiring each day (some in shaky financial shape) and many millennials’ making frugal budget choices, almost everyone is looking for ways to save.

One way they’re doing that is by cutting cable TV. The number of people who cut the cord last year was up 33 percent from 2016, according to research firm eMarketer. The number of cord cutters is expected to be 27 million this year, a 22 percent increase over last year. And the number of “cord nevers” — younger people who have never subscribed to pay TV — is on the rise as well, to 34.4 million, with eMarketer predicting a 6 percent increase this year.

The numbers reflect near-soaring price points. Since 2007, cable TV and satellite TV bills have risen 53 percent to just more than \$100 per month, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Some counties are trying to help their residents figure out ways to save. In response to feedback from the Maricopa County Library District’s annual customer satisfaction survey, library staff created a “Cut the Cord” kit last year. The kit included a small LED TV, an Amazon Fire Stick, Amazon Fire TV,

Apple TV, Roku Streaming Stick and Chromecast Ultra. Once the kit arrived, Librarian Lynn Taylor said she tried out the different streaming devices in preparation for showing residents how they work.

“I thought the kit would be well-received by the community near my library,” said Taylor. She was right. About 80 people showed up to the first class on a Tuesday night. The following Saturday saw another 44 residents.

“A large portion of the community are seniors, who are looking for ways to cut their budget,” she said.

The county got the word out about the Cut the Cord program by including information about the program in its weekly email of upcoming events, posting flyers in the library and sharing information about it on Facebook, where it was shared hundreds of times, Taylor said. Residents also shared the information on a neighborhood Facebook page.

The program itself, Taylor said, is “part presentation, part ‘show-and-tell’ and part sharing information.” She first asks for a show of hands to see if anyone in the audience has cut their cable or has a broadcast antenna, and if so, asks them to share their experiences with others there.

Taylor tells audiences that cutting the cord is “a very per-

sonal experience” and their viewing choices will determine which streaming service they pick. “Customers who enjoy watching sports would probably pick a different streaming service than customers who enjoy Hallmark movies,” she said.

Next, Taylor demonstrates how the streaming devices work. She also gives residents handouts they can take home from *Consumer Reports* and various websites. “I also had extra papers on how to stream NASCAR, football and Major League Baseball.”

The biggest challenges to the program? Working with seniors who are not as tech-savvy as their younger counterparts. “Their knowledge of technology was varied,” she said. “My knowledge of internet speeds and over-the-air antennas needed some improvement as well.”

The biggest successes to the program, Taylor said, have been the large turnouts for the meetings and requests to repeat it. “The library staff try to keep up with what is trending in our community, and this program fits the bill,” she said. “The program also created a sense of community with attendees sharing their experiences and expertise.”

Taylor advises other counties

considering offering a similar program to know that they will likely attract a senior crowd that seem to be most interested in the “big picture” of how streaming TV works.

She also advised that counties considering a similar program may want to sign up for a basic streaming service, sign up for a trial account or see if the presenter can use their streaming account.

Taylor said it’s helpful too if you keep abreast of changes in the industry. “I have had to do more research, especially as the landscape for streaming services keeps changing,” she said.

The cost for the program was the initial investment for the streaming devices and for the small TV, Taylor noted. “Luckily, I have access to a large-screen TV and I use that to demonstrate most of the devices, so the whole audience could see the TV.”

In this case, the only other cost is staff time to do the research for the program. “My library district subscribes to *Consumer Reports* and I was able to use their articles and videos to do my beginning research,” she said. **CN**

To find out more about the cord-cutting program, contact Taylor at: LynnTaylor@mcladaz.org.

CN JOB MARKET

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

CLALLAM COUNTY, WASH.

Salary: \$130,219.77 – \$158,660.06/annually

Clallam County lies across the northern portion of Washington’s Olympic Peninsula, the northwest corner of the state of Washington. The high mountains, rugged coastlines, deep forest, miles of unspoiled rivers, clean air and water, and mild marine climate offer a most unusual combination of environmental amenities. The County’s cultural, educational, and social amenities, along with the wide range of living styles from small town to rural to backwoods, make Clallam County a uniquely desirable place to live and work.

