

# VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS EMPHASIZES INFRASTRUCTURE

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

Vice President Kamala Harris emphasized infrastructure and elections July 9 in her first in-person conference as vice president, at the National Association of Counties (NACo) 2021 Annual Conference at the Gaylord National hotel and conference center in Prince George's County, Md.

Harris, who got her start

working in county government as the district attorney for Alameda County, Calif., spoke with county officials about the crucial services counties provide.

"It's wonderful to be with you, the county leaders, who have been holding it down and holding it up all at the same time," she said. "You really are in that way such incredible national leaders."

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Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to NACo members July 9 at the opening of NACo's 2021 Annual Conference in Prince George's County, Md. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

## Virus surge prompts action by counties

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

A recent surge in COVID-19 cases, fueled by the more contagious Delta variant, has prompted some counties to reissue mask mandates, regardless of vaccination status, in government buildings or all indoor settings and in some cases require vaccinations for employees.

At the same time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is advising mask-

ing indoors in counties with substantial or high coronavirus spread, a classification that applies to most of the South and West.

Leon County, Fla. was the first in the country to require employees to be vaccinated, giving them a deadline of Oct. 1 to be fully vaccinated.

County Administrator Vince Long also required new employees to be two weeks past their final dose of their vaccine

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## Senate advances \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill

by **Jessica Jennings**

The final text of the five-year, \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure agreement, released Aug. 1, shows commitment to a variety of county priorities, including \$550 billion in new investments for all modes of transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, public lands, broadband and resilience.

The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) would direct most of its investments — nearly 52 percent — toward modernizing and making improvements to transportation infrastructure, with the majority of funding reserved for highways, roads and bridges. It also makes supplemental appropriations to several federal agencies.

The legislation is funded

from a variety of sources, including \$205 billion in repurposed COVID relief funds from 2020, \$67 billion in proceeds from the February 2021 c-band auction, \$56 billion in economic growth resulting from a 33 percent return on investment in these long-term infrastructure projects, \$53 billion in unused federal unemployment insurance supplements returned by states, \$50 billion in recouped fraudulently paid federal unemployment benefits and \$49 billion from delaying the Medicare Part D rebate rule.

The bill addresses a priority for counties: Increasing the off-system bridge set-aside by 5 percent, resulting in a \$330 million increase to \$1.035 billion annually.

Among other areas of interest to counties, the IIJA:

- Extends the Secure Rural Schools program for three years
- Significantly expands the number of competitive grant opportunities via supplemental appropriations to the U.S. Department of Transportation
- Authorizes \$14.65 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund over five years
- Provides \$1 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program
- Fully funds the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act, which would allow state and local governments to use

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## VP: 'Even when you weren't sure, you never gave up'

From HARRIS page 1

Harris highlighted the roles county leaders have played throughout the COVID-19 pandemic from freeing up hospital beds to providing social services and setting up food distribution sites.

"People have looked to you to provide reassurance," she said. "They have searched your eyes for comfort and for confidence to know that everything is going to be OK."

"Even when you weren't sure, you never gave up," she said. "No matter how tired you were. You woke up every morning to get the job done."

She thanked county leaders for their service, listing the variety of essential services that counties provide from behavioral health care to fixing potholes.

"Each and every day, you take our nation's ideals and you make them real," she said. "You see the needs of our people and you meet them."

President Joe Biden's administration sees county leaders as partners as they work to rebuild the country, she said, adding



(L-r) County Supervisors Sylvia Glass and Phyllis Randall of Loudoun County, Va. dance waiting in line for Harris' speech.

Photo by Denny Henry

the administration is determined to make improvements that are real and tangible, with one improvement focusing on infrastructure.

Harris said infrastructure in the country is in desperate need of updates across the country.

"For too long, counties have been trying to maintain or repair infrastructure that simply needs to be updated," she said. "Many of you have had to stretch already tight budgets to make that happen, to put Band Aids on the problem."

The proposed bipartisan infrastructure agreement represents the largest long-term infrastructure investment the country has made in nearly a century, she said.

The agreement provides solutions for high-speed internet and broadband access, areas where the pandemic has revealed even more stark disparities across the country.

"The bipartisan infrastructure agreement will help connect every American to high-speed internet and through that agreement, we will expand our broadband infrastructure, we will open up competition to bring down prices and we will close that digital divide," she said.

Harris asked county officials to share their stories and expertise to let others know about in-

frastructure needs on the county level.

She also emphasized the role county officials play in elections with overseeing polling locations, hiring, training and employing election workers and ensuring ballots are counted in a fair and transparent process.

"Protecting the right to vote is about as American as apple pie," she said, adding that county leaders are the backbone of elections.

Harris said there are many obstacles for local election officials when it comes to voting, with many facing threats and harassment.

"The president and I are extremely grateful for your service, and we have your back," she said. "We are going to work and provide you with the resources that you need to carry out our elections with integrity."

With many individuals having their first interaction with government on the local level, Harris said the strength of democracy depends on local leaders.

"You are the leaders the American people look to," she said. "You are the leaders the American people trust. You are the leaders who deliver for the American people."

"Thank you for everything you have done and everything you will do." **CN**

## Bill addresses county priorities

From BUILD page 1

low interest loans for pre-disaster mitigation activities

- Creates a new population band within the Surface Transportation Block Grant for communities between 50,000 - 200,000, allowing for a more equitable suballocation of funds

- Establishes a new competitive grant program for local governments to address and eliminate at-grade rail crossings

- Significantly expands Buy America requirements for covered infrastructure materials

- Codifies elements of the Trump Administration's "One Federal Decision" making one federal agency responsible for issuing a decision resulting from a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review

- Increases the thresholds for categorical exclusions, making more projects eligible for streamlining

- Authorizes \$3.5 billion for the Weatherization Assistance Program in FY 2022

- Includes \$5 billion over five years for a new grant program to support activities that reduce the likelihood and consequence of impacts to the electric grid due to extreme weather, wildfire and natural disaster

The package, however, fails to address the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund, requiring a \$118 billion bailout from the

U.S. Treasury's general fund to pay for IJA's highway and transit programs

By *County News'* deadline, the package was awaiting procedural votes and up to 60 hours of debate. The Senate began considering amendments, with over 150 filed thus far, including an amendment from Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) that would allow counties to utilize the direct funds provided by the American Rescue Plan for a wide variety of transportation activities without a local match requirement.

The bipartisan package's path is complicated by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's (D-N.Y.) commitment to move the bipartisan deal in tandem with a larger reconciliation package that will address the remaining items on President Biden's legislative agenda, including items from the American Jobs Plan left out of the compromise and the American Families Plan provisions. Even if the Senate sends bipartisan infrastructure legislation to the House this week, it could languish anywhere from weeks to months while the massive \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill is developed. **CN**

*Jessica Jennings is an associate legislative director at NACo in the Government Affairs Department handling Transportation and Infrastructure issues.*



### SNAP/STATS

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STATE	'ROUGHNESS' SCORE
OKLAHOMA.....	61.8%
IDAHO.....	62.5%
INDIANA.....	69.6%
ALABAMA.....	76.6%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	76.9%

Source: MoneyGeek.com (December 2020)

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# Counties reexamine mask, vaccine policies in wake of new COVID spike

From COVID page 1

before starting work. Employees granted an accommodation must wear masks at all times while working and may be required to submit weekly negative COVID tests.

“This is very simple and very serious. As an employer, we are required to provide a safe work environment for employees, and unvaccinated employees pose a significant risk to spread the virus,” Long wrote in an email to all employees.

“As an essential government agency, we are obligated to ensure our operational readiness to serve our community, and virus outbreaks among our workforce that could have been avoided pose a very real threat to our operational readiness.”

Orange County, Fla. Mayor Jerry Demings has made the same requirement of county employees in his jurisdiction.

The Tallahassee Democrat reported that Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) was considering legal action against the county’s re-

quirement, which his spokeswoman said would potentially violate employees’ right to privacy.

Meanwhile, despite a high vaccination rate, the City and County of Denver are mandating vaccines by the end of September for all of their employees, all hospital workers and employees in clinical, long-term, home health, child care, school and correctional settings. Others are taking a more targeted approach. Mecklenburg County, N.C., is requiring all public health employees be vaccinated, as will Monroe County, N.Y. In Dallas County, Texas, masks are required in its courthouse.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) signed an executive order banning local governments from mandating vaccines.

After Gov. Doug Ducey (R) banned mask mandates in Arizona, Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry will recommend the Board of Supervisors, at its Aug. 10 meeting, require employees receive



Demings

their first dose of a vaccine by Oct. 1.

St. Louis County, Mo. was among the first to mandate masks again in all public indoor spaces starting July 26, though the county council soon overturned Executive Sam Page’s order for mandatory masking in all indoor spaces. Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt filed a lawsuit contesting the mandate.

In Nevada, Gov. Steve Sisolak’s (D) emergency declaration for masks in public indoor spaces covered 12 of the state’s 17 counties in the CDC’s substantial or high transmission

zones, covering both urban Clark County and rural Esmeralda County, which was one of the last counties in the United States to record a positive case.

In California, six weeks after the state stopped requiring people to wear masks indoors, seven counties in the San Francisco Bay area made their own public health orders. Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Sonoma counties mandated “well-fitting masks” for indoor public setting, regardless of their vaccination status.

Solano County did not act with the rest of that group. Health Officer Bela Matyas explained his hesitance.

“As these mandates are being promulgated, they don’t address the problem that is occurring,” he told KRON News. “Our cases are very clearly not occurring in public places. They’re occurring in people’s homes, at parties, barbecues, picnics, camping events and so issuing a mask mandate in the indoor public space environ-

ment isn’t going to change that. In fact, if you [examine] data in those counties that have already issued mandates, there has been no change in the level of disease.”

New York City will require proof of vaccination to enter indoor restaurants and gyms, taking an approach that rewards those who are vaccinated.

On the private side, many businesses have begun mandating vaccinations for employees to return to the office for months, and some, like Tyson Foods, give bonuses to frontline workers who get the vaccine.

President Biden called on state, territorial and local governments to provide \$100 payments for every newly vaccinated American to help boost vaccination rates.

The Treasury Department is offering technical assistance to local governments so that they may use money from the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to make that happen. **CN**



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## GENERAL SESSION

## SPEAKERS



## Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi talks power of counties



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi talks to NACo members July 12 as then-NACo First Vice President Larry Johnson looks on. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi discussed the roles and power of counties in advocating for bipartisan COVID-19 relief funding July 12 at the 2021 NACo Annual Conference in Prince George's County, Md.

Pelosi sat down with NACo then-First Vice President Larry Johnson for a Q&A and thanked county officials for their work getting local communities through the COVID-19 pandemic and for their advocacy for the rescue packages.

"You have made a tremendous difference and we want the package to reflect that in direct assistance," she said, adding that much of the work that got the country through the pandemic comes through counties.

"While the states have their

role to play, we could not do the job unless we went directly to county officials," Pelosi said.

Pelosi has local government roots with both her father and brother serving as mayors of Baltimore.

"I know you have no buffers and people know who you are because of their sense of community," she said.

She emphasized the importance of funding going directly to counties and localities.

"We were not going down any path without each and every one of you," she said.

Pelosi said it became clear something significant needed to be done when the pandemic made the digital divide even more stark. The bipartisan infrastructure bill includes \$65 billion for broadband with \$40 billion for rural broadband. Pelosi said in order to bridge the digital divide, there's a need for

more funding.

