

Election Day spotlight falls on counties

by County News staff

Before, during and after Election Day 2020 — the spotlight was on counties. In an election held during a pandemic and already charged with enthusiasm, county election departments around the country went the extra mile to maintain a sense of calm, reliability and a little levity in the face of an election that had many on edge.

Voters in Cascade County, Mont. who dropped off ballots at the county elections office in the days leading up to Election Day, were met with more than just the faces of election staff. “Viper the Elections Dog” is a Collie-Australian shepherd cross who spends his time keeping the calm in the county elections office, the *Great Falls Tribune* reported.

Cascade County Clerk and Recorder Rina Fontana Moore said people come to the office just to see Viper.

“Everybody needs a little dog time now and then,” she said.

More for the poll workers than the voters (though they were encouraged to hang out), Coconino County, Ariz.’s ballot drop-off location featured a house band, Righteous Harmo-

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A voter casts a ballot during the early voting period at the West Kendall Regional Library, one of 33 early voting polling locations in Miami-Dade County, Fla. Early voting broke records across the country. See story Page 5. Photo courtesy of Miami-Dade County

County priorities at play during lame duck session on Capitol Hill

by Eryn Hurley

With the 2020 general election behind us, Congress will return from recess this week for a lame duck session that is expected to extend well into December. With plans for the lame duck session largely contingent on the uncertain outcomes of this year’s election, congressional leaders have provided few concrete details.

Currently, with a Republican-led U.S. Senate and Democratic-led U.S. House of Rep-

resentatives, how Congress will proceed with its remaining work is what many counties and citizens across the country are focused on.

With just a few weeks left in the 116th Congress, members are faced with a long list of un-

finished business including the need to reach an agreement on a coronavirus relief package after months of stalled negotiations. Lawmakers must also pass Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 funding legislation to avoid a government shutdown when

the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on Dec. 11.

The next few weeks also provide one last opportunity to finalize other outstanding legislative issues such as on-

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A look at funding for COVID-19 vaccine planning and distribution

by Blaire Bryant and Eryn Hurley

The development of a COVID-19 vaccine that would provide immunological protection to the virus is a critical component to ending the current public health crisis. In September, following the release of the U.S. Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) vaccine framework for local planning efforts, states and local jurisdictions were given 30 days to develop interim plans for vaccine distribution.

Now that we are past the Oct. 16 state plan submission deadline, state and local health officials have under-

scored the crucial need for federal funding to support the daunting task of vaccine distribution and administration by state and local governments.

Funding support has become critical for state planning and distribution efforts.

Counties support over 900

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COVID-19 relief package a top priority during lame duck session of Congress

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going negotiations on Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and reauthorizations of key health care extenders.

COVID relief?

The top priority for many lawmakers during the lame duck session is coming to an agreement on a coronavirus relief package.

Since March, Congress and the administration have worked together to adopt four federal coronavirus aid packages, with the first two bills targeted at public health strategies, nutrition assistance for children and older adults and enhanced federal support for paid sick and family leave.

The third package, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (H.R. 748/P.L. 116-36), provided hundreds of billions of dollars in loans and grants to major industries and small businesses as well as direct cash payments to individuals.

Most notably for counties, the CARES Act established a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund for state and local governments to address COVID-19 expenses. These funds directed aid to local governments with populations of over 500,000 to address necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency.

Prior to the election, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and U.S. Department of Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin were locked in a series of negotiations over the last few weeks with both parties expressing optimism and stating they had made considerable progress. However, just days before the election, the prospects of a deal seemed unlikely amid ongoing disagreements over provisions such as additional state and local aid, unemployment insurance and liability protections for businesses.

After unsuccessful attempts to reach a deal on COVID-19 stimulus aid before the election, Pelosi signaled that she

hopes to pass additional aid during the lame duck session in Congress. In a similar tone, Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-Ky.), who sailed to reelection last week, announced that passage of a new coronavirus aid bill was a top priority for the lame duck session. Previously, McConnell had talked about passing a coronavirus stimulus bill at the beginning of 2021.

As counties continue to play a significant role in mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus, NACo research estimates that the coronavirus pandemic could have a \$202 billion budgetary impact on counties of all sizes through fiscal year 2021, including \$172 billion in lost revenue and an additional \$30 billion in COVID-19 response costs.

Heading into the lame duck session, lawmakers will now pick up where negotiations were left off prior to Election Day. NACo will continue to advocate for a robust coronavirus relief bill that ensures counties of all sizes have access to additional direct, flexible funding to fight this pandemic, rebuild the economy and strengthen our communities.

Avoiding a government shutdown

Another high priority for lawmakers this lame duck session is reaching a spending agreement to extending current government funding past the expiration of the current CRF in early December. Lawmakers must decide whether to negotiate with the current administration to enact long-term spending legislation to fund the government through FY 2021 or enact another stop-gap spending measure that would allow the time for a presidential transition to occur and negotiate appropriations legislation.

How Congress addresses challenges of funding the government will have a direct impact on many county priorities that rely on federal discretionary spending, including: COVID-19 pandemic relief, unemployment insurance, the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program and the Community Development Block Grant. Ultimately, Congress must decide whether to negotiate.

Prior to the election, Congress was unable to pass or enact any of the 12 annual appropriations bills. The U.S. House was successful in passing 10 of the 12 spending bills in July 2020. On the other side of the Capitol, the U.S. Senate was not able to advance any of the spending bills through committee.

Unable to pass any of those spending bills, Congress adopted a CR, which extended FY 2020 funding levels for most programs.

The current CR included certain funding anomalies, such as \$8 billion for Child Nutrition Programs, \$1.4 billion in direct loans for the U.S. Department's Rural Water and Wastewater Program and increased funding for infrastructure projects. The CR also included language to extend key expiring programs, including extensions for the federal welfare program, also known as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and key public health and Medicaid programs.

House and Senate leadership elections on the horizon

In addition to their legislative work, the House and Senate will also elect new leaders for the 117th Congress during the lame duck session. Party leadership in both chambers are expected to remain rela-

tively as is.

In the Senate, McConnell easily won reelection and is not currently facing any challenges to his leadership position. Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) is also expected to remain as the Democratic leader. A big question mark for the Senate: A runoff in Georgia for those Senate seats.

With the Democrats maintaining control of the House, lawmakers will need to decide in the coming weeks if they want to keep their leadership team in place or make changes. Before the election, party leaders had projected increasing their 233-seat majority but are on track to narrow their hold on control in the House after upsets in several swing districts.

Currently, there are no challengers to Pelosi for her leadership position. In addition to Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) or Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) are likely to retain their positions, but it is common after an election where a party loses seats for there to be some members looking for a change. There are no major challengers expected for Republican leadership in the House with Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) expected to stay in their current roles.

Members of Congress are currently scheduled to return to Washington on Nov. 16 with Republican Conference's leadership elections scheduled for Nov. 17 and leadership elections for Democrats will be held on Nov. 18-19.