Clallam is a charter county and the County Commission consists of three County Commissioners. The County is seeking a results-driven, steadfastly strategic, visionary, and grounded servant leader with high integrity to serve as its new County Administrator.

The ideal candidate will be a decisive, ethical, transparent, humble, emotionally intelligent, innovative, and collaborative manager with a charismatic personality and exceptional interpersonal skills who is not afraid to address issues head-on.

The selected candidate must hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in business administration, public administration, or a closely related field; a master’s degree in business or public administration or a closely related field is preferred.

Candidates must have at least 10 years of experience in managerial, financial, and executive level decision making in local government and success working with an elected governing body or board.

Candidates should have a demonstrated record of effective budgetary, financial, staff management, and exceptional community relationships. Experience working with unions is desired.

Please apply online at:
<http://bit.ly/SGRCurrentSearches>
For more information on this position contact: Ron Holifield, CEO Strategic Government Resources
Ron@GovernmentResource.com
214.676.1691



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ARIZONA

A safety driver operating an **Uber self-driving vehicle** was watching a TV show on Hulu on her phone during a test drive March 18 that ended when a pedestrian was struck and killed by the car, TechCrunch.com reported. The details of the crash were in a 318-page police report recently submitted to the **MARICOPA COUNTY** Attorney's office showing that the driver was watching "The Voice," and looked down 204 times during the 43-minute test drive. Police say the driver's eyes were off the road more than 30 percent of the time during the 11.8-mile drive. The report also found that Uber had disabled the car's emergency braking system so it didn't work under computer control. Maricopa County turned the case over

to **YAVAPAI COUNTY** due to a potential conflict of interest. The Maricopa County AG had previously teamed with Uber on a "Save Lives, Don't DUI" campaign. It's unclear whether the driver will face charges, KPHO/KTVK reported.

CALIFORNIA

- Nearly 25 years ago, **ORANGE COUNTY** was looking for ways to increase its revenue and opened its doors to other counties that needed a place to throw their **trash** away. Fast forward to today — a new county grand jury report warns that the county could find itself running out of landfill space if they continue accepting trash from other counties. County Supervisor Todd Spitzer disagrees, saying the board's "trash for cash" decision, made earlier to help pay to



A pilot is underway for a shared autonomous vehicle on public roads in **ALAMEDA COUNTY, Calif.**
Photo courtesy of First Transit

CALIFORNIA

First Transit is partnering with the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority, which includes the **ALAMEDA COUNTY** Transportation Commission, to pilot the **first operation of a shared autonomous vehicle (SAV)** on a public road by a transit agency in the state of California. This is the fifth SAV initiative for First Transit in North America. The SAV pilot will connect passengers from the Dublin/Pleasanton Bay Area Rapid Transit station in Dublin, Calif., to nearby shopping and entertainment. The testing phase for this pilot is expected to take two years without passengers. First Transit will provide operational support, maintenance and an onboard customer service agent for passenger questions and information. Easy Mile is the SAV manufacturer.



An entrance to **Trump International Golf Club** in **PALM BEACH COUNTY, Fla.** The club is owned by President Trump.
Photo by Welles Enterprises/Getty Images

FLORIDA

President Donald Trump has sued the **PALM BEACH COUNTY property appraiser** over the valuation of Trump National Golf Club, according to *The Palm Beach Post*. The suit marks the fifth year in a row the president has disputed the property tax bill for the 131-acre golf course. As he fights the \$19.7 million assessment, his financial disclosures in 2016 and 2017 list the golf club's value as "over \$50 million."

"Trump tells voters his properties are hugely valuable but claims they are worth far less for property tax purposes, which unfairly shifts to others the burdens of government," David Cay Johnston, author of *"It's Even Worse Than You Think,"* told the newspaper.

reconstruct and renovate the county civic center, is the way to go. "The horse has left the barn," he said. "We need the revenue stream." Of nearly five million tons of trash headed to county landfills each year, 37 percent is from surrounding counties, *The Orange County Register* reported.