Pelosi said she turned to county officials for their input on how to spend the funds to see the most benefits for local communities.

"We still need more [funding]," she said. "We need to gauge, and you'll help us do this — what do we need?"

Pelosi said it was necessary for members of Congress to hear from county officials and provide bipartisan support for relief funding.

"Know your power from this, you made so much of this happen," she said.

Pelosi discussed the bipartisan infrastructure bill and told county officials the bill includes what could be agreed on related to infrastructure, but she said she feels some of it is an "old view" of infrastructure.

While the bill includes funding for broadband, Pelosi said

there needs to be a greener infrastructure bill to create more jobs.

"We have to make the bill greener to be more for this century than last century," she said.

To build back better, she said the bill needs to focus on workforce training and development to benefit everyone in the economy.

"We want to have a bipartisan bill, but we have to recognize that we have to have legislation of the future that involves many more people that is greener for our country and more technologically available to everyone," she said.

In response to a question, she also discussed the increase in violence in communities across the country which she said varies depending on localities.

"We want to address the underlying causes of violence and arrest," she said. "The ideas that

spring from your communities are very important for us to hear because we don't want public policy that has some unforeseen consequences that are really not contributing to the solution."

She described how many Democrats, Republicans, independents, gun owners, hunters and others support background check legislation.

"We would hope that Congress would be as bipartisan as the American people are in this regard and it is a very important part of stopping violence in our country," she said.

"Know your power. The ideas that you have are useful to us," she said.

"The contribution you made in the advocacy... the outside mobilization, makes all the difference in the world. Thank you NACo, for making all the difference in the world." **CN**



## GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



# HUD Sec. Marcia Fudge asks county officials to address affordable housing crisis head on

by Rachel Looker  
staff writer

It is a new day at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), according to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge.

"This HUD understands what it means to invest in housing," Fudge told county officials July 10 during NACo's 2021 Annual Conference.

"We know that when we invest in housing, we invest in people. When we invest in people, we make people feel good. When we make people feel good, we inspire them to do good and I believe good things happen to good people."

Fudge, who started her public service career at the Prosecutor's Office in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, told county officials "HUD will change the way we do business."

"We always have to remember that we indeed are our brothers' and sisters' keeper," she said. "Goodness demands



HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge takes the stage July 10 at the NACo 2021 Opening General Session. Photo by Denny Henry

that every American live with stability and with dignity with a roof over their head."

Before COVID-19, more than 11 million Americans spent more than 50 percent of their

income on rent, she noted. For too many people, Fudge said, a stable home is out of reach.

"I consider every single person who receives HUD support to be in my care, to be my con-

stituents," she said.

Under her watch, Fudge said HUD will deliver support as quickly as possible and meet urgency with urgency.

The American Rescue Plan

block grant funding.

Fudge said she plans on making fair housing enforcement a priority for many who still face discrimination when trying to rent homes or secure

## GOP LEADER MITCH McCONNELL DROPS BY



Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (and a former county official, he noted) of Kentucky dropped by the 2021 NACo Annual Conference via video to wish NACo members well, after being introduced by fellow Kentuckian, NACo then-President Gary Moore, judge/executive, Boone County, Ky. "The federal government is going to be sending a lot of money down to counties all over the country," McConnell said. "I know you'll spend it wisely. I hope you'll take advantage of this probably once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." Photo by Denny Henry

delivered more than \$22 billion in emergency rental assistance. HUD will also provide \$5 billion to assist with emergency vouchers to help those who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

"We must ensure that these resources reach the people who need them — so if you are holding up the money, let it go," she said.

The country must address the affordable housing crisis head on, she said, and President Biden has asked that the HUD budget be increased by \$9 billion, equivalent to a 15 percent increase.

Biden's budget also contains an increase of \$295 million in community development

mortgages.

"We will engage with local leaders like you to determine the unique challenges and opportunities in each of these communities and then we can work together to forge a more inclusive housing policy for this country," she said.

As secretary, Fudge said she will ensure that HUD follows a simple philosophy: Strive to do good for others, simply because it is the right thing to do and expect nothing in return.

"I call it 'being good for nothing,'" she said. "I'm calling on every single person in this room to 'be good for nothing' and when we are good for nothing, we will do great things." **CN**



## GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



## Buttigieg: Infrastructure bill 'a bipartisan moment'



Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg addresses county officials July 10 at the Opening General Session. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg capitalized on the bipartisan Opening General Session audience July 10 at NACo's Annual Conference to push the recent Senate compromise on a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure spending package.

In doing so, the former mayor of South Bend, Ind. acquiesced that counties were probably the most influential component of the local and state government equation for bills that will benefit them dramatically.

"You have so many more highway miles and road miles under your responsibility than mayors who usually get the first phone call," he said.

"You have public health responsibilities that very few people thought much about until everything depended on it. You have so many functions that the public does not understand and are less likely to get attention for, except when something

goes wrong."

The infrastructure agreement, representing the largest federal investment in virtually every mode, serves a variety of constituencies in every situation, including high-speed internet, transit, roads, bridges, ports and more.

"That means better and more extensive service, yes in our biggest cities but also in rural communities that depend on transit, that depend on paratransit in so many ways," Buttigieg said, noting that advocacy by county officials will be necessary to ensure the bipartisan agreement on the bill extends beyond the group of 10 senators who negotiated it.

"Everyone in the National Association of Counties is in a position of power, but even more important, a position of trust and credibility to help bring the bipartisan infrastructure framework across the finish line. We're looking at you to do just that," he said.

"It's amazing how challeng-

ing it sometimes is to get Congress to agree to something that overwhelming bipartisan majorities of Americans and local officials already overwhelmingly want.

"This is a bipartisan moment around a shared priority."

Buttigieg pointed out that game-changing American infrastructure projects, including the transcontinental railroad, New Deal and the interstate highway system, involved ferocious debate and compromise and went beyond being foundations for job growth and economic success and helped unite Americans by connecting them.

"If you believe that the bipartisan infrastructure plan will

help the country, this is the time to make your voices heard," he said.

The plan would put Americans in a position to capitalize on technology as workers and as consumers, he said. The half-million electric vehicle-charging stations, for examples, would be located in communities large and small.

"There are so many Americans who would benefit so much from the fuel savings that are available if we can move into that electric vehicle future," Buttigieg said.

"And make no mistake, it's coming either way. The question will be whether it will be made in America — we're going to work to make sure that actually happens.

"When we talk about these jobs, they sound so futuristic that it's hard to imagine them," he said. "But we're talking about jobs that exist right now."

The broadband expansion that would bring high-speed internet to previously under-

served communities would serve not only as an economic equalizer, but help rural areas reverse their population loss, allowing them to compete for remote workers.

"These investments will create a generation of good-paying jobs, the majority of which will be available to workers whether they have a college degree or not," he said.

Buttigieg made two promises to great applause from the gathered county officials.

"State and local funding from the American Rescue Plan will not be clawed back as a 'payfor' for the bipartisan infrastructure package," he said, addressing fears that had been circulating for weeks.

"The Department of Transportation will work with you to be as user-friendly as a federal agency has ever been, because you shouldn't need a full-time staff of federal relations professionals to figure out how to get support from an agency in Washington." **CN**



# Off-duty musician meets on-duty county health officials

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

It was the same old song.  
Boy develops love of music.  
Boy works at family business  
on the side. Boy finds himself in  
charge when global pandemic  
disproportionately threatens  
the health of 30 of the business' older workers, including boy's father, the company president.  
Boy is overwhelmed.

## GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



Up until then, John Ondrasik's familiarity with counties came mainly from performing at county fairs as "Five for Fighting," maybe shaking hands with an elected official backstage.

"When the pandemic occurred, I had a new relationship with you," he said to the General Session audience



Singer and songwriter John Ondrasik talks about the pandemic July 10 during the General Session of the NACo Annual conference in Prince George's County, Md. Photo by Denny Henry

July 10, while describing the perspective that many members of the business community saw in 2020.

His family's wire fabrication business produces shopping

carts and its contribution to the food supply chain qualified it as essential during the height of the pandemic.

"If you have three COVID cases in two weeks, like we

did, you're designated an outbreak, and you have to call the county," he said.

In Ondrasik's case, that was Los Angeles County. "I was scared. I was nervous."

"They were going to send an inspector out to see the factory. Was the inspector going to yell at me? Will he be mad at me?" Was he going to write me a ticket? Fine me?"

His fears, he said, were allayed. A public health nurse talked him through contact tracing and prevention measures, and soon she was on his speed dial.

He found everyone he worked with from the county to be compassionate.

"One of the silver linings of this terrible time was that I got a sense of your reality, your challenges," Ondrasik said.

"I know your job is hard in normal times, I also know no matter what our intent is, someone is always mad at you, no matter what you do. That's hard enough in real times. With a pandemic hanging over your head..."

He hoped he could represent all small businesses and thanked county officials across the country for the

services and guidance they provided to the private sector throughout the pandemic.

"We could not have done it without you," he said.

He performed his Grammy-nominated song "Superman" for the first time in 16 months for the crowd, along with some other personal favorites, relating how a conversation with his young daughter provided the lyrics for one song.

Ondrasik noted that he wrote "Superman" in 45 minutes and never expected to perform it himself, let alone see it find such cultural resonance, particularly in a post-9/11 world.

"The joke is that I've been looking for that 45 minutes ever since," he said.

"Sometimes, little things turn into big things, and you might not know you're doing that big thing when you're doing that little thing."

So, the possibility now exists that Los Angeles County personnel, in the course of just doing their jobs during the pandemic, could find themselves as fodder for Ondrasik's next hit song.

Artists are nothing if not dreamers. **CN**

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# Counties use ARP funds to advance equity

by Rachel Looker  
staff writer

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) represents an opportunity to advance equity, according to Clarence Wardell III, the chief data and equitable delivery officer with the White House Rescue Plan team.

Wardell spoke to county officials July 11 during the 2021 Annual Conference.

He also serves as a senior advisor for policy implementation and delivery with the White House Domestic Policy Council and discussed the Biden administration's approach to equity.

"The American Rescue Plan represents an opportunity like no other that I've seen in my lifetime," he said.

The actions counties take now will determine whether implementation of ARP contributes to reversing the widening disparities across socio-economic outcomes, he noted.

He described how Biden's executive order on advancing racial equity provides a framework for this work.

The executive order defines equity as the consistent and systematic, fair and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

"At its core, equity means centering those communities, not excluding others but making sure you're addressing the needs of communities and individuals either willfully or unintentionally excluded previously," Wardell said.

To ensure those in need are being met in the most meaningful and transformative ways possible, Wardell highlighted the importance of ensuring individual programs and initiatives are delivered and executed in equitable ways.

"I would encourage us to think about the ways in which the pandemic has exacerbated inequities in our communities," he said.

Wardell emphasized the need to address money loss, access to quality childcare and housing instability in comprehensive



The White House's Clarence Wardell III speaks to county officials July 11 at the 2021 NACo Annual Conference. Photo by Hugh Clarke

ways.

"Deciding what to invest in is only one piece of the puzzle," he said.

"We can't make an investment decision and walk away. We have to be invested in making sure that those programs and initiatives are delivered well and in ways that are advancing equity."