In addition to congressional leadership positions, there is expected to be some movement at top committee posts due to term-limits, retirements or lost reelections. Typically,

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SNAP/STATS



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

FASTEST-GROWING NATIVE POPULATIONS BY PERCENT INCREASE 2010 TO 2019:

Clark County, Nev.:	28.8 percent
Maricopa County, Ariz.:	27.7 percent
Salt Lake County, Utah:	25.8 percent
Pinal County, Ariz.:	25.5 percent
Bexar County, Texas:	21.8 percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Sales tax revenues fluctuate during COVID-19

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

County sales tax collections are just another element added to the list of items impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shutdowns, stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions have negatively impacted sales tax revenue for many counties. However, other counties have experienced the opposite effect and have seen many individuals spending money in communities like never before.

The pandemic has had an overall negative impact on sales tax revenue for New York counties, according to Dave Lucas, New York State Association of Counties director of Finance and Intergovernmental Relations.

For about half of the counties in New York, sales tax is the number one source of revenue, he said.

Sales tax collected from March through September is off by around \$1.6 billion, Lucas said, noting that this is 16.5 percent of what was expected to be collected over those months throughout the state. Of that \$1.6 billion, around \$1.2 billion of that loss (21 percent) is specifically from New York City.

Upstate New York counties are experiencing a decline of around \$300 million with taxable sales, he said, equivalent to 8 percent below expected rates for that time frame.

When the state went into lockdown in early March, restaurants, mass transit, travel accommodations, auto dealerships and sectors that are key sales tax sources for counties shut down as well.

Tompkins County, an upstate county home to Cornell University, is faring the worst behind New York City in sales tax collections. Lucas said with more students attending school remotely and not holding the same spending power, the county has seen major impacts on sales tax revenue.

“I think one thing we really learned here is the virus is controlling the economy right now and until you control the virus, it’s pretty hard to restore



Photo courtesy of Visit Kenosha

normal economic activity,” he said.

Lucas said impacts from sales tax revenues depend on how counties generate the sales tax. Counties with big box stores like Lowes, Target and Walmart which all remained opened throughout the pandemic, were not hit as hard with losses.

Smaller, rural counties located in upstate New York that were more self-contained are breaking even with sales tax collections compared to last year. Lucas attributes this to how many of these counties rely on tourism. He said the down season the counties typically experience for tourists happened around the same months that the pandemic began, which aided in preventing declines in sales tax collections.

One third of counties through September have broken even with their budgets, according to Lucas.

“It tends to be the smaller, rural counties that are doing better,” he said.

Lucas said many counties are “going on the offense” with economic development for 2021 and working to promote that they are open for business and doing it safely.

“Hopefully we’re going to have a vaccine and things will calm down and the virus will get under control and that will encourage folks to return to normal,” he said.

Many rural counties throughout the Midwest have experienced upward trends in sales tax collections.

Kenosha County, Wis. County Executive Jim Kreuser said the county has had all-time record collections for sales tax revenue in the months of May, July and August — all during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kenosha County sales tax receipts through August were over \$10 million, equivalent to a 1.75 percent increase when compared to last year, he said.

The county borders Illinois and when shutdowns began in many areas throughout the neighboring state, Kreuser said people flocked to the county.

While there has been less business in the restaurant and bar sector, he said significant increases in online sales, grocery, hardware and certain retail stores are making up for the downturn.

“We didn’t know if it would make up for those other sectors that went down and now the proof is in the pudding that in fact it has and moving forward it’s not going to be a budget issue for this coming budget,” he said.

Kreuser also attributes the increased revenue to added development throughout the county with job growth and capital investments.

“It’s really been an economic boom for Kenosha County and we’re continuing to hit

our stride,” he said.

In Hickory County, Mo., Commissioner Keith Mertz said the county is up over \$100,000 in sales tax revenue for the month of September compared to last year’s numbers.

“We’ve fared real well,” Mertz said.

Hickory County is a tourist and retirement community and when surrounding areas enacted ordinances, many fled to the county.

Mertz said parks are still open in Hickory County, even though they typically close

around October.

He worked with state legislators in June to open parks early and experienced full campgrounds throughout the summer.

While county officials are not planning for an influx next year, Mertz said he believes the county will fare well.

“These people who have bought campers and bought into the camping thing, they’re going to be back,” he said. “It’s definitely brought a lot of eyes to the area, brought a lot of people here that never came here before.”

WORD SEARCH

NYE COUNTY, Nev.
Created by: Charlie Ban

R Y E N M U V B I W N R M F V X B Z R A
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- BULLFROG:** A short-lived county formed by the state in the late '80s to capitalize on Yucca Mountain development.

DEATHVALLEY: The town of Beatty serves as a gateway to Death Valley National Park across the border in California.

HUGE: Behind nearby San Bernardino and Coconino counties, Nye is the third largest county in the contiguous United States.

INTRIGUE: Secrecy surrounds the Nellis Air Force Base.

MANHATTAN: A town in the far northern part of the county.

MINING: Nye County has records of 1,591 mines.

MIZPAH: The Mizpah Hotel in Tonopah was once the tallest building in the state.
- PAHRUMP:** More than 60 percent of the county's population lives in this southern town.

RHYOLITE: A ghost town in the county popular with filmmakers.

ROCKHAMMER: Nye County's shape resembles a rock hammer.

SEVEN: Only 7 percent of land in the county is private and taxable.

STATETROOPER: The 1950s TV show "State Trooper" was set in Tonopah.

TONOPAH: The county seat of Tonopah comes from a Shoshone word meaning "small water."

YOMBA: A Native American reservation in the county.

YUCCA: A mountain that houses a nuclear waste repository in the county.

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In the spotlight, counties leap hurdles to count ballots on Election Day 2020

From *ELECTION* page 1

ny, on hand to provide entertainment in the days leading up to the election.

In nearby Maricopa County, voters this year were able to find polling places with low to no waiting times (it's similar to the "Wait times for Disneyworld" app), to avoid long lines. Residents there can vote at any polling location and can check the county election webpage to find out wait times at polling locations near their home or business. Every 30 minutes, a poll worker at each site updated the estimated wait-time and number of people in line.

Although robust early and mail voting took some of the pressure off on Election Day, some counties still had some hurdles to overcome.

On top of a pandemic, Gulf Coast counties, including those in Alabama preparing for elections, were also hit by Hurricane Zeta.

The weekend before the election, the storm knocked out power to more than 300 polling places there. But by Election Day, all polling places were open, with power restored or generators on site.

The storm also caused polling places to be moved in Louisiana. Utility companies and county officials in Mississippi and Georgia also scrambled to restore power to make sure residents could vote.

An ice storm last week in Oklahoma County, Okla. that had long-lasting consequences for the restoration of electricity ended up being less of a problem for affected polling places. Oklahoma uses a paper ballot system, so the show went on, often with cell phone flashlights providing assistance.