DELAWARE

On a party line vote, Democrat lawmakers successfully passed a bill that guarantees the right of private employers to enter into **labor deals** that require their employees to join or pay fees to a union, Delaware Online reported. The bill blocks an effort to create a patchwork of individual counties and towns where "union shops" were forbidden. Republicans in **SUSSEX COUNTY** had made a strong push to enact those kinds of laws last year. (See "New Mexico, Delaware counties explore right-to-work ordinances," *County News*, Nov. 22: <https://bit.ly/2jiwxRs>.)

FLORIDA

A **legal battle** over a Beetle, a 2005 Volkswagen Beetle that is, is on in **LEE COUNTY**. The county commissioned a local artist to cover the car in seashells in 2016 for a National Seashell Day promotion. The artist and volunteers covered the car in more than 20,000 seashells. The artist said the county promised her in a verbal agreement that she could keep the car, aka the "Shell Love Bug," when the promotion was over. The county said "no," that they needed to follow the usual procedure of



Seashells are at the heart of a dispute between an artist and **LEE COUNTY** in Florida. Photo by Jack Vanden Heuvel via Getty Images

auctioning off county property. She sued the county and a federal judge denied the county's motion to dismiss the lawsuit. The artist owns the copyright to the artwork; the county owns the title to the car. We shell see what happens next...

MARYLAND

HARFORD COUNTY recently launched a "**Choose Civility**" campaign, according to *The Baltimore Sun*. The effort is part of a nationwide campaign to lift up communities by promoting respect, empathy and tolerance between individuals and within and among organizations. County Executive Barry Glassman and County Library CEO Mary Hastler hosted a kickoff breakfast that featured Valerie J. Gross, president of Education Enterprises for Libraries and founder of the movement. The local effort is focused on encouraging considerate conduct among county residents and reducing bullying, especially online.

MICHIGAN

• **WAYNE COUNTY** sold a former psychiatric hospital and its surrounding 28 acres to developers for \$1, *The Detroit News* reported. The developers plan to invest \$20 million to create affordable senior homes and emergency housing for families. Assistant County Executive Khalil Rahal said the sale will save the county about \$375,000 a year in maintenance and insurance costs. In 1940, the hospital housed a population of 4,000 mentally ill patients. The hospital was closed in 1981 due to financial problems and mental health care reform, the newspaper reported. "This is a sale of a property that's going to see investment in an area that's been empty for two years," Rahal said. "This kind of relieves us of a lot of those curating costs while maintaining the community aspect that the community wants to see."

NEBRASKA

After a contractor missed deadlines on a culvert project, **LANCASTER COUNTY**'s board barred him from doing any business with the county for two years.

The board also rescinded an almost \$334,500 contract that had been awarded to the contractor's company. The county engineer said the company did not let her know it would be unable to hit the deadline



and continued to bid on other county projects. The county has banned one other vendor in the past 13 years, according to the county purchasing agent.

NEVADA

Hoping to keep police phone lines open in case of emergencies, **CLARK COUNTY** has set up a website for residents reporting illegal fireworks. Reports could be made anonymously for fireworks that were not purchased in a seven-day period from authorized vendors, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported.

NORTH CAROLINA

The **U.S. Supreme Court** will not hear a case prohibiting the **ROWAN COUNTY** Board of Commissioners from opening meetings with Christian prayers, the Associated Press reported. As a result, the county will be barred from using a

Christian invocation only.

The full U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit in Richmond ruled against the county in 2017, following a 2013 lawsuit. It said the commissioners' practice of leading the prayers themselves and inviting the audience to join, always in the Christian faith, violated the First Amendment by establishing Christianity as a preferred religion.

OHIO

"Hey, that's my dog!" If a dog owner could present a current dog license through July 9, **LUCAS COUNTY** Canine Care and Control waived adoption fees for pet owners reuniting with the stray dogs, *The Blade* reported. The timeframe allowed for dog-owner reunions after the July 4 fireworks, which could send many dogs running.