To advance initiatives in equity, Wardell offered a few key principles:

- Design for 'hardest to reach' and most in need
- Design programs to ensure everyone will benefit — think about awareness, accessibility
- Building short cycles of feedback to inform qualitative discussions

"I think we really must ensure that we are investing in things that have a strong evidence base," he said. "If they don't, we make sure we're building structures with rigorous resources [and] rigorous evaluation into our process to make sure that we're building that evidence base as we go."

King County, Wash. was ground zero for COVID-19, seeing the first deaths from the vi-

rus in the country.

After closures and shutdowns from the pandemic and the virus disproportionately affecting communities of color, King County Assessor John Wilson said the county knew they had to view the situation through an equity lens.

"Over and over again, we realized that we have an undeniably racial disparity," he said.

The county received over \$440 million in American Rescue Plan funds and plans to put the money toward public health, community organizations, community support, workforce training and invest in BIPOC businesses and economic resilience funds.

(The acronym refers to black, indigenous and other people of color, and aims to emphasize the historic oppression of black and indigenous people.)

"If you didn't quickly realize the inequities COVID revealed, you simply weren't paying attention to what was happening around us," he said.

In Harris County, Texas, the county has taken steps even before the COVID-19 pandemic to become an equitable economy,

according to Deputy Director of Policy Sasha Legette.

Minorities make up 62 percent of the county's population, she said, and when COVID-19 hit, like in many states across the country, communities of color were disproportionately affected.

"Racism is in fact a public health crisis and for far too long, there has been an inequitable distribution of resources creating an uneven playing field in Harris County," Legette said.

The county decided to use equity framework to assess and ensure American Rescue Plan dollars were going to be spent in an equitable distribution of resources.

"We saw a major opportunity to bolster our commitment to equity, using our ARPA dollars and how those funds were going to be distributed," she said.

Harris County, Texas Lead Policy Advisory Janae Ladet said the county's framework contains goals, strategies and approaches to advance equity within products and programs.

The equity framework is applied to each project funded through ARPA dollars.

"We find that this framework has already forced our county to start thinking about equity and we're already seeing a shift in some of our programs and policies," she said.

James Crowder, a senior associate at Policy Link, a national resource action institute, referenced 10 priorities as a framework for advancing racial equity through the American Rescue Plan:

- Explicitly name racial equity as a goal
- Engage historically underserved communities
- Connect unemployed and low-wage workers with good jobs
- Stabilize and grow POC (person of color) and immigration-owned businesses
- Restore and expand public services
- Invest in frontline, COVID-impacted communities
- Prevent displacement and increase community ownership
- Strengthen civic infrastructure
- Prioritize a few cross-sector, high-impact equity investments
- Track disaggregated data to ensure accountability **CN**



# CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

## FCC focuses on broadband deployment, data collection



Members of NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee gather in small groups to discuss broadband and other topics July 9, at the NACo Annual Conference. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is busy fostering broadband deployment and access, according to Kirk Burgee, the FCC's chief of staff with the Wireline Competition Bureau.

Burgee discussed the FCC's broadband data collection with members of the NACo Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee July 9 during the 2021 Annual Conference.

The FCC aims to improve the way it collects data from providers by collecting information at the broadband serviceable location level to pinpoint specific locations where broadband data is available and where it is not.

The collection will also provide a map of all locations, residences and small businesses where broadband is located or could be installed.

Burgee explained that current data collection methods use census blocks and do not produce detailed data points.

"The broadband data collection is designed to correct for that," he said, adding that "it also does a number of other

things that will result in a very useful tool for us and for stakeholders."

The data collected will be available to all stakeholders including governmental agencies and the public.

"It's going to be largely transparent," he said. "There's very little of the data that we will collect that won't be available to stakeholders for them to use for their own purposes."

As part of the broadband data collection, Burgee said the FCC will have a process through which state, local and tribal entities that are engaged in broadband mapping can submit their own verified data sets.

"This is a real leap forward in terms of what the deployment map will show," he said.

He also discussed other FCC programs including the Emergency Broadband Benefits Program, a \$3.2 billion fund established last year to provide support for services and devices to low-income households. As of July 4, there are 3.3 million households enrolled in the program.

The Emergency Connectivity Fund is also a new FCC program with a \$7.17 billion fund established by the Amer-

ican Rescue Plan that provides funding to eligible schools and libraries for the purchase of equipment. The program intends to address issues arising out of the pandemic.

Also speaking to the committee Saturday was Greg Cooke, the FCC's chief of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, spoke with county leaders about 911 fee diversion.

He explained how the principal source of funding for 911 fees are assessed by the state, however, states and other jurisdictions often divert these funds from 911-related purposes.

When this occurs, money doesn't go to local precincts or local public safety, he pointed out. From 2012-2019, states and jurisdictions diverted over \$1.5 billion in 911 fees, according to Cooke.

"The state is reducing the amount that goes to 911 and it's a real problem," he said.

In the Consolidations Appropriations Act of 2021, Congress required a commission issue new regulations on 911 diversions by creating an advisory committee and End 911 Fee Diversion Strikeforce, which will complete a detailed study of 911. **CN**



## Supporting America's Heroes

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

Members of NACo's Veterans and Military Services Committee heard July 10 about how they can help caregivers in their counties.

The Hidden Heroes Cities & Counties program was founded in 2012 by Sen. Elizabeth Dole, helping the country's 5.5 million caregivers who provide more than \$14 billion in uncompensated care, according to Laurel Haxton, who serves as the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's community engagement manager, where she oversees the program. The campaign is chaired by actor Tom Hanks.

"It's not a one-size-fits-all," Haxton told county officials. "We realize each county has its specific needs. The program can help pinpoint your needs."

In her role, Haxton helps implement and expand the program by engaging caregivers, community partners and elected officials across the country. The program establishes a national registry for caregivers to connect to helpful resources.

"I urge you to work to bring this program to your county,"

said Haxton, who oversees the Hidden Heroes Cities & Counties program.

The foundation established the program for cities and counties to help find solutions for caregivers, working with NACo and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Counties can take the first step by passing a resolution or proclamation to encourage support of caregivers. So far, nearly 200 cities, counties and states have taken the pledge to be a Hidden Heroes community.

Some of the program's resources include:

- An online community, where caregivers can meet and share experiences (more than 3,000 caregivers participate).
- Training to help caregivers and those they are caring for be a part of their health plans.
- A care-givers fellowship program: A two-year fellowship to learn to be an advocate for themselves and those they are caring for.
- A 35-hour respite opportunity **CN**

To learn more, visit [HiddenHeroes.org](https://HiddenHeroes.org).



Laurel Haxton, community engagement manager for Hidden Heroes Cities & Counties at Elizabeth Dole Foundation, speaks to members of NACo's Veterans and Military Services Committee Saturday at the Annual Conference. Photo by Hugh Clarke



# Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts pick up steam

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Dave Somers was an ecologist before he got into county government, and that background gave the Snohomish County, Wash. executive a valuable perspective on the national racial justice reckoning that has continued over the past 14 months.

“They call it ‘disturbance ecology,’” he said during a July 11 workshop at the Annual Conference. “When you have a flood or a fire, there’s devastation and pain. From that, life springs forward.”

His predecessor’s equity and inclusion task force had disbanded itself out of frustration years earlier, and the county did not seem to be missing it. With 85 percent of its 120,000 residents identifying as White, he called Snohomish County “an easy place to put issues [of racial inequity] aside and say there’s no problem because a lot of people don’t experience it day to day.”

But while its population is more homogeneous compared to nearby King County, Somers found there was a desire to address those challenges, both

within county government and in public.

“Having this out in the open, talking about it, trying to understand it, identify it, where it is... it’s the only way forward. It’s painful for all of us, but it’s important,” he said.

Whatever form counties’ efforts take to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, Cook County, Ill. Board President Toni Preckwinkle said county officials share the same basic motivation and goals.

“As government leaders, we have a moral obligation to focus on equity to undue decades of past harm,” she said. “We have to recognize that inequities have been perpetuated by racist government policies.”

Denise Barreto, Cook County’s director of equity and inclusion, admitted that not every county has leadership that is prepared to phrase themselves as Preckwinkle does, but efforts to start that work can come in surprising places.

Andrew Strong, director of equity and racial justice for San Diego County, said he initially didn’t expect much from his relatively conservative county’s foray into DEI work.

“We’re not going to neces-

sarily dive too deep into what structural racism is, how to tear down walls of oppression,” he said.

A \$5 million allocation for his efforts, though, showed him otherwise.

“That was a little more action,” Strong said. “It was time — 2020 happened and it allowed us the space to dedicate resources.”

Durham County, N.C. Commissioner Brenda Howerton built on Somers’ observation that however belated these efforts may be, there is demonstrable momentum to keep things moving following George Floyd’s death in May 2020.

“This year has been the most difficult year about the conversation on racism and equity that I’ve had since I’ve been in office,” she said. “In my county, there was so much pain, and that was the tipping point for the people in our community to say something different has to happen here. The racism is so thick, our children are being murdered in the street, the system is not taking care of our children. We have policies in place, I am part of that system that’s not taking care of peo-

ple.”

The panel discussed five strategies for advancing DEI work:

- **Find your why:** It’s straightforward, but identify why your county is doing the work. It can range from something as simple as, as Howerton said, “it’s the right thing to do.”

- **Equity starts in the house:** View equity internally first. Counties can set their own policies for personnel and to a limited extent, for the public. “It’s important to remember that our employees are the community,” Strong said.


- **Don’t burden marginalized groups:** Barreto noted that women of color are disproportionately asked to do DEI work, often with no additional compensation. “Invite everyone in and don’t go looking for your Black and Brown people to do this work. Look for your young people,” she said.

- **Do what you can where you are:** Ensure that your county’s approach is appropriate for your county, and if you adopt something from another county, adjust it to your community’s needs. “It’s about navigating the advances, the policies to make it work for you and

your constituents, Howerton said. “It’s hard, it’s ugly sometimes, but no matter how hard it is, there will always be people around you who will stand with you. You may feel like you’re standing alone when you call out the systemic racism, but there will be people who will be with you to take that stand.”

- **View equity as a gateway to justice:** We’re trying to change a system that has been in place for 200-plus years,” Howerton said. “It’s not going to be easy, but do we have any choice? Racism is alive and in our faces. And if we want to keep quality staff, we must hear them and respect them and how we respect them is showing equity, inclusiveness.”

## NACo DEI working group

NACo recently convened a group of county leaders to explore efforts related to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion and to advise NACo on ways to expand resources for county leaders. Contact Ophelia Bitanga-Isreal at [obitanga@naco.org](mailto:obitanga@naco.org) or visit <https://www.naco.org/county-resources-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>. 

# The future of the post-pandemic economy

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

The country is on its way to a full recovery post-COVID-19, according to Moody’s Analytics Chief Economist Mark Zandi.

Zandi’s observations were a part of a meeting of NACo’s Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC), whose members discussed COVID-19’s economic impact and smart infrastructure July 11 at the 2021 NACo Annual Conference.

Zandi shared his outlook on the upsides and downsides of a post-COVID-19 economy.

The country lost 22 million jobs last March into April at the height of the pandemic and the country is still down 6.8 million jobs from pre-pandemic levels, according to Zandi.

However, it’s his opinion that the country will fully recover from the pandemic by early



NACo’s Large Urban County Caucus hear from Stefania Yanachkov, federal policy, Waymo, at their meeting July 11 at the Annual Conference. Photo by Hugh Clarke

2023.