Voters saw delayed results coming out of some counties in Georgia on election night. Fulton County experienced a delay counting absentee ballots after a pipe burst in a room that stored the ballots at the State Farm Arena. The broken pipe did not damage any ballots or elections equipment, but delayed the processing of ballots for four hours, Fox-5 Atlanta reported.

Election officials continued counting late into the night with five individuals staying after midnight to scan ballots and tabulate numbers, NBC News reported. Simultaneously, 100 county employees worked at

the county warehouse to tabulate early in-person ballots.

Issues also arose in Gwinnett County, where a glitch with new software impacted thousands of ballots and delayed results for absentee ballots.

Allegheny County, Pa. got most of its absentee ballots out early, but state law prevented the county from even opening the envelopes until Nov. 3, regardless of when they were returned. As a result, the creases in the ballots were harder to straighten out and election workers had to feed them into machines in smaller batches to avoid jams, WESA-FM reported.

Many counties across the country saw polling location hours extended after opening times were delayed.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections extended the hours for four polling locations for precincts in Sampson, Cabarrus and Guilford counties because of delayed openings caused by problems with printers and other electronic equipment.

A precinct in Sampson County received the longest extension, of 45 minutes, the Associated Press reported.

As one of the first states on

the East Coast to see all polls closed, the extensions delayed the time North Carolina could report statewide results, pushing the time back from 7:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. Clark County, Nev. also saw voting extended by an hour for certain polling places that opened late because of technical difficulties.

Harris County, Texas withstood numerous legal challenges to the more than 127,000 votes cast at drive-through voting locations based on an argument about what constitutes a polling place.

The arguments centered on the definition of a building, an important distinction in the state law, "each polling place shall be located inside a building." Most drive-through voting locations were inside tents, *The Texas Tribune* reported.


U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen ruled late Monday afternoon that the ballots already cast could not be invalidated. Although the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals denied a motion to halt drive-through voting, County Clerk Chris Hollins closed nine out of 10 drive-through voting locations as a precaution on Election Day.

Polling places themselves

varied. Though mostly in community centers, fire stations, schools and other public buildings, Westmoreland County, Pa. voters cast their ballots in two women's basements, the *Greensburg Tribune Review* reported. The state election code allows for private residences to be used if they are accessible and free of voter intimidation.

In the 1960s, one community's polling place in Westmoreland County changed regularly among equally undesirable locations and bounced from a one-room schoolhouse to an old gas station that didn't have bathrooms, water or heat.

Betty Tokarcik used to drive results to the courthouse and offered the use of the foundation of the home her carpenter husband was in the process of building. The ground-level basement was finished a few years later and the polling place has remained for 57 years.

In Elko County, Nev., officials wanted to be able to report out some early results, but word came back that one precinct, in Jiggs, could not confirm that polls had closed. Jiggs, the Lamoille Canyon town that produced two governors, has a population of two. 



The graphic features a yellow background with several white lightbulbs hanging from brown strings. Each lightbulb is inside a white speech bubble shape. In the top right corner, there is a logo for the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the NACo Knowledge Network. The text "NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES" is in small letters above "NACo". To the right of "NACo" is a stylized logo of three stars. Further right, the text "NACo Knowledge Network" is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font.

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NACo Knowledge Network

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Early voting numbers break county records



Voters stand outside of an early voting location in Williamson County, Texas where early voting records this year surpassed the county's own 2016 total voter turnout. Photo by Ali Linan/Community Impact Newspaper

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't stop Americans from casting their ballots early for the 2020 presidential election.

Over 100 million Americans voted early with 35.9 million in-person votes and 65.2 million mail-in ballots, according to data from the U.S. Elections project.

States saw record-breaking turnout numbers with some, such as Texas, surpassing the total number of votes cast for the 2016 election.

Hays County, Texas was the first county in the country to surpass its own total 2016 voter turnout numbers.

According to Hays County Elections Administrator Jennifer Anderson, the county had a total of 73,589 votes in the 2016 election. The county surpassed that number on Oct. 25 — over a week before election day.

Hays County had 12 early voting polling locations open for the county's 152,674 registered voters. As of Oct. 28, the county had surpassed its half-way mark and reached 56 percent voter turnout, Anderson

said.

She attributed the high number of early voters to a heightened awareness of the election and election dates because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think that there's just been a lot of media attention on this election," she said.

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott (R) extended the early voting period in Texas from 12 days to 18 days because of COVID-19. The early voting period lasted from Oct. 13 to Oct. 30.

Anderson said other than the first day of early voting, she did not see large crowds or long lines during the early voting period.

"It has been a very consistent flow and I think that extra week has helped with that," she said.

The county had practice running polling locations during a pandemic during the state's primary in July.

Anderson said the main changes to running an election during a public health crisis involved cleaning polling locations, using disposable sty-luses, masks, hand sanitizer, following social distancing guidelines and establishing germ barriers between voters

and poll workers.

"All of those things we're doing in this year's election that ordinarily we wouldn't even think about for an election and all of that required some amount of training and had a fiscal impact as well," she said.

Williamson County, Texas also broke early voting records this year and was one of the first three counties in the country to surpass its own 2016 total voter turnout.

Elections Administrator Christopher Davis said the county surpassed the total number of voters from both the 2016 election and the 2018 gubernatorial election.

At the end of the early voting period, the county had 263,020 voters — nearly 70 percent of the county's 384,911 registered voters.

"It's very impressive for us," Davis said.

The county's 19 early voting sites were open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day except for two Sundays, when they were open 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

"We think there's been ample time and opportunity for almost every voter to get out and vote in person if they weren't

voting by mail," he said.

During the first week of early voting, turnout was steady with lines wrapping around the buildings of early polling locations, Davis said.

Voters in the county could check via smartphone on estimated wait times at any polling locations.

The county also saw an almost tripling of applications for ballot-by-mail compared to previous elections, according to Davis. Voters could track the status of mail-in ballots from the post office to the ballot board.

"These voters can self-serve and get the information themselves and I'd like to think that only encouraged more participation in that mail ballot program and it's worked very well given that we've seen almost a tripling of the volume that we normally see in these elections," he said.

Davis said Abbott also allowed voters to walk in their ballots to offices at any point in time this year because of the pandemic. In prior years, voters could only drop off a ballot on election day.

"We're seeing a little bit more

of that as well with folks walking their ballot into our office and that's something that we traditionally haven't seen outside of Election Day," he said.

In Kankakee County, Ill., Clerk Dan Hendrickson said over one-quarter of the county's 68,200 registered voters voted early.

Around 13,000 early voters cast their ballots in person or through the mail in the 2016 election in Kankakee County. As of Oct. 29, the county recorded 18,000 early voters with six days until election day.

Hendrickson said 168 people voted on the first day of early voting in 2016. This year, that number nearly tripled with 469 casting a ballot.

"I think you can attribute it to certainly not in any small part to concerns about COVID," he said.

Hendrickson said voters increasingly embrace early voting every election.