OKLAHOMA

Provisional ballots made the difference in **BEAVER COUNTY** remaining the only dry county in Oklahoma. State Question 792, allowing the sale of liquor and "strong beer," initially passed by seven votes, but was overturned three days later when the provisional ballots were counted, *The Oklahoman* reported. Thirteen other counties voted in favor of State Question 792.

OREGON

A **LANE COUNTY** Public

Health grant is helping to cover the cost of **pneumonia vaccines** for every patient older than 65 and high-risk patients between ages 19 and 64 at two local hospitals.

Patients in those populations at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Centers will be offered the vaccine before they leave the hospital, in hopes of preventing hospitalization because of pneumonia, *The Register-Guard* reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

• After running deficits for six of the past seven years, including the last five, **CAMBRIA COUNTY**'s audit shows the county was debt free in 2017.

"We've cut waste. We've made technological improvements, and the commissioners and the office holders and the employees of Cambria County are all responsible for this because they're working as a team and to benefit the taxpayers of Cambria County," Controller Ed Cernic Jr. said, according to WJAC News.

• Negotiations for a **re-entry services contract** took a turn when **LANCASTER COUNTY** Commissioners Chari Josh Parsons proposed performing the services in-house.

The \$361,000 contract proposal with a for-profit company was a point of contention with several citizens, and Parsons said the county's staff was capable of providing the services, *The LNP* reported.

TEXAS

A **HARRIS COUNTY** sergeant was hospitalized after touching a flyer laced with the opioid drug **fentanyl** that was placed on her car. Nearly two dozen of the same flyers were placed on the windshields of cars parked at the sheriff's office's recruitment and criminal investigations center. The sergeant felt lightheaded and showed other fentanyl-related symptoms, was rushed to the hospital and released the same day, the *Houston Chronicle* reported.



PENNSYLVANIA

For the second consecutive year, the Municipal Water Authority of **WESTMORELAND COUNTY** was honored as the **best tasting water** in the state by the American Water Works Association, *The Tribune-Review* reported.

Law enforcement officers can incidentally ingest opioid drugs kicked into the air during drug busts, and often wear protective masks and gloves to avoid ingestion.

VIRGINIA

The **AUGUSTA COUNTY** Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance allowing the county to lease its land for **solar energy use**, *The Daily Progress* reported.

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

IN MEMORIAM

John McNamara
Gerald Fischman
Wendi Winters
Rob Hiaasen
Rebecca Smith

Capital Gazette
Annapolis
(Anne Arundel County), Md.
June 28, 2018



MICHIGAN

MACOMB COUNTY recently celebrated 200 years of being a county with nearly 200 runners covering 200 miles in a torch relay. The torchbearers covered 27 communities in all in 40 hours. "Give our torchbearers the support they need as they run through your community," the county announced. "Bring your cameras, noisemakers and flashlights and let these men and women know that they are doing a great job." The county also sent out maps and specific times on where and when to see the torchbearers. Image courtesy of Macomb County



As summer continues, some employees are awaiting their vacation, while others bask in the glow of time off. How long does that vacation glow last? A week? Two weeks? Maybe just a few hours? How long an employee's vacation glow lasts says a lot about the workload, stress and culture of the department and organization. Once that vacation glow is gone, it can be difficult for employees to stay focused during the summer, as they experience sadness that their vacation is over, jealousy that a co-worker's vacation is approaching, or frustration that they have to catch up on their own tasks, or cover someone else's responsibilities.

A 2010 study published in the *Applied Research in Quality of Life* found that anticipation of vacation — just planning the vacation — made people happier. The happiness from planning the vacation actually lasted longer than the happiness caused by the vacation itself. The study was conducted with 1,530 Dutch individuals and defined tourism as “an activity which allows for an escape from the routine of daily life” and that such a break was “much needed for healthy functioning in society.” Therefore, one might surmise that celebrating the planning of a vacation and celebrating the taking of a vacation, combined with small changes to the work routine itself can also have an impact.