“I think this will be one of the quickest economic recoveries from recessions since World War II.”

When looking at the outlook of the economy in a post-pandemic

period, Zandi said he thinks there will be several fundamental changes that will have long-lasting shifts in the economy.

He cited an increase in online use, less travel, more remote

work and the migration away from urban areas.

“I don’t think it’s ever going back to where we were,” he said.

While Zandi is optimistic about the future, he said there are some risks — one being dis-

inflation.

“Obviously the economy has reopened very rapidly,” he said, explaining how increased demand causes supply prices to increase with both commodity prices and industrial prices spiking.

“In my view, this will be temporary,” he said.

Zandi said another risk relates to the government support that has been keeping the country going throughout the pandemic.

“Those supports are soon coming to an end... and that means a lot of households that are still struggling — lower income houses, communities of color — are going to have to adjust to all that which tends to be difficult.”

The final risk he identified is the pandemic itself and the possibility of a resurgence.



# CONFERENCE



## Nimble county and motivated members kick-start conference



by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

A 1 a.m. phone call from Prince George's County, Md. Executive Angela Alsobrooks kicked off a three-month race to accomplish what usually takes three years — assembling a NACo Annual Conference.

That, along with a \$64 million renovation of the Gaylord National Harbor Hotel and Conference Center, has allowed the 2021 NACo Annual Conference to serve as a kick-off event for the county. It's one that officials hope can be a model to others, as they bring back events that can in turn provide the tax revenue that will fund the services counties have been providing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a sense of normalcy for their communities.

"NACo and county governments never did close," said NACo President Gary Moore, the judge/executive of Boone County, Ky. "Our county officials have been working on the frontlines throughout the pandemic. We don't have the liberty to be able to close."

The close proximity to NACo's Washington, D.C. headquarters allowed NACo staff

to prepare for the conference without heavy air travel in the weeks leading up to the July 9-12 conference.

"This was quick, there was a lot of unknowns, but it says a lot about Prince George's County's preparedness, a lot about our leadership and Gaylord National's preparedness to be able to take on such a great opportunity," said Leslie Whitlow Graves, president and CEO of Experience Prince George's.

Councilwoman Monique Anderson-Walker, who represents the Prince George's County district that includes the hotel and conference center, embraced the chance to be a leader.

"This kick-off here at the National Harbor really sets the tone for what we are trying to push forward and that is that we're open for business and that we can be successful in keeping a safe environment while moving forward with many people being entertained and learning here," she said.

"The past 16 months have been a reset and awakening, as the COVID-19 shutdown brought undivided attention to social ills as well as systemic issues highlighting disparities in health and economics," she

noted. "This time provided us opportunities to turn inward, to be introspective, and to turn outward, to look for opportunities to make changes in a very meaningful way."

In addition to committee meetings and workshops, NACo members will approve federal advocacy priorities.

"NACo's national issues platform reflects many of the challenges Prince George's County and other counties currently face: the devastating impacts of COVID-19, public health and the economy, the opioid and heroin crisis, criminal justice, mental health reform, transportation infrastructure and economic development," Anderson-Walker said.

She credited Montgomery County Councilmember Craig Rice and Baltimore City Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton with helping bring the conference to Prince George's County.

Moore said he hopes the work NACo, Prince George's County and the Gaylord National have done would not exist in a vacuum.

"If we can be a resource to the private sector in any way, we're delighted to do this," he said. **CN**

## LUCC members talk future technology

From **LUCC** page 11

"There are risks as I mentioned... but I do want to say I feel about as good about the economic outlook as I have in a long, long time — including before the pandemic," he said. "It's prudent to be cautious and guarded against the downsides, but I think we can take some solace — the economy is going to be at our back the next couple of years."

LUCC members also discussed the future of county infrastructure.

A representative from an autonomous driving technology development company, Waymo, told county officials about the Waymo Driver, a fully autonomous car.

There are 50 million injuries and 1.35 million deaths worldwide because of vehicle crashes due to human error and inattention, according to Stefania Yanachkov, Waymo's federal policy and government affairs staff.

Waymo's mission is to improve safety on roads throughout the country.

"We believe that we need to

just remove the driver and really believe in nothing short of fully autonomous technology," she said.

Fully autonomous driving is unlike other technologies that may ask a driver to take over or intervene during the ride, she said.

"Waymo is always the driver, from beginning to end," she said. "You don't have to sit behind the wheel or have a driver's license to use our technology."

The technology provides a 360-degree view of up to three football fields in all directions of the vehicle.

Yanachkov described the Waymo One, a ride-hailing service similar to Uber or Lyft, but lacks a human driver, and Waymo Via, which is a fully autonomous trucking service.

Waymo One is currently only available in the Phoenix area but does not require specific infrastructure to be implemented.

"We're aware that a priority for local governments is really integrating the technology and services with public transportation, but also making transportation systems more equitable and sustainable," she said. **CN**

## ON THE MOVE

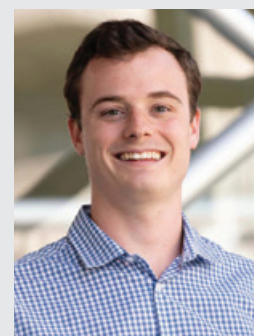
### NACo OFFICERS AND STAFF

- President **Larry Johnson** addressed members of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania via video at their Annual Conference and Trade Show, held August 1-4 in Hershey, Pa. NACo Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** and Membership Director **Kim Hall** also took part in the conference.

- Johnson** and Immediate Past President **Gary Moore** participated August 1-3 in the South Carolina Association of Counties Annual Conference in Hilton Head, S.C. Government Affairs Director **Mark Ritacco** and Membership Associate Director **John Losh**, also took part in the conference.

- First Vice President **Denise Winfrey** and NACo Executive Director **Matt Chase** participated in the United Counties Council Annual Conference, held July 26-27 in Galena, Ill.

- Seamus Dowdall** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant. He previously served as an American Rescue Plan fellow at NACo. Prior to joining NACo, he held several positions with Politico, including account manager and customer success manager. He earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics.



**Dowdall**



## CONFERENCE MEETUPS



# County libraries reimagine their expanding roles in wake of pandemic



A meetup July 10 on county libraries drew a large crowd at the 2021 NACo Annual Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

by **Rachel Looker**  
staff writer

County libraries across the country are adapting to help local governments recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and provide long-term services to communities.

County library staff discussed the future of county libraries and the role that library systems can play when it comes to social justice, economic mobility, closing the digital divide and providing social services to residents during a meetup July 10 at NACo's 2021 Annual Conference.

In Prince George's County, Md., the library system adapted throughout the pandemic to provide services to residents including launching a vaccine hotline center at the library to help connect residents to vaccines.

"If there's an idea, bring it to the library because you'd be surprised how willing we are to start something new that can grow," said Robert Phillips, CEO of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System. "Libraries are all about creation."

She explained how libraries' efforts focus on community health with libraries administering flu shots, providing yoga classes and holding other well-being activities.

"People come to the library," she said. "They like the library. It feels like another home."

She added that while county libraries focus on building relationships, they work to connect residents to resources and services such as providing information on homeless shelters, connecting individuals to workforce development programs or connecting library patrons to

social workers who are hired as part of the library staff.

"These are partnerships that are going to help our community as a whole," she said.

County library officials talked about changes to county systems following the pandemic with many county libraries looking to reimagine their facilities to be used for other purposes.

Johnson County, Kan. Assistant County Manager Joe Waters said they are rebuilding many of their older libraries with new spaces that have both small and large meeting spaces with many computers.

While they are not reducing space limits, Waters said they are evolving already existing space to serve different roles in communities. Some new spaces are being constructed with children and teens in mind to encourage youth to visit the li-

brary.

"We have a significant percentage of our population that still want books," he said.

Waters said libraries help a county's overall economic vitality.

"We are finding that an investment in our libraries is economic development," he said.

In Scott County, Minn., Commissioner Barbara Weckman Brekke said the library went on the road with a book mobile that worked to improve early literacy in communities.

The book mobile visits the same locations for multiple weeks to build relationships with residents.

"This is more than just a bookmobile," she said of the connections it helps strengthen within the community.

County library officials also discussed the possibility of using library space for different

uses, as office buildings are downsizing and more employees work from home.

Phillips said they are looking at "rework library spaces" and creating free space where there are desks and equipment that those working from home may not have in their own spaces. The county library will work to help entrepreneurs and small businesses with library staff members even trained to help write small business plans.

Linda Thompson, New Hanover County, N.C. chief diversity and equity officer, said the county is partnering with the county library and a community college system to offer all high school seniors who graduated this year free tuition.

"[It's a] great partnership with our library," Thompson said. "There's great space at the library and it's a great way to drive young people there." **CN**



# NACo UPCOMING EVENTS



REGISTRATION  
NOW OPEN!

## WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION CONFERENCE & RURAL ACTION CAUCUS SYMPOSIUM

Oct. 13-15, 2021 | Salt Lake County, Utah  
[www.naco.org/WIR21](http://www.naco.org/WIR21)



## FALL BOARD MEETING & LARGE URBAN COUNTY CAUCUS SYMPOSIUM

Dec. 1-4, 2021 | DeKalb County, Ga.



## NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Feb. 12-16, 2022 | Washington, D.C.



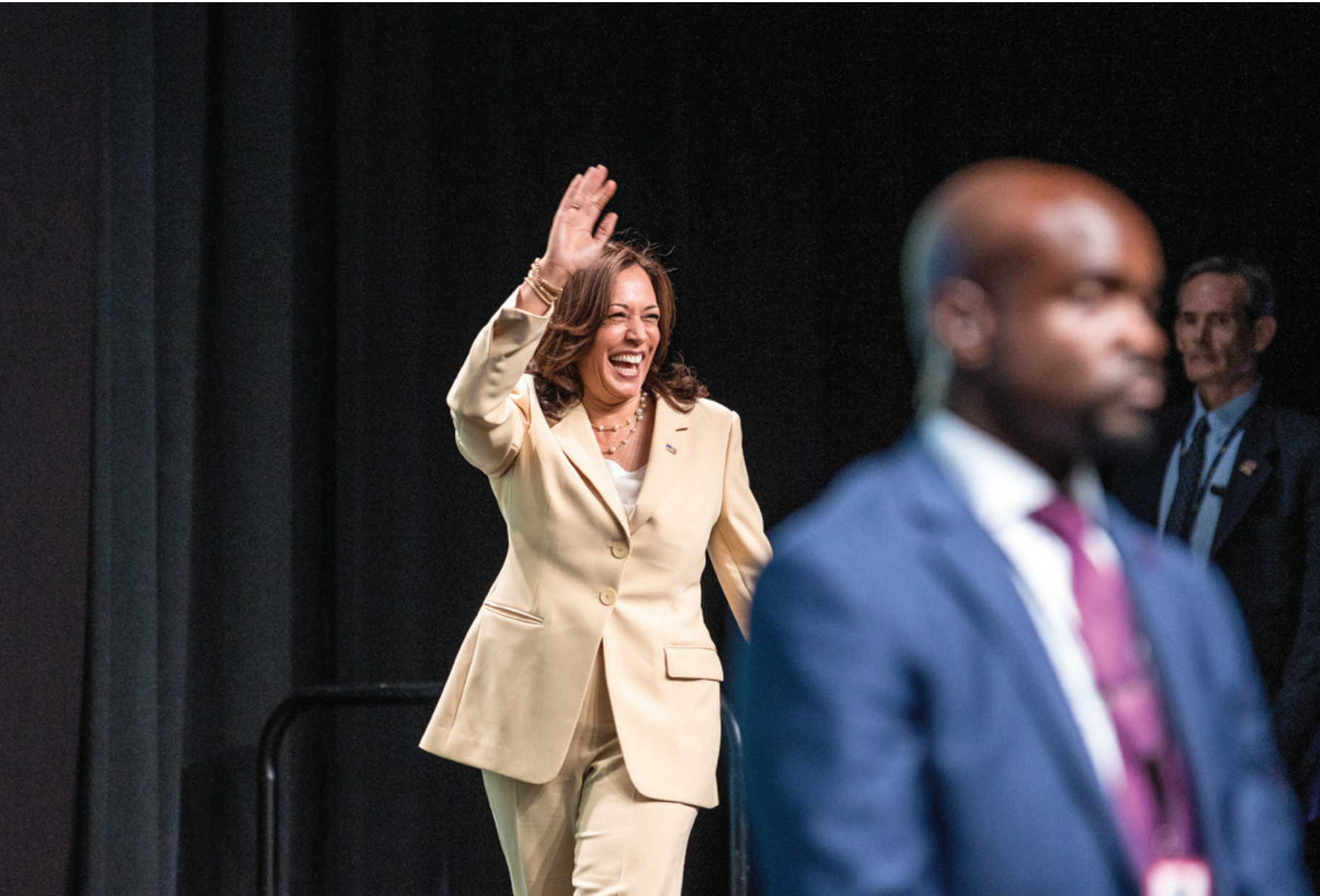
## 2022 NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE