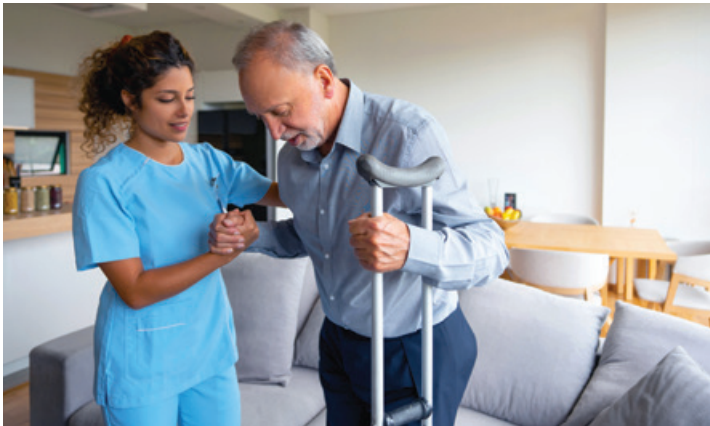
"I would expect that our early numbers will do nothing but continue to grow — maybe not as exponentially as they did this year, but people are used to it and it's a great service that we can provide," he said. **CN**

County resources help military veterans, caregivers

by Mary Ann Borgeson

In celebration of National Family Caregivers Month, let's recognize those who continue to answer the call to serve. Among the nation's brave service members and veterans who returned wounded, ill or injured, are the 5.5 million military caregivers who they depend on every day. Though their work does not take place in the public eye, local communities can and should recognize its importance. Thirty-seven percent of counties nationwide have veterans representing more than 10 percent of their adult population — including Douglas County, Neb.

"Caregivers don't ask to be a caregiver. They become a caregiver because there is a need. Whether it be of love, friendship obligation, or just because no one else will be the caregiver," says Ron Stark of San Diego County, Calif., who previously cared for a fellow veteran in his community who had no family



or friends willing to help. As Ron would tell you, caregivers selflessly take on their responsibilities often without any resources or guidance.



Borgeson

County leaders know caregivers are crucial to a wounded warrior's success. The National Association of Counties is committed to providing counties with the necessary resources for supporting servicemen and women, veterans and their families through our Veterans and Military Services Standing Committee. Dedicated to serving this underrecognized community,

the Elizabeth Dole Foundation — which NACo has partnered with since 2019 — know that counties matter in helping military caregivers.


I recently participated in Elizabeth Dole Foundation's inaugural Hidden Heroes Cities & Counties Summit in early October, where local government officials connected with industry leaders and military caregivers to promote best practices and policies through grassroots efforts. The Elizabeth Dole Foundation actively works with the NACo Veterans and Military services committee to provide guidance and raise awareness

for caregivers.


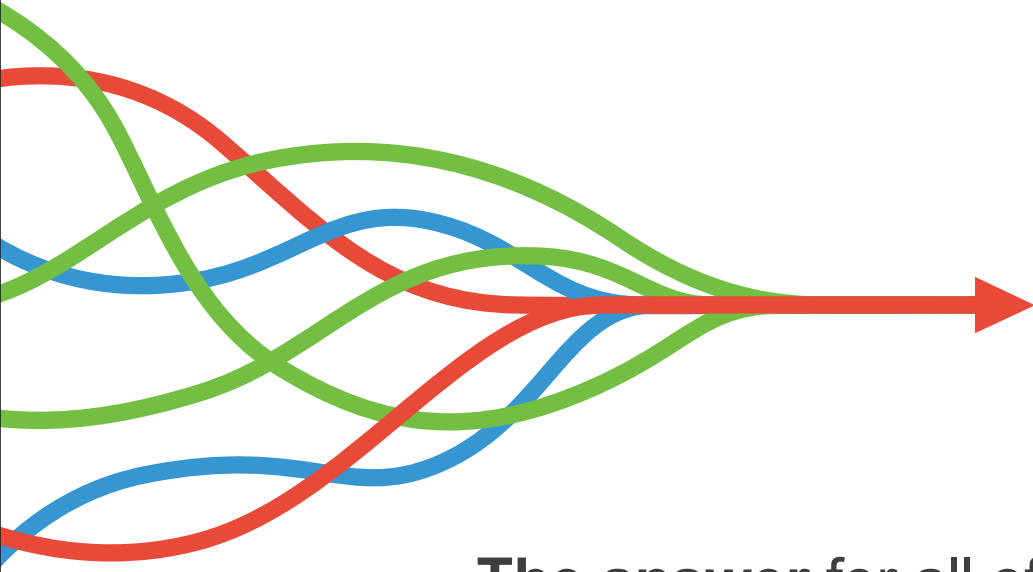
"The resources the Foundation provides to county commissioners enables us to create and pursue viable solutions for our veterans and caregiver populations," says Heather Post, committee chair and councilwoman of Volusia County, Fla. "Our country's veterans have paid a deep sacrifice and to be able to work on issues that directly benefit them is a humbling endeavor."

The Foundation also partners with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs so military caregivers receive critical assistance and support during COVID-19. Senator Elizabeth Dole and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie recently announced the Respite Relief for Military and Veteran Caregivers and Campaign for Inclusive Care programs will expand to nationwide coverage. The Elizabeth Dole Foundation can work with your state's local VA offices to make these tools accessible for military caregivers in your community.


As this partnership grows, we

will expand support and opportunities for military caregivers while encouraging all members to stand by hidden heroes in their county. To date, more than 156 cities, counties, and states — including most recently Nebraska and soon Douglas County — have signed the Hidden Heroes pledge, passing resolutions to recognize and engage military caregivers in their area. By joining NACo and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation in this movement, we encourage you to mobilize military caregivers and let their voices be heard. We urge all 3,069 counties to join Douglas County in passing a resolution and making a pledge to support our nation's Hidden Heroes! 


Mary Ann Borgeson is a Douglas County, Neb. commissioner and immediate past president of NACo. To get involved and become a Hidden Heroes county, contact Yazmin Alfonso, manager of City and Community Initiatives, at yazmin@elizabethdolefoundation.org.



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Federal funding needed by state and local governments for vaccine distribution

From VACCINE page 1

hospitals, 824 long-term care facilities and 1,943 local health departments — which will all play an integral role in vaccine distribution.

The infrastructure that these and other approved immunizing entities will need to prepare for the mass distribution of a vaccine is extensive, and will require enhanced resources for vaccine storage, provider staffing and training, and updating technology and data systems to track vaccine inventory and ensure that individuals are getting accurate dosages.

The CDC has released approximately \$200 million in funding to states and local governments to date for vaccine planning efforts, much of which did not reach county health officials. However, aside from this allocation, state health officials are estimating that approximately \$8 billion will be needed in total, of which:

- \$3 billion would be used for workforce recruitment and training
- \$1.2 would be used for cold supply chain management which includes transportation, storage, equipment and training for staff
- and \$500 million would be used for technology and data system enhancements

No official announcement has been made by CDC or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on additional funding distributions to states and localities for vaccine planning and distribution efforts.