Here are five ways to make small changes to the office routine and boost morale in the office this summer.

- **Celebrate vacation planning.** A bulletin board with a map and some pins can identify where people are travelling, like to travel or want to travel in the future. Employees can

Cures for Summertime Blues



SPEEDREAD

A study published in the *American Psychosomatic Society* in 2000, concluded that “frequent annual vacations seemed to exert a direct positive effect on mortality” and that “vacations may not only be enjoyable but also health promoting.” So not only will employees who take annual vacation be revitalized, they might even live longer.

discuss things to see from their hometown or their favorite place. Not all in one office? Create a virtual map or send a weekly email that showcases trips, travel tips and/or photos.

- **Potlucks and BBQs.** A come-and-go potluck or BBQ can still allow office coverage while celebrating summer. Picnic tables and eating outside in fantastic summer weather make the experience even more enjoyable, allowing staff time to relax and refocus. The potlucks can have themes or recipe sharing too.

- **Themed casual Fridays.** More than just jeans on Friday, themed casual days can be a special treat for employees

who do not have to wear uniforms. Hawaiian shirts, souvenir T-shirts, shorts, sneakers or crazy socks can all be Friday themes. Want to take it one step further? Have all the Friday themes start with the letter “F”: Freedom Friday, wear red, white and blue; Fedora Friday, wear your favorite hat; Football Friday, wear your favorite football attire; Fan Friday, wear your favorite college attire; Fair Friday, wear boots to celebrate the county fair; Fitness Friday, wear a shirt supporting a local, charitable 5K walk or run. Put photos in the newsletter or have awards for most creative.

- **Training or Teambuilding.** Have staff share their creative talents at a brief meeting or over lunch. Have an employee who is a master gardener? Loves to grill? Finds the best airfare deals? Has experience traveling internationally? Perhaps it is a forum to allow employees to share travel tips, so that the team can hear about the vacation all at once, which prevents the employee who just hiked Mount Whitney or vacationed in Orlando from repeating stories multiple times. The events can be lunch and learns, where employees bring their lunch to hear about fun topics. The con-

versations allow co-workers to learn more about one another and share interests.

- **Summer flexible work schedules.** Some organizations have summer hours, where the office hours actually change from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the summer. Other organizations may not have this flexibility, but departments can create a summer schedule for staff or have staff develop their own summer schedule. Perhaps most staff work 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., while others take turns covering the 4 p.m.-5 p.m. shift. Perhaps some work 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., getting to either sleep in a little later now that kids are not off to school or exercise in the morning. Or perhaps an employee would prefer a longer lunch. This may allow them to have lunch with older kids, or carpool younger children to half-day summer camps. Also, lunch times could be flexible. An employee who takes their lunch break at 1:30 p.m. may run into less traffic and have greater time for their own use.

Be sure to include staycation participants in the vacation celebrations. Staycations allow people to be a tourist in their hometown, save money, eliminate travel time and max-

imize relaxation.

Staycationers can still benefit from the pre-vacation planning as they decide how to spend their time off. Maybe their favorite place is their own backyard, a trail they don't get to hike often, or a restaurant they only visit on special occasions. Maybe their planning involves a book they have been hoping to read, a movie marathon with a friend (In case you're interested, *bingeclock.com* will estimate the time and give suggestions for movies; all the movies by Steven Spielberg are listed at 7 days, 8 hours and 55 minutes), or a new store they have not had a chance to visit.

According to the U.S. Travel Association website, American vacation usage has declined over the last 40 years, but is on a slight upswing since 2014, with the average American taking 17.2 days in 2017. The website states “52 percent of Americans left vacation time on the table,” for a total of 705 million unused days.

So, take some vacation time this summer, help continue the upswing in vacation usage, encourage staff not to leave vacation in the accrual bank, and be happier, healthier and reinvigorated. You might even live longer. **CN**