July 21-24, 2022 | Adams County, Colo.



CONFERENCE  
MOMENTS IN

PICTURES



Vice President Kamala Harris waves to NACo members July 9 as she takes the stage before speaking at the General Session.



NACo members catch up with each other during breaks in the conference.

2021 ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
OF COUNTIES

NACo.

ALL IMAGES TAKEN  
BY DENNY HENRY  
UNLESS NOTED



Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County commissioner (right), Jim Healy of the Illinois State Association of Counties (center), and John Ostlund, Yellowstone County commissioner (left) joke July 9 before the start of the Transportation Policy Steering Committee Meeting at the NACo Annual conference in Prince George’s County, Md.



# CONFERENCE MOMENTS IN PICTURES



DeKalb County, Ga. Chief Executive Officer Michael Thurmond (left) administers the NACo oath of office to DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Larry Johnson, flanked by his daughter Tiara and wife, Tanisha, July 12 in Prince George's County, Md.



Stephen Acquario, executive director of the New York State Association of Counties, discusses the association's recently published book, "Our Darkest Hours," about the county response to COVID-19.



"Our Darkest Hours" details the county response to the COVID-19 pandemic in New York.

Fremont County, Colo. Commissioner Dwayne McFall catches up on *County News* while waiting for the Annual Business Meeting to begin.





# CONFERENCE MOMENTS IN PICTURES



NACo members and others try their luck at games in the NACo exhibit hall at the Annual Conference. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Adams County, Colo. officials get NACo members excited about their county hosting the 2022 NACo Annual Conference.



Black Hawk County, Iowa Auditor Grant Veeder delivers his annual limerick.



NACo members gather near the Registration and Voting Credentials Help Desk at the conference.



Members of the Women of NACo gather for a photo at the WON Leadership breakfast. Members enhance the effectiveness of female county officials and engage in seeking leadership positions in their communities and within NACo. Photo by Hugh Clarke





NACo members gather for an early-morning bike ride over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge into Virginia and back. Photo by Hugh Clarke



Matt Chase photographs the wooden flag carved by Blue Earth County, Minn. Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg.



NACo's then-First Vice President Larry Johnson (right) talks with (l-r) Commissioner John Ostlund of Yellowstone County, Mont., Commissioner Mike McGinley of Beaverhead County, Mont. and Commissioner Greg Chilcott of Ravalli County, Mont.



Then-Second Vice President Denise Winfrey, Will County, Ill., board member, introduces HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge during the General Session.



# CONFERENCE MOMENTS IN PICTURES



Commissioner Mike McGinley of Beaverhead County, Mont., gets help with voting July 12.



Fulton County, Ga. Commissioner Liz Hausmann



Douglas County, Neb. Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson gives a hug to Roane County, Tenn. Commissioner Ron Berry.



Outgoing NACo President Gary Moore pauses for a photo with his family.



Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman makes a point at the NACo Board of Directors meeting.



Then-NACo President and Boone County, Ky. Judge Executive Gary Moore addresses members July 12 at the Annual Business Meeting.



# CONFERENCE MOMENTS IN PICTURES



NACo members catch up with each other in the hallways in-between workshops and meetings.



Palm Beach County, Fla. Commissioner Melissa McKinlay delivers a short resolutions report from NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee.



NACo President Larry Johnson of DeKalb County, Ga. (center) is surrounded by the chairs he appointed for NACo's committees, task forces and boards who will help guide policy decisions through the next year.



# AWARDS



Boone County, Ky. High graduate Hannah Andino-Gautier accepts the David Davenport NACo Presidential Scholarship.



Julie Guerra, Human Resources director, Nueces County, Texas (center) accepts Nationwide's Aspire Award for 2021. The award focuses on county plan efficiencies to help employees retire comfortably. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Mercer County, W.Va. Commissioner Greg Puckett (center) accepts the Public Leadership in the Arts Award for County Arts Leadership, from Jay Dick (left), of Americans for the Arts and NACo President Gary Moore, Boone County, Ky. judge executive.



# ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

2021 ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

NACo



Aetna Senior Vice President of Public and Labor, Erich Twachtman (left), takes part in celebrating Alameda County, Calif.'s award in the Health category with representatives from the county.



Leon County, Fla. Commissioner Bill Proctor accepts the Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation category award for the county.



Fremont County, Colo. Commissioner Debbie Bell, president of Colorado Counties, Inc., accepts the award for Summit County, Colorado's in the Children and Youth category.



Representatives of Oakland County, Mich. accept their award in the Civic Education and Public Information category.



Erie County, N.Y. County Executive Mark Poloncarz accepts the Community and Economic Development category award.



New Hanover County, N.C. officials accept their award in the County Administration and Management category.



CSA Executive Director Craig Sullivan accepts Maricopa County, Ariz.'s award in the County Resiliency: Infrastructure, Energy and Sustainability category.



Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and Whitney White accept the award in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety category.





**Jeff Rogers, finance director, City and Borough of Juneau, accepts Alaska Municipal League's award in the Financial category.**



**Representatives of Franklin County, Ohio accept their award in the Human Services category.**



**Montgomery County, Md. Councilmember Craig Rice (r) helps accept the award in the Information Technology category.**



**Miami-Dade County, Fla. commissioners accept awards in the Volunteers and Libraries categories.**



**Montgomery County, Md. Councilmember Craig Rice and Marhonda Williams (center) accept the award in the Parks and Recreation category.**



**Hennepin County, Minn. Commissioners Debbie Goettel (center) and Angela Conley accept the Personnel Management, Employment and Training category award for the county.**



**Howard County, Md. takes home the prize in the Planning category.**



**Broward County, Fla. wins in the Transportation category.**



# RESOLUTIONS



At the 86th NACo Annual Conference held July 9-12 in Prince George's County, Md., member counties approved dozens of policy resolutions including some that were brand new to the American County Platform. Policy steering committees also made several changes to their platforms. Resolutions covered a wide range of federal policy issues that affect county government operations. They include everything from affordable housing and broadband to the environment and veterans' issues and much more. The following are the newest policy positions adopted by NACo members (for a complete look at all resolutions and platform changes, visit [naco.org/policy-resolutions](https://naco.org/policy-resolutions)).

## COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Reauthorize WIOA

**ISSUE:** Reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with enhancements that would reduce bureaucracy, improve alignment and increase flexibility for more efficient and effective results. WIOA reauthorization legislation should promote innovation and flexibility at the state and local level and be responsive to local emerging economic realities, and business needs to ensure U.S. workers and businesses have the skills and training needed to compete in the 21st-century economy.

### Support Fire Sprinkler Installations in Public Housing Developments

**ISSUE:** Residents of public housing developments are dependent upon the government to maintain the housing and ensure its safety. Unfortunately, there have been fatal fires in public housing developments across the nation due to a lack of fire sprinkler systems in these older developments. Local and state housing authorities often lack the funds needed to install these life-saving systems.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to pass the Public Housing Fire Safety Act (S. 265/H.R. 2638), which would authorize a \$25 million competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Housing



and Urban Development (HUD) to assist housing authorities with completing these retrofit installation projects. This bill also would direct HUD to identify the number of unsprinklered housing developments across the nation.

## ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE

### Amendment of U.S. Code Title 16. Conservation Chapter 12. Federal Regulation and Development of Power, Subchapter I. Regulation of the Development of Waterpower and Resources Section 803. Conditions of License Generally

**ISSUE:** A resolution urging

the United States Congress to amend 16 U.S. Code § 803 (a) (2)(B), to include recommendations from Local agencies exercising administration over flood control in the issuing of licenses for waterpower and resources.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the United States Congress to amend 16 U.S. Code § 803 (a) (2)(B) to include recommendations from impacted regional and local agencies exercising administration over flood control in issuing of licenses for waterpower and resources.

### Oppose Material Preference Legislation

**ISSUE:** There is a national effort to eliminate local control of water, wastewater, and stormwater (water) infrastructure systems, which would deny engineers, utilities, local governments, and public entities the

ability to design water systems in the manner that best serves the needs of their communities.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports local control of decisions related to water infrastructure as local communities are in the best position to determine appropriate local water infrastructure investments. State and federal governments should not pass laws or regulations that restrict or limit local governments' ability to invest in the types of water infrastructure and innovative technology that best suits their needs. NACo is neutral as to which materials communities select for water infrastructure projects, but NACo recognizes that communities have unique needs regarding water infrastructure and their autonomy to address those needs should not be restricted or limited in this manner.

## Reduce Emissions from the Aviation Sector

**ISSUE:** Between 2009 and 2018, studies have shown that carbon dioxide emissions in the transportation sector have steadily increased by 22%. The aviation sector has proven to be one of the fastest-growing sources of emissions in the U.S. transportation sector over the past decade.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the federal government to continue research of air and noise pollution caused by aircraft, and enforce existing standards, rules and regulations. As we see pollution trends in transportation continue to increase, NACo urges the continued support of the use of emissions standards for aircraft and

See **POLICY** page 25



*From POLICY page 24*

aircraft engines through the Environmental Protection Agency and international organizations like the International Civil Aviation Organization.

## Support Resuming Federal Offshore Leasing in the Gulf of Mexico

**ISSUE:** The Federal Government's position on resuming offshore leasing is important to America's counties regarding the funding of conservation, recreation, restoration and protection of vital national resources.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the Federal Government's resumption of offshore leasing in the Gulf of Mexico, to maximize the funding streams of the royalty revenue for the purposes of conservation, recreation, restoration and protection of vital national resources.

## Reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act

**ISSUE:** The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) expired in 2012. For now, the program continues to receive appropriations, but its future is uncertain unless Congress acts to reauthorize it. The bipartisan America's Conservation Enhancement Act (S. 3051 / H.R. 925) would reauthorize NAWCA through 2024 while increasing the authorized annual funding level to \$60 million. The Land Trust Alliance will continue to advocate for its passage.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

## Include Waste-to-Energy

**ISSUE:** Local governments have invested billions of dollars in waste-to-energy (WTE) as an environmentally conscientious alternative to landfilling. Unfavorable treatment of WTE by the federal government in upcoming legislation could be detrimental to the financial viability of WTE and hinder the expansion of WTE, and its ben-

efits, in the United States.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports the full inclusion of WTE in the Production Tax Credit, the Clean Energy Standard, climate programs, and other related policies.

## FINANCE, PENSIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### Support Remediation of Abandoned Buildings on Tribal Lands

**ISSUE:** Across the nation, on tribal lands, many abandoned buildings that were once schools, federal offices and clinics have been abandoned by the federal government. The federal buildings are dilapidated, no longer in use, and need to be removed or restored for other use.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to provide federal funding and necessary resources to remove dilapidated federal buildings or restore federal buildings in tribal communities.

### Conduct Additional Analysis on its Proposal to Change the Definition of Metropolitan Statistical Areas

**ISSUE:** A proposed change in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) definition of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) moves the minimum population of core MSA cities from 50,000 to 100,000, fundamentally changing the federal definition of urban and rural. Although OMB originally did not mean for the classification to be used in funding decisions, currently many federal programs do use the designation of MSA/rural to categorize funding eligibility and so the change has the potential to dramatically change how funds are allocated and distributed across both rural and urban areas. Very little study has been undertaken to identify impact.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges OMB to postpone making a final decision on the change

to the MSA definition until the agency has completed a thorough investigation and analysis of the potential impacts of that change and how these impacts will affect federal agency funding decisions, counties, and municipalities.

## HEALTH

### Support a Joint State, Local, Tribal, Territorial, and Federal Covid-19 Pandemic After-Action Report

**ISSUE:** The emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic demands a comprehensive analysis of our public health system and response to the crisis to recommend policy action.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress and the President to charter a commission to prepare a complete account of the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to:

The condition of state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal public health agencies prior to the emergency.

A comprehensive and coordinated analysis on preparedness and response to the emergency by each level of the system.

Recommendations to legislative and executive policymakers and staff to improve response to future crises and effectiveness of the system overall.

## Declare Gun Violence a National Public Health Crisis

**ISSUE:** Public Health Awareness raises awareness of the relationship between the health of individuals and the health of their communities. There has been a rise in gun violence throughout major metropolitan areas in the United States.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the Federal Government to work with local community and government agencies in identifying specific activities to: (1) decrease gun violence among the youth (2) increase funding to the programs specific to reducing gun-violence; (3) Work with local law enforcement agencies to create strategies to reduce the amount of illegal firearms in the United States (4) work with marginalized populations to provide education on gun violence, issues and solutions (5) Advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and (6) support local, State, and Federal programs that advance anti-gun violence initiatives.

## Lift and Reform the Medicaid IMD Exclusion

**ISSUE:** The federal Medicaid statute prohibits federal Medicaid payments to states for services provided in institutions for mental disease (IMDs), which are defined as hospitals, nursing facilities, or other institutions of more than 16 beds

that are primarily focused on treating mental illness, including substance use disorder. The IMD payment exclusion has resulted in unintended consequences, including undermining mental health parity for Medicaid beneficiaries and contributing to critical treatment bed shortages.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to amend the Medicaid statute to allow states that have a plan for providing appropriate outpatient care to receive federal Medicaid payments for services provided in IMDs for people with severe mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorder (SUD). Additionally, due to the unprecedented strain placed on public behavioral health systems during the pandemic, NACo urges Congress to temporarily allow states to receive federal Medicaid payment for services provided in IMDs during the COVID-19 public health emergency and for 180 days after the emergency ends.

Until permanent IMD reform legislation can be enacted and implemented, NACo urges the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to work with states and counties to waive the IMD exclusion (including waiving state-wideness) for states and counties that have a plan for providing appropriate outpa-

*See POLICY page 26*



Fulton County, Ga. Commissioner Liz Hausmann, chair of NACo's Transportation Steering Committee, takes the microphone at the Annual Business Meeting, where NACo members voted on policy resolutions. Photo by Denny Henry



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tient care.

## Amend the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy in the Federal Social Security Act

**ISSUE:** The Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy forces local taxpayer dollars to be used for providing health services to pre-trial detainees who are eligible for Medicaid through their Constitutional rights.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to amend the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy in the Social Security Act, allowing pre-trial detainees to access Medicaid services while awaiting trial.

## HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

### Increase Federal Funding for Civics Education

**ISSUE:** State and federal resources for civic education have declined over time, negatively impacting civic knowledge and literacy as well as civic engagement. More robust civics education can help the next generation of Americans become more engaged and better versed in local government, supporting communities where residents thrive.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to pass legislation increasing funding for federal civics education grant programs, including but not limited to those that serve state education agencies, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, research and education workforce development.

## JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### Nationwide Approach to FEMA Implementation of NMFS Biological Opinion

**ISSUE:** The impacts of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) have the

potential to be profound for counties nationwide.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that any approach to Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance undertaken by FEMA for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is narrowly tailored to FEMA's authority and receives extensive input from impacted local and state governments, including consideration of local land use laws and ordinances that are already in place to promote and protect water quality, flood storage and riparian habitat.

### Base Federal Assistance Eligibility on Cross-Jurisdictional Boundaries

**ISSUE:** Considerations need to be provided when determining if a County receives Federal Disaster Assistance in instances in which the disaster occurs across state lines, impacting multiple counties during a localized event.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo recognizes that localized disasters can impact neighboring counties divided by a State line. NACo also recognizes that no inter-state language is included in the Stafford Act or Federal regulation providing consideration in granting federal resources or support to counties fairly during a localized disaster event in which one County receives assistance, and the other equally impacted does not. NACo recommends a federal study be completed on potential disparities in resources and support when one state is provided federal assistance and a neighboring county that is responding to the same emergency does not. Based on the result of the study, language shall be included where appropriate, accommodating this consideration and ensuring equal support. One potential focus point is in relation to per capita impact indicator and project thresholds for FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) and Public Assistance (PA) for those neighboring



Montgomery County, Ohio Commissioner Deborah Liebermann, Human Services and Education committee chair, addresses NACo members July 12. Photo by Denny Henry

counties divided by a state line.

## PUBLIC LANDS

### Oppose any Bill in the 117th Congress That Tries Again to Designate "Red Rock Wilderness" in the State of Utah

**ISSUE:** On May 10, 2021, S. 1535, the *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act*, was introduced again in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. This legislation would lock up approximately 8.4 million acres of federal land within Utah as wilderness. Past versions of S. 1535 failed to pass Congress numerous times due to opposition from Utah's congressional delegation, governor and county officials.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo calls on Congress to oppose S. 1535 because wilderness legislation should be driven by elected local leaders and residents.

### Support the Legal Validity of the Presidential Proclamation of 2017 that Downsized the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, Applauding the Benefits that Have Resulted from that 2017 Downsizing, and Opposing

### Any Efforts to Reverse that 2017 Downsizing

**ISSUE:** The validity of the 2017 Presidential Proclamation that downsized the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the benefits that resulted from that 2017 downsizing, and the poorly guided threats to reverse that 2017 downsizing.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports the President's December 4, 2017 valid legal exercise of authority to downsize the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) from approximately 1.9 million acres to just over one million acres and to order a new management plan for the reduced monument, because (a) the governments of the State and affected counties requested and supported the 2017 downsizing, (b) the 2017 downsizing conformed to the Antiquities Act standard that the land comprising the national monument be confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects of historic or scientific interest to be protected, and (c) the new management plan for the reduced monument has produced substantial land management benefits and benefits for the local communities.

### Further Engage with Impacted Counties When Developing the

### Implementation Strategy to Conserve Thirty Percent of the Lands and Waters in the United States by 2030 ("30 by 30")

**ISSUE:** Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, directs federal agencies to develop a strategy to conserve thirty percent of the lands and waters in the United States by 2030, known as "30 by 30."

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges the Biden Administration to further engage with impacted counties, especially those with large tracts of federal lands within their jurisdiction, in developing an implementation strategy for 30 by 30. Conservation efforts under 30 by 30 must be focused on voluntary and locally-led programs with federal agencies primarily providing support through funding and technical assistance to state, local and tribal governments, as well as private land and forest owners. Federal agencies should coordinate resource and forest management plans with elected officials from natural resource reliant counties, especially those with large tracts of federal public lands within their jurisdiction, and agricultural communities and other private landowners on the im-

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plementation timeline and economic impacts of this proposal. Conservation must be treated as a broad, collaborative set of principles and ideas designed to ensure the wisest use of our natural resources. Conservation includes the preservation of pristine wilderness areas, active forest management projects to reduce the threat of wildfire and create timber jobs, voluntary species conservation agreements and programs to keep private working lands productive in ways that meet specific, local environmental needs. Federal agencies must also ensure federal lands under a multiple-use mandate remain productive to generate revenues to support voluntary conservation programs and ensure 30 by 30 does not lead to large increases in federal land acquisitions.

## Resume Onshore Petroleum Leasing on Federal Lands

**ISSUE:** Onshore oil and gas leasing on federal lands supports local economies and provides important revenue streams to all levels of government for resource conservation, recreation, restoration and protection programs.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo supports the resumption of onshore leasing on federally owned lands where appropriate to maximize the royalty revenue streams for natural resource conservation, recreation, restoration and protection programs.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

### Support Federal Solutions to the “Homework Gap”

**ISSUE:** Given the ever-increasing need for digital connectivity for children to successfully complete their schoolwork, the “homework gap” is leading to inequities in education in counties across America, which negatively impacts child development, the

success of our economies and the quality of living in our communities.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** To address internet affordability and adoption issues in K-12 education known as the “homework gap,” NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program providing high quality, subsidized and discounted internet and computer access to low-income K-12 students through a shared cost formula spread between providers, families, and the federal government.

### Support a Permanent Federal Broadband Assistance Program

**ISSUE:** The digital divide disproportionately impacts low-income households, who, due to affordability issues, have lower rates of technology adoption and access to broadband internet at home. This disparity creates additional barriers to accessing public benefits, employment opportunities, digital learning, telehealth services and opportunities for civic engagement, negatively impacting county economies, health outcomes and quality of life.

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program that helps low-income families afford internet service. A permanent broadband benefit program must include measures holding Internet Service Providers accountable to increasing access and providing affordable service to qualifying households. Additionally, such a program should incorporate relevant data, best practices and any key policy lessons learned during the Federal Communications Commission’s implementation of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program established under the American Rescue Plan Act.