The federal government will cover the cost of purchasing vaccines.

Despite concerns over how to fund the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine, the administration has taken on the cost of purchasing vaccine dosages from manufacturers. Upon approval of a vaccine, set dosage amounts will be purchased and shipped with related supplies to vaccine administration sites.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136),

allocated billions of dollars in funding to purchase COVID-19 vaccines. According to data released by HHS, Operation Warp Speed, the federal initiative tasked with overseeing the development of coronavirus countermeasures, has spent approximately \$10 billion on COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing and therapeutics.

The vaccine will be provided free of charge to most Americans, especially to vulnerable populations, during the public health emergency.

Also included in the CARES Act were provisions mandating that “group health plans and health insurance issuers...cover (without cost-sharing) any qualifying coronavirus preventive service,” including vaccines. On Oct. 28, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released an interim final rule with comment period (IFC) that implemented these provisions.

Under the rule, any future FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine must be provided at no-cost to beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid and most private insurance providers. The covered service is a requirement for any state Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance program receiving the temporary increase for federal medical assistance (FMAP) that was provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA, P.L. 116-127).

The mandate would provide Medicaid beneficiaries free access to the vaccines during the public health emergency (PHE). However, the agency will allow for flexibility on this requirement after the PHE has been lifted.

The temporary 6.2 percent FMAP increase provided in FFCRA is set to expire at the end of the PHE in January 2021. While the chances of the PHE being renewed are uncertain at this time, counties have advocated for sustained federal aid for state Medicaid programs, which have seen dramatic boosts in enrollment during the course of the pan-

See VACCINE page 8

FEDERAL FUNDING AND MANDATES FOR VACCINE DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

Bill Title (Number) Coronavirus: Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-123)
Funding Amount Allocated: \$61 million Summary of Provision Provided additional funding for FDA “Salaries and Expenses” for COVID-19 response, which includes “the development of necessary medical countermeasures and vaccines”.
Funding Amount Allocated: \$3.1 billion Summary of Provision Provided additional funding for the HHS “Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund”. The funding was provided to help respond to COVID-19, including the “development of necessary countermeasures and vaccines”. These funds can also be used “for the construction, alteration, or renovation of non-Federally owned facilities for the production of vaccines”. The bill also instructs the HHS Secretary to use these funds to purchase vaccines.
Funding Amount Allocated: \$300 million Summary of Provision Provided additional funding made available to the “Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund” for the same purposes listed above. However, the funding is only available if the HHS Secretary notifies Congress that the \$3.1 billion allocation “will be obligated imminently and that additional funds are necessary to purchase vaccines...”.
Bill Title (Number) Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127)
Funding Amount Allocated: Medicaid FMAP assistance increased temporarily by 6.2% for each state/territory Summary of Provision States were only eligible for this temporary increase in federal medical assistance if the State provides “coverage under such plan (or waiver), without the imposition of cost sharing...for any testing services and treatments for COVID-19, including vaccines...”.
Bill Title (Number) Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES, P.L. 116-136)
Funding Amount Allocated: \$80 million Summary of Provision Provided additional funding for FDA “Salaries and Expenses” for COVID-19 response, which includes “the development of necessary medical countermeasures and vaccines”.
Funding Amount Allocated: \$706 million Summary of Provision Provided additional funding for NIH. Mandates that no less than \$156 million of these dollars be used “for the study of, construction of, demolition of, renovation of, and acquisition of equipment for, vaccines and infectious diseases research facilities”.
Funding Amount Allocated: \$3.5 billion Summary of Provision Provided additional funding for the HHS “Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund”. The funding was provided to help respond to COVID-19, including the “development of necessary countermeasures and vaccines”. \$3.5 billion of this funding is allocated to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority for “manufacturing, production and purchase....of vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics...”. These funds can also be used “for the construction, alteration, or renovation of non-Federally owned facilities for the production of vaccines”.
N/A Required the strategic national stockpile to include PPE and other medical supplies “required for the administration of drugs, vaccines and other biological products”.
N/A Mandates that the Secretaries of HHS, Labor and Treasury “require group health plans and health insurance issuers...to cover (without cost-sharing) any qualifying coronavirus preventive service”, including vaccines.
Requires any licensed COVID-19 vaccine be covered by Medicare Part B program without cost-sharing

CRF permitted for vaccine planning

From VACCINE page 7

demic. Given that widespread availability of a COVID-19 vaccine is not projected until well into 2021, without an extension on federal support for Medicaid, many beneficiaries could be charged out of pocket costs for vaccinations.

The HHS and Department of Defense have taken steps to ensure that long-term care facilities have access to a COVID-19 vaccine at no cost.

In October, the agencies announced new agreements with CVS and Walgreens to provide and administer COVID-19 vaccines to residents in long-term care settings nationwide.

The initiative will be managed by the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program, which will provide complete management of the COVID-19 vaccination process at no cost to the facilities and will minimize the burden of ordering and administering

vaccines for these facilities on local health officials.

States and counties are permitted to use federal relief funds to pay for vaccine planning and distribution efforts.

As states and localities continue to advocate for additional federal aid to support vaccination efforts, health officials have begun looking elsewhere for this much-needed support.

CMS has indicated that recipients of the \$175 billion Provider Relief Fund (PRF), established by the CARES Act to provide fiscal relief to hospital and health care entities, may use these funds to cover the cost of vaccine administration for uninsured individuals who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medicaid.

In addition to the PRF, a new \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) was established under the CARES Act, which provides state, county and municipal governments with pop-

ulations of over 500,000 people with federal aid needed to address necessary expenditures incurred due to the coronavirus public health emergency.

As permitted by the CARES Act, states and localities may use CRF dollars towards medical expenses that include vaccine distribution and administration.

For example, Sacramento County has allocated a portion of its CRF allocation towards purchasing supplies and resources necessary to effectively distribute a COVID-19 vaccine once it is approved and made publicly available.

We also have seen counties, such as Pima County, Ariz., use CRF dollars to purchase facilities and store vaccinations once they are made available for future use. **CN**

Blair Bryant and Eryn Hurley are associate legislative directors in NACo's Government Affairs department.



**MANATEE
COUNTY, FLA.**

Commissioners approved an official ordinance in 2014 adopting the current Manatee County seal. The county's 1973 Board of Commissioners adopted the same seal, but it was not supported by an accompanying ordinance and the previous seal continued to be used. Over four decades later, commissioners carried out the intent of the 1973 board.

The seal depicts the county's culture, history, economy and environment.

The National Park Service operates the DeSoto Na-

tional Monument in Manatee County to share this history with visitors.



Its main focus is the DeSoto Boat, a reference to the county's history regarding a theory that Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto's expedition crew initially landed at the mouth of the Manatee River.

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

STRONGER COUN

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**SAVE
THE
DATE**



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES **NACo**



→ **When:**
Thursday, November 12
from 2-3 PM EDT

Make the Most of Your NACo Membership

Join NACo for an interactive and tailored webinar to help maximize your county's membership investment.

→ www.naco.org/MakeTheMost



Photo courtesy of Visit Los Alamos

Los Alamos County, N.M. ranks as nation’s healthiest community

by Pamela Mann

U.S. News & World Report, in collaboration with the Aetna Foundation, recently announced the release of the annual Healthiest Communities rankings. Now in its third year, the report evaluated nearly 3,000 counties nationwide in 10 categories, ranging from the economy and public safety to education, housing, food and nutrition.

The rankings assess which communities provide the greatest opportunity to live a productive, healthy life and offer insights for consumers and policymakers into best practices and policies for achieving positive health outcomes.

A new addition to this year’s rankings includes the overlay of COVID-19 data to better understand how the virus is affecting communities across the nation. Findings align with other reported trends and observations that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting people with underlying health issues, as well as communities of color. The fatality rate among African Americans is nearly double the national average.

According to Dr. Garth Graham, vice president and chief community health officer of CVS Health, “this third effort further describes what drives health and helps us to understand the impact of race and poverty, education, housing



and other [non-clinical] factors in defining or influencing how long people live. The additional overlay of COVID-19 data amplifies long-standing issues around how inequities play out in health.”

The highest-ranked communities


The top five Healthiest Communities all scored above the national average in at least nine of the 10 categories evaluated. Los Alamos County, N.M., is No. 1, receiving nearly a perfect score for population health, which measures access to care, healthy behaviors, health conditions, mental health and resulting health outcomes within communities.

“We feel very fortunate to live in such a wonderful town with opportunities that make it a healthy place to live — such as clean air, clean water and an abundance of outdoor activities,” said Los Alamos County Council Chair Sara Scott. “Every year, the county council revisits our strategic priorities with community input and focuses on key issues relevant to the

rankings, including affordable housing, protecting our open spaces and recreational amenities, and supporting social services. Behavioral, mental and physical health are important quality of life components for our citizens.”

Douglas County, Colo. and Falls Church, Va., follow at No. 2 and No. 3, respectively. Broomfield County, Colo., places fourth, while Routt County, Colo., rounds out the top five.

Colorado communities dominate the top 10, including: Douglas (2), City and County of Broomfield (4), Routt County (5), Pitkin County (7), Summit County (9) and San Miguel County (10). Together, these communities boast an average score of 93 for overall population health.

To compile the rankings, U.S. News and the Aetna Foundation worked with the University of Missouri Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems, a research institution skilled in community health assessment. The rankings are based on 84 metrics drawn from sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 

Visit www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities to see where your community ranks.

Pamela Mann is the Health program manager in NACo’s County Innovations Lab.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

KAREEM MURPHY

NACo Board Member
Director of Intergovernmental Relations
Hennepin County, Minn.



Murphy

Number of years involved in NACo: 20

Years in public service: Six

Occupation: Lobbyist (director of Intergovernmental Relations)

Education: Bachelor of Arts (History and Spanish) from Howard University; Master of Arts (U.S. History) from the University of Maryland, College Park

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Ran a marathon last year.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:

My mother, civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, President Obama (can I add Michelle to that?).

A dream I have is to: Dance in the company of a Broadway musical.

The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is: Ride the rapids of the Rio Grande River in New Mexico with my husband.

My favorite way to relax is: Watching episodes of *The Golden Girls*.

I’m most proud of: My 29-year relationship with my husband.

Every morning I read: *The Washington Post*

My favorite meal is: Deep-dish pepperoni pizza.

My pet peeve is: Toilet paper rolls being incorrectly hung.

My motto is: “Don’t get mad; get smart.” (I got this from my great uncle, E.V. Wilkins.)

The last book I read was: *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey*, by Sen. Kamala Harris

My favorite movie is: *The Birdcage*

My favorite music is: Anything by Prince

My favorite U.S. president is: Franklin Delano Roosevelt

My county is a NACo member because: We are committed to contributing to and benefiting from a national partnership to build up communities, strengthen the social safety net and ensure every American can live with dignity and opportunity. NACo is the premier venue for this partnership and today’s membership is based on our historic role in NACo, our current scope of need and benefit and the prospect of greater things to come for the nation’s 3,069 counties.

You’d be surprised to learn that:

I was a contestant on *Wheel of Fortune*.



..... ON THE MOVE➔

NACo OFFICERS

• NACo President **Gary Moore**, judge/executive, Boone County, Ky. and NACo CEO/Executive Director **Matt Chase** addressed members of the Kentucky Association of Counties at their 46th annual conference, held Oct. 28-29.

NACo STAFF

• **Khea Pollard** has joined NACo as a program manager for Justice. She previously served as policy advisor for San Diego County Supervisor Greg Cox, a former NACo president, on policy development to ensure alignment with county initiatives. Khea earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership Management.



Pollard

• **Courtney Weber** has joined NACo as a graphic designer. She previously served as graphic designer at Johns Hopkins University. Courtney earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in Fine Arts.



Weber

• Associate Legislative Director **Blaire Bryant** and Program Manager **Kirsty Fontaine** addressed county officials Oct. 26 at the New Hampshire Association of Counties annual conference on "Building the Foundation for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The County Role."



Fontaine

Counties Futures Lab Director **Teryn Zmuda** and Director of Government Affairs **Mark Ritacco** provided a federal update on COVID-19. Associate Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** and Program Manager **Kerwin Henderson** made a presentation on county criminal justice reform during COVID-19.



Mattson

• Chase talked to students Oct. 27 at Washington College in Kent County, Md. about NACo and America's counties.

• Chief Technology Officer **Rita Reynolds**, along with Commissioner Christopher Constance of Charlotte County, Fla., participated in a presentation Oct. 27 on "Cybersecurity Readiness in Wisconsin County Government," led by Tim Rahschulte, Ph.D. The talk is the first in a four-part series arranged with NACo Strategic Partner, the Cybersecurity Collaborative, managed by Operations Manager **Brandon Natsuhara**.



Henderson

• Associate Legislative Director **Eryn Hurley** provided an update Oct. 28 to the Michigan Association of Counties on the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund and how counties can spend dollars in innovative ways that comply with federal guidance before the Dec. 30 deadline.



Natsuhara

• Chief Public Affairs Officer **Brian Namey** addressed state association executive directors enrolled in the High Performance Leadership Academy on Oct. 30 to announce a leadership challenge in 2021.

And the Winners Are?

2020 cashVest® 90+ and National Leadership Awards

Six counties recently received the 2020 cashVest® 90+ Award, three+one® announced.

This award signifies the excellence in the implementation and management of all liquidity in the public marketplace set by three+one. To qualify for this award, your entity must have received a cashVest score of 90 percent or above for four contiguous quarters. It should be mentioned that multiple qualifiers are calculated into the cashVest score to determine the rating. The five qualifying categories include:

- **Percent of available funds providing value**
- **Liquidity proficiency**
- **Warnick rate indicator***
- **Cashflow optimization**
- **Investment policy practices**

A cashVest score of 90+ signifies to the country, state and

taxpayers that these counties have achieved the highest value available on financial resources.

The following counties have met the criteria to receive the cashVest 90+ Award by achieving a score above 90 for four consecutive quarters.

- **Beaufort County, S.C., Maria Walls, CPA county treasurer**
- **Chautauqua County, N.Y., Kitty Crow, director of finance**
- **Orange County, N.Y., Karin Hابلow, commissioner of finance**
- **Rensselaer County, N.Y., Mark Wojcik, chief financial officer**
- **Wayne County, N.Y., Patrick J. Schmitt, county treasurer**

In addition, this year's National Leadership cashVest

Award recipient is Scott D. German, treasurer of Genesee County, N.Y.

This prestigious award recognizes and acknowledges the leadership that German has demonstrated, both statewide as well as nationally, in establishing and practicing the highest possible standards of financial governance and liquidity management.

German has been a leading advocate for the implementation of best practices in identifying and managing all levels of cash as a revenue-generating asset. The new innovations he has adopted in treasury services have strengthened the protection of taxpayer monies entrusted to him while also significantly increasing interest revenues for his county.

Congratulations to this year's cashVest award recipients!

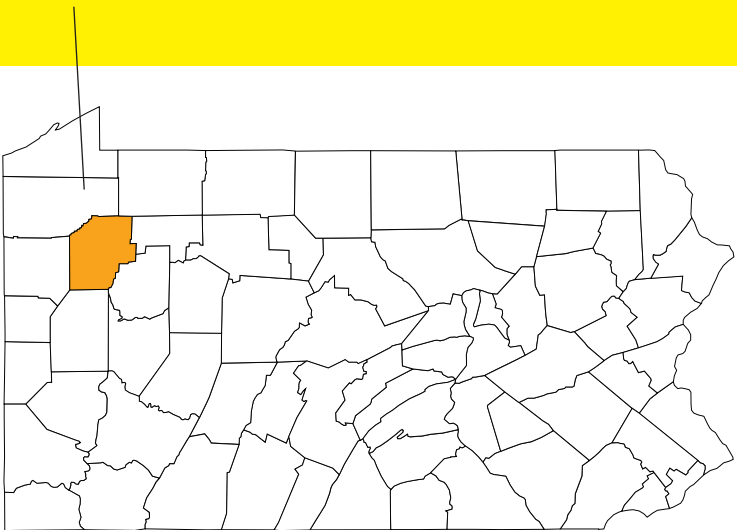
GET TO KNOW...

Venango County, Pa.

Welcome, Venango County, Pa.

Venango County is located in western Pennsylvania, halfway between Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) and Erie County (Erie). The county was established in 1800. Its courthouse, built between 1867-1869, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The 675-square-mile county includes the cities of Franklin (the county seat) and Oil City. The county is located less than three hours from Akron, Cleveland and Youngstown in Ohio, Buffalo, N.Y. and State College, Pa.

Venango County features the historical site of the Drake Well to commemorate Edwin L. Drake striking oil outside of Titusville. The Drake Well was the first commercial well drilled



to find oil, launching the modern oil industry. Visitors can travel to the Venango Museum and Drake Well Museum to view historical oil exhibits.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



BRIGHT IDEAS | KING COUNTY, Wash.

King County Tries Social Media to Promote Diverse Contracting Opportunities

PROBLEM:

A declining number of bids submitted per contracts and a poor return on investment for purchasing newspaper ads is inefficient to reach diverse bidders.

SOLUTION:

Create a social media program to reach diverse business communities and increase competition for procurements.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

King County, Wash. has found a new use for social media.

The county launched a program in 2019 to improve competition for public procurements and engage diverse business communities by promoting contracting opportunities through social media posts.

The goal of the program is to increase the number of bids received and target suppliers that are underutilized, such as small businesses or women and minority-owned businesses.

Communications and Training Lead for King County Procurement and Payables Lindsay Pryor said there is a focus on diversity and inclusion throughout the county and for procurement, that is often focused on contracting with smaller businesses.

"Our initial goal was to flat up get more interest in our contract opportunities, but then we realized that it may also be a great opportunity to target those community groups, those suppliers that maybe weren't getting the message through traditional newspaper advertising," she said.

Washington has a state requirement that counties must place procurement opportunities in the newspaper of record for the community.

Pryor said they were noticing

how expensive it was to place advertisements.

While they are required to place ads, they were spending a lot of money by choice to reach out to other community groups.

"We were finding that there was no large readership for some of those papers that we were spending money on," King County Procurement and Payables Communications and Systems Specialist Jeremy Zimmerman said.

The social media program uses a mix of free posts and inexpensive ads to promote contracting opportunities. The county started by creating accounts for King County Procurement on LinkedIn and Twitter and then branched out to posting through the King County Facebook page.

The department created templates for each advertisement which includes a short description of the contract, procurement ID number and a link to view the full contract opportunity.

Zimmerman created a small library of images with King County branding to incorporate into each post.

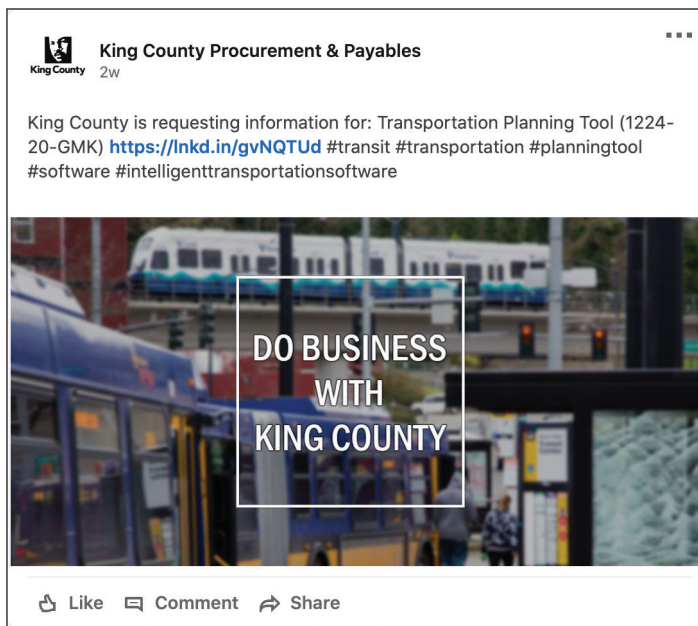
"You get a lot more visibility with anything that has an image and so it just works to try and find images as best as possible that tell folks something about the contract that we're putting out," he said.

The department created internal guidelines to describe what posts would look like and reassure county leadership there wouldn't be any violations of procurement rules.

Pryor emphasized the importance of establishing standards and advised counties looking to create a similar program to be clear with leadership about handling feedback on posts.

"That level of transparency produces trust in government and produces more bidders per contract," she said.

The department uses Hoot-



King County, Wash. uses multiple social media platforms, including LinkedIn, to advertise contracting opportunities.



A Twitter post advertises a bid request for uniforms as part of the county's efforts to use social media for public procurements.

suite, a social media management platform, to schedule posts weeks in advance that are then posted simultaneously on multiple platforms.

Pryor said the department hired a translation firm to create standard posts in seven different languages to post translated phrases into the beginning of each ad. By using social media, Pryor and Zimmerman do not have to track down every community news bulletin to target different languages.

The program has proven to be successful with the number

of bidders increasing from 7 to 37 percentage points based on the contract type advertised on social media.

Interest in the posts is driven by what is being solicited, according to Pryor.

"There are some very specialized industries that only have a few people that might ever be interested," she said. "The number of views we got really depended more on what we were procuring than whether or not it was free or paid."

Zimmerman said Facebook saw the best results in terms of paid advertising. The

county found capital projects did better on LinkedIn while Facebook had the best results across the board, although the department used more paid advertisements when posting to Facebook.

Zimmerman said he likes the transparency of using social media to see data metrics and measure how people engage with ads for contracts.

"We can cross reference that onto what impact that has on our number of bids or proposals we get for a contract we advertised," he said.

"I like the inclusion aspect of it. I think it's the right message to send that anyone is welcome to come and do business with us," Pryor said. **CN**

King County's Engaging Diverse Business Communities in Public Procurements program is the recipient of a best in category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Community and Economic Development category.



A look at county priorities during congressional lame duck session

From **PRIORITIES** page 2

chairmen and ranking members are nominated by the Republican and Democratic steering committees and confirmed by the respective party caucuses.

As Congress elects new leaders and congressional committees are reorganized, NACo will provide an analysis of these changes and the potential impact on county governments.

Although many details of the lame duck session remain fluid, NACo is actively monitoring several issues of importance to counties that could arise during the last days of the Congress in addition to those mentioned above.

Water Resources Development Act

Although an incoming administration may encourage Congress to hold off on passing substantive policy legislation, Congress could decide to continue its work on substantive measures. One item for action would be the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

Earlier this year, the full House passed its WRDA bill, and the Senate passed its bill out of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Negotiations between the chambers have been ongoing since the summer. While both bills reauthorize U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water resource projects, the Senate bill includes funding for drinking water and wastewater programs. Because the House and Senate bills differ, an informal conference committee has been working to reconcile policy differences between the two. Should the informal conference committee reach an agreement between the chambers and the Trump Administration, Congress may be able to act quickly and pass WRDA.

Health care

Congressional leaders have also indicated they plan to reauthorize several key health care extenders of importance to counties, which are currently set to expire on Dec. 11. These extenders include

funding for community health centers, a delay of disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payment reductions, and funding for health workforce programs like the National Health Service Corps.

Medical billing

Prior to the election, both Congress and the Administration signaled interest in reconciling differences on surprise medical billing. To address this issue, current legislation focuses on ensuring cost transparency for out-of-network services and limiting patient cost-sharing rates.

Despite disagreements in the approach for addressing this issue, it has been a largely bipartisan effort and may see movement during the lame duck session. Surprise billing legislation is of key importance to counties as it may impact reimbursement rates for local EMS providers and rural hospitals.

Maternal health

With the COVID-19 pandemic drawing attention to ex-

isting racial and ethnic disparities in health care, lawmakers' focus has turned to addressing maternal and infant mortality. Currently, there are dozens of proposed bipartisan bills in both the House and Senate that focus on maternal health and health disparities.

Prior to the election, two bipartisan bills advanced out of the House.

The Helping MOMS Act (H.R. 4996) would extend postpartum coverage under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) from 60 days to one year and the Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act of 2020 (H.R. 4996) would expand initiatives to address maternal health in rural areas and promote innovation in the field. Both bills would benefit local health care access and outcomes by expanding Medicaid services as well as address underlying causes of maternal mortality with new funding.

The Senate plans to consider both bills during the lame duck session, with the potential to be included in a legislative

package with other similar maternal health bills.

CARES Act deadline

Prior to the election, Reps. Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.) and Madeleine Dean (D-Pa.) introduced the Leveraging Options for Counties and Localities (LOCAL) Act (H.R. 2854).

The bill would extend the deadline for CRF recipients to spend their allocations from Dec. 30, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2021.

As established under the CARES Act, if a county does not spend its entire CRF allocation by Dec. 30, 2020, the remaining dollars will be recouped by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Understanding the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, the LOCAL Act seeks to provide local governments flexibility to plan ahead.

The bill's strict deadline does not allow counties to plan for future costs in 2021 and beyond.

The bill also encouraged states to distribute a portion of their CRF allocation to counties with populations of less than 500,000 that did not receive direct funds. **CN**



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



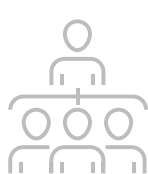
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the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot
& Winkeler

Virtual Recognition: I See You Where You Are

Paula is a long-term county employee. Her office is a distance away from the primary county administration building. Sometimes, the employees in Paula's building feel disconnected from the rest of the organization because of their physical distance from the primary hub of activity.

Every year, the county recognizes employees with public service awards and employees are encouraged to nominate individuals and teams who have exemplified public service. Historically, all recipients have been recognized at an in-person event where leadership recognizes the contributions of staff, certificates are awarded and pictures are taken.

Four years ago, Paula was the recipient of a public service award. Due to the distance from the site of the recognition event, Paula arrived late to the awards ceremony and left early. Paula saw colleagues she had known at the county for many years, who she didn't get to see on a regular basis anymore. But due to her limited time at the event, she didn't get to mingle the way she wanted.

Paula was humbled by the nomination written about her when she felt she was just doing her job. She appreciated the recognition by county leadership and elected officials. She was proud of her certificate of recognition. She left the event feeling happy, yet rushed.

Three years ago, Paula nominated a small team of employees in another division for the same recognition award, to honor their outstanding support during a critical time. As the nominator, Paula was also invited to the event. However, on the day of the event, one of the team members of the group being recognized was out of the office ill.

This left more work for the other members of the team and the team decided not to attend

the event. Paula didn't want to go without the team.

A week later, the certificates of recognition arrived in interoffice mail. Paula felt disappointed the team didn't get the leadership recognition they had earned.

Two years ago, Paula saw the request for nominations in her email inbox. As she thought of the different people and who were deserving of recognition, she wondered if she had thanked them enough and if they knew how appreciative she was of their internal customer service. Based on her experience the last two years, she felt the event was too much hassle, too difficult to get time away, too many minutes to travel. She looked at the nomination email for a few minutes before hitting delete. Last year, she doesn't even remember seeing the email.

This year, COVID-19 has ended all in-person recognition events. But it is a great opportunity to ask questions that can guide the future of events and maybe make events greater than ever before for more

people.

Last May, schools