### Actively Engage Counties Prior to Developing 5G Wireless Infrastructure

**ISSUE:** As Congress works on legislation to help grow

our nation’s wireless broadband infrastructure, it is imperative that they engage local leaders to ensure that new wireless infrastructure built on locally owned property is done so with the prior approval of the governing jurisdiction, and does not preempt or limit local zoning authority

**ADOPTED POLICY:** NACo urges Congress to work with local officials when drafting legislation that would encourage the use of state or county owned land, including public rights-of-way, to build new wireless infrastructure, including fifth (5G) wireless networks, to expand service to rural areas, or to promote digital equity. NACo has long advocated for universal access to reliable wireline and wireless high-speed broadband service – as crucial for education, employment, and economic development – and NACo further urges Congress to oppose any legislative or regulatory proposals that would limit or preempt local zoning authority or the ability of local governments to charge reasonable fees for the use of publicly owned land to build wireless infrastructure

## TRANSPORTATION

### Direct Federal Policymakers to Include Direct Funding to Improve the Evacuation Routes Along the Gulf Coast and East Coast Coastal Communities

**Issue:** During the need for evacuating counties and/or parishes, especially during active hurricane season, traffic is often congested and moves slowly to evacuate citizens out of the impacted areas

**Adopted Policy:** NACo urges the improvement of existing evacuation routes and the possibility of including state routes as designated routes as well the prioritization and designation of funding for improvements to local counties and parishes evacuation routes. **CN**

## GET TO KNOW...

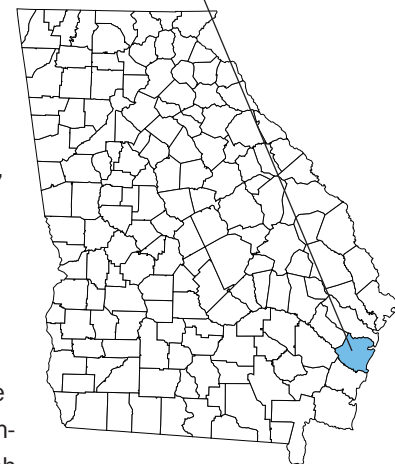
## McIntosh County, Ga.

### Welcome, McIntosh County, Ga.

McIntosh County is located on the Georgia coast, halfway between Savannah, Ga. and Jacksonville, Fla. The county was founded in 1793 and is named after the McIntosh family, whose members were the earliest settlers to the area after the Georgia colony formed. Lachlan McIntosh of the McIntosh family served as a general in the Continental Army.

The county seat of Darien was the county’s first permanent settlement. Its early economy relied on the shipment of rice and cotton. Following the Civil War, the county became an international timber market shipping yellow-pine timber.

**The county features historic sites such as Fort King George, the first En-**



**glish fort in the state and the oldest fort remaining on Georgia’s coast.**

Each year, the Blessing of the Fleet festival is held in the county to honor fishermen who work in the shrimping industry, which is a significant economic driver for the county.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



Fort King George Photo by Evangelio Gonzalez/Flickr

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WORD SEARCH

WASHOE COUNTY, Nev.  
Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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**ANTELOPE:** Established in 1931, the Sheldon Antelope Refuge Area is partly located in the county taking up more than 570,000 acres of land and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**ART:** Located in the county, the Nevada Museum of Art is the only American Alliance of Museums-accredited art museum in Nevada.

**ATLANTIS:** The Atlantis Casino is one of 10 casinos located in the county.

**BIGGEST:** The county seat, Reno, is known as the “The Biggest Little City in the World.”

**CRYSTAL:** The 56-acre Crystal Peak Park was once home to a lumber company and then a resort. A family who later lived on the property deeded the land to the county in 1993.

**PAIUTE:** Nearly 2,000 people live on the 742-square mile Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Reservation, about 35 miles northeast of the county seat.

**PYRAMID:** Pyramid Lake is the geographic sink of the basin of the Truckee River.

**RENO:** The county seat is named for Civil War Union Major General Jesse Reno.

**ROSE:** Mount Rose is the highest mountain in the county at 10,785 feet above sea level.

**SAND:** Sand Harbor is a state park at Lake Tahoe, the largest alpine lake in North America.

**TAHOE:** Eleven percent of Lake Tahoe lies in Washoe County.

**TAVERN:** Sky Tavern is a non-profit located in the county dedicated to help residents learn winter sports and more.

**TRUCKEE:** The Truckee River runs through the county and is as a source of water and recreation. It’s named for a Paiute chief.

**WASHOE:** Named for a tribe of American Indians, the county was founded in 1861 and takes up more than 6,000 square miles.

**WINTERS:** Winters Creek Lodge is a popular ski resort in the county.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

JERRY WHITE

NACo Board Member  
Assessor  
Shoshone County, Idaho



White

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

**Years in public service:** 19

**Occupation:** County assessor

**Education:** High school and numerous International Association of Assessing Officers courses

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** Life is pretty darn good for me and I have been blessed, but if I had to choose something I would say overcoming stage 4 cancer after undergoing numerous radiation, chemotherapy treatments and some great medical care.

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** Author Robert Fulghum, Benjamin Franklin and actor Jim Parsons.

**A dream I have is to:** Tour every national park with my loving wife Candi — starting with Denali to witness the Northern Lights.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done:** Complete the STP (Seattle to Portland) 200-

mile bicycle ride in one day.

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Tinker in my shop/man cave.

**I’m most proud of:** My parents — especially my mother. All five-foot-two of her. She had 12 children in the span of 15 years. The amount of cooking, canning, sewing and clothes-washing was staggering. I can never remember taking hot lunch at school. Our lunches were always packed for us with homemade bread, baked goods and love. I never remember her sleeping. She was up when I went to bed and up when I got up in the mornings. Now at 90 and a great, great grandmother still ready to tackle any problem for her family.

**Every morning I read:** My emails and *The Spokesman-Review*, the Spokane, Wash. daily newspaper.

**My favorite meal is:** The traditional Thanksgiving meal.

**My pet peeve is:** Unorganized/disorganization (though by looking at my desk, you would not

believe it) and the time it wastes.

**My motto is:** Stolen from Henry Ford — “Whether you think you can or think you can’t, you’re right.”

**The last book I read was:** *Maybe (Maybe Not)* by Robert Fulghum

**My favorite movie is:** I go back and forth between *The World’s Fastest Indian* and *Secondhand Lions*

**My favorite music is:** Any music by Bob Seger

**My favorite U.S. president is:** I don’t know if I have a favorite, but my favorite past president is Jimmy Carter. The example he has shown in his work after his presidency such as protection of human rights, promoting democracy, conflict resolution and mediation, disease prevention, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, Sunday school teacher and a loving husband of almost 70 years is a true test of character.

**My county is a NACo member because:** The invaluable lobbying they do on behalf of the counties is priceless such as Secure Rural Schools, the recent authorization of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds directly for the counties and their vast array of resources and friendly, knowledgeable staff are so valuable. There is no way a small county, any county, could accomplish this on their own.



finally!

NACo swag is now available online!


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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES NACo

You’d be surprised to learn that:

I grew up in a household with the two best parents in the world and 11 brothers and sisters on the grounds of the oldest building in Idaho. Our family were the caretakers of the Old Mission State Park.

Photo by Orin Blomberg/flickr





## BRIGHT IDEAS | MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, Fla.

# Library Partnership Helps Minority Business Owners

**PROBLEM:** Disparities cause young Black professionals to leave Miami-Dade County and contributes to the reduction of economic growth in underserved communities

**SOLUTION:** Provide educational networking sessions to support minority-owned small businesses.

by Rachel Looker  
staff writer

The Miami-Dade Public Library System in Miami-Dade County, Fla. has used partnerships to promote its resources for small businesses.

The library system partnered with the Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust in 2019 to participate in the First Fridays Breakfast Series of networking events.

The trust focuses on Black-owned small businesses and promotes small business growth within the community. The organization's focus is to address socioeconomic disparities within the Black community.

According to a report, "The Status of the Black Community in Miami-Dade County" conducted by The Metropolitan Center at Florida International University, nearly 30 percent of respondents who identified as young Black professionals said they were leaving Miami-Dade County.

The study found disparities in income, housing, health, education, employment and the criminal justice system impacted the Black middle-class community in the county.

Main Library Assistant Manager Mary Garcia said the trust asked if they could present their small business capitalization program at some of the library locations which serve as optimal meeting locations with large conference rooms and co-working spaces.

Garcia said the trust invited library staff to participate in the panels to discuss the library's resources for small



**Main Library Assistant Manager Mary Garcia (right) shows an attendee some of the library's online resources during one of the workshops at the First Fridays Breakfast Series.** Photo courtesy of MDEAT

businesses.

"They were so impressed about all these free resources that a lot of people hadn't heard about that they then invited us to participate in more of their programs — one of them being the Business Breakfast Series," she said.

The groups held the events at Black-owned businesses with the first held at the Oasis, a newly opened Black-owned business.

The Miami-Dade Public Library System presented the findings of its report at five of the monthly workshops which were held on the first Friday of each month.

During the events, attendees had breakfast and listened to speakers. Each workshop focused on a specific topic including branding, marketing, business capital and conducting business with government entities.

Garcia said the first workshop held at Oasis served as a great networking spot with an inviting environment.

Library staff presented information during the workshops on the variety of small business resources and programs offered for free at the li-

brary. The library system provides patrons with access to sample business plans, databases to explore statistics, access to download legal forms, sources to research investments and many other online classes in multiple languages.

Little River Branch Library Manager Tristan Miller said during the first workshop, attendees were surprised to learn about the many resources and services the library offered to small businesses.

"From that day, we signed up a lot of people for library cards and programs," Miller said. "A lot of those people came back to the library and wanted to know more about our resources and what else we offer."

The library system has its own patent and trademark resource center where individuals can meet with a trained librarian to review the patent and trademark process to help launch a small business.

Miller described how library branches also offer free tablets with internet services, free 3D printing which many business owners use to print logos, media labs, resume classes and job search classes.

To advertise the workshops, the library and trust promoted each event with flyers and on social media to attract attendees to the workshops.

"Our audiences kept growing every time we met," Garcia said.

She explained how the library has been supporting small businesses for years by offering these resources, services and providing co-working space to county residents.

"We're constantly promoting programs that help small businesses," she said.

Miller advised county library systems to identify underserved areas within a community and determine what resources are not being tapped to help small business owners. He emphasized the need for libraries to promote their services to residents.

"We need to create partnerships with local businesses so people can know and get this

knowledge out," Miller said.

Garcia advised counties to work with local colleges or universities, business development programs, the Small Business Administration or any other organizations that specialize in helping small businesses.

"This is one of the best times to use online resources because there's so much more available than there was before," Garcia said.

The First Fridays Breakfast Series are ongoing with workshops continuing to be held.

"You just create partnerships, see what you could do for them and what they can do for you," Miller said. **CN**

*Miami-Dade County's First Fridays Business Breakfast Series is the recipient of a Best in Category 2021 NACo Achievement Award in the Libraries category.*



**MADISON  
COUNTY, N.Y.**

**M**adison County, N.Y. officials approved a resolution for the county seal in 1919. The circular seal symbolizes the long-lasting relationship between the county and the Oneida Indian Nation.

The county's planning department updated the seal in the late 20th century, but it has never been formally adopted. The updated logo corrected historical inaccuracies with the Native American's dress and removed a sword that was placed in the hand of the colonial man.



The seal includes a dark background with the sun rising. In the center of the seal, a shield of liberty is placed between an American Indian and a colonial man.

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



# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## ARIZONA

**MARICOPA COUNTY** has released a “Just the Facts” website amid an **election audit**. The county said the website is meant to address what it calls misinformation being spread amid the Arizona Senate’s election audit. The website, JustTheFacts.Vote, explains the state’s election laws and provides in-depth information on how the county conducts elections.

## CALIFORNIA

The **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Board of Supervisors approved a guaranteed income plan July 27 for some people ages 18-24 who are transitioning out of **foster care**. The three-year pilot program will give 150 individuals \$1,204 per month. Youth receiving these county benefits — who are mostly male and Black or Latino — do not qualify for any other federal or state cash assistance and face particularly severe challenges to becoming self-sufficient, according to the motion. An estimated 31 percent are homeless and without a support network, according to KTTV-TV.

## FLORIDA

**ORANGE COUNTY** is recruiting non-profits to train them on how to access funding for **rental assistance**,

with the federal eviction moratorium set to expire. Non-profits will be able to help struggling tenants apply for assistance before it’s too late. “We are asking local non-profits to help us reach those facing eviction,” said Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings. “I encourage all those that wish to be a part of the solution to participate in the virtual training session and engage with your clients to make sure they know resources are available.”

## GEORGIA

**GWINNETT COUNTY** has spent \$500,000 on a “Listen to Gwinnett Moms,” for a **vaccine campaign** featuring moms. Videos and photos are being used for social media, billboards and TV commercials, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported. “If we want to stop the spread of COVID-19, you



need to get vaccinated,” said Silvia King, a mom who participated in a videoed vaccine roundtable hosted by the county. “I think a lot of people want their life back, going back to the normal activities... We want the schools open, and the kids want to go back to see their friends and teachers.” Watch the videos here: <https://listentogwinnettmoms.com/meetthemoms/>



This mansion for sale in Baltimore County, Md. was targeted by squatters calling themselves sovereign citizens. Photo courtesy of Zillow.com.

## MARYLAND

• **BALTIMORE COUNTY** has had quite the time trying to get rid of **squatters** in an empty mansion that was put up for sale, according to a report by *The Baltimore Sun*. Calling themselves “sovereign citizens,” a group of people broke into the home and stayed, refusing to leave even after police tried getting them out using a helicopter and armored vehicles. Officers were able to get a search warrant after identifying one of the squatters as a felon. He and another person, charged with burglary, were detained awaiting hearings and three others living at the home could not be found.

## MARYLAND

• In the face of some local opposition worried about health risks, **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** was set to vote recently on allowing the installation of **5G antennas**. The zoning bill includes amendments that require antennas to be 30 feet from homes and establishes an appeal process if neighbors object to a new antenna placement.



posing an ordinance that would make it a **misdemeanor to photograph, record or take videos** inside county-owned buildings. Flying drones near the county jail, juvenile deten-

## MICHIGAN

**OTTAWA COUNTY** is pro-

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## MINNESOTA

Everyone knows it’s tough **finding new employees** these days. In **FARIBAULT COUNTY**, the only veterinarian in town is sweetening the pot to help find his replacement by throwing in his practice and his pickup truck. Dr. Robert Bogan is ready to sign over the deed to his clinic and everything in it but the pharmaceuticals, KARE-TV reported. The rural county is even in a federal program that will forgive \$150,000 in college debt by any new vet who sticks around for at least six years. There may be hope on the horizon. A University of Minnesota student is interning with Bogan. He’ll graduate from vet school in three years, when Bogan is 77. Bogan said if his health holds, he’s willing to wait.

**Dr. Robert Bogan, the only vet in Fairbault County, Minn. prepares to vaccinate a cow heading to a county fair.** Photo courtesy of KARE-TV



## From NEWS FROM page 30

tion center, courthouses and above other county-owned buildings, including parks would also be part of the ordinance. Doug Van Essen, corporate counsel for the county, noted that “we live in a different world than we did 50 years ago and this is just a consequence of that.” The name of the proposal is the “Surveillance, Invasion of Privacy or Security Ordinance.”

## NEW YORK

Tracing a recent dramatic growth in the number of Hispanic business owners, **WEST-CHESTER COUNTY** has held several virtual **Spanish-language seminars** to help explain how best to obtain a small business recovery grant.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The **NEW HANOVER COUNTY** Public Library will **no longer charge late fees** for children’s materials. If a user holds onto an item for too long, however, it must be designated “lost” and the library will charge to replace it.

## OREGON

• After two years, **DESCHUTES COUNTY** will receive **marijuana tax revenue** again. The county lost its right to the tax revenue in 2019 when the county entered a moratorium on new processing and growing facilities, running afoul of a state law requiring counties to allow all licensed recreational marijuana activity to receive tax revenue. In 2020, residents voted against a ballot measure that would have allowed new facilities in the rural part of the county. House Bill 3295, which passed recently, allows a county that bans a sector of the marijuana industry, after initially allowing it, a way to still receive tax dollars. *The Bend Bulletin* reported that the bill was crafted specifically for Deschutes County’s circumstance.

• A **LANE COUNTY** sheriff’s deputy **drowned while attempting to rescue a child** in a reservoir. Courtney Couch was paddle-boarding when she tried to save the child, fell into

the water and did not resurface, the **LINN COUNTY** sheriff’s office said.

## TENNESSEE

Last year, Donnie Cox joined the **SCOTT COUNTY** Occupational Training and Treatment Program rather than go to the Duffield Regional Jail. He questioned whether the program would help. But he recently stood before the county Board of Supervisors to share his testimony and belief in that same program he now says changed his life and perception, the *Times News* reported.

“I was skeptical of the program going into it,” Cox said. “You hear everybody say this and that, but it really did change my life. ... I appreciate the opportunity I was given. I really do.”

The program offers participants the opportunity to work on community projects as an **alternative to incarceration**. The court-ordered program allows those who qualify to remain in the community as they help landscape, build and improve local spaces within the county **UTAH**

• Buses in **SALT LAKE COUNTY** will double as **air quality monitors** as part of a

project with the Utah Transit Authority, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality and the University of Utah. Sensors attached to electric buses will provide instant information about harmful pollutants hovering around the Salt Lake Valley, including ozone, particulate matter and nitrogen oxide.

## VIRGINIA

• **ARLINGTON COUNTY** residents who want to try out

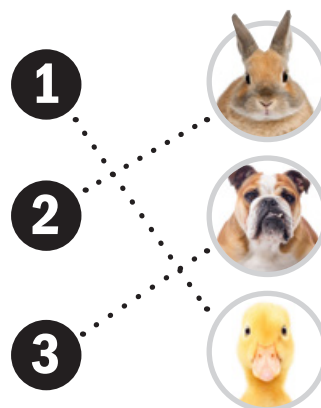
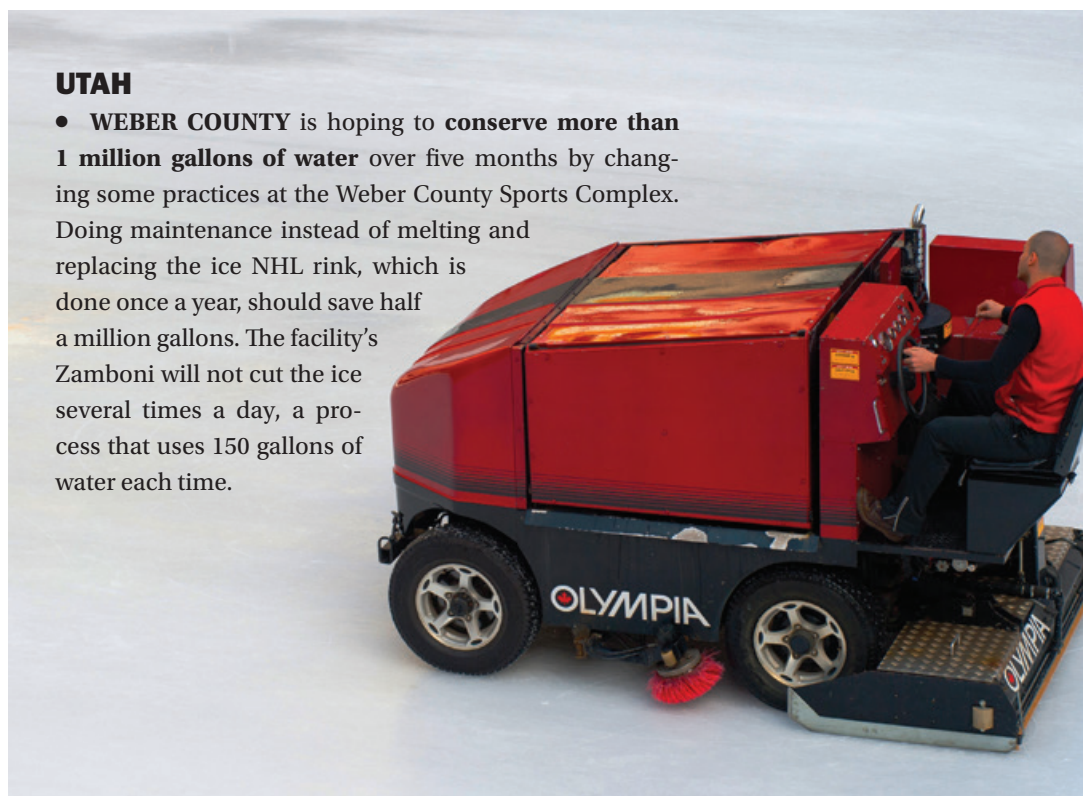


## NEBRASKA

**HALL COUNTY** Commissioner Gary Quandt stayed on the roof of his county courthouse for 64 hours in late May in a fundraising effort for a **local veterans’ cemetery**. He brought awareness to a drive to raise \$750,000 to qualify the local Nebraska Veterans Cemetery to become a state veterans cemetery. The qualification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Association would allow veterans from across the state and across the nation to be buried with their spouses in central Nebraska. *The Grand Island Independent* reported that Quandt, brought a raincoat with him.

## UTAH

• **WEBER COUNTY** is hoping to **conserve more than 1 million gallons of water** over five months by changing some practices at the Weber County Sports Complex. Doing maintenance instead of melting and replacing the ice NHL rink, which is done once a year, should save half a million gallons. The facility’s Zamboni will not cut the ice several times a day, a process that uses 150 gallons of water each time.



**prospective ranked-choice voting** had the opportunity to participate in a mock election put on by the Office of Voter Registration and Elections. Though the county Board hasn’t used the system yet, the county has had authorization to do so for its elections.

• **FAIRFAX COUNTY** is partnering with its independent public school district to help families ease back into in-person learning with the **School Aged Child Care** program. The program will run before and after the school day for children in K-6. Some centers will serve ages 5-21 with multiple types of disabilities.

• **HENRICO COUNTY** will spend \$2 million to replace the roof on its jail, but the new roof will be eligible for **solar panels**, which the county plans to use to reduce energy costs.

## WASHINGTON

• The **CHELAN COUNTY** Commission passed new regulations limiting the number of available **short-term rental**

**properties** in unincorporated parts of the county. The new rules will cap short-term rentals that are not owner-occupied at 6 percent of total housing units, *The Seattle Times* reported. Rentals can continue operating if their owners were renting them out before August 2020, paid taxes and followed new rules, and their rental permit would be valid if the property is sold once, but not twice.

• The Washington State Supreme Court upheld **KING COUNTY**’s process for conducting **inquests** of officer-involved deaths, and now County Executive Dow Constantine has issued an executive order refining the process and clarifying the role each party plays in the proceedings. That brings King County’s inquest process into alignment with the court’s ruling and state law and expands their agency to review policy and training of law enforcement.

## WISCONSIN

**MILWAUKEE COUNTY** will provide **free legal representation** to residents facing eviction or foreclosure through the end of 2022. The American Rescue Plan will fund \$30 million for the pilot “Right to Counsel” program.

*News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.*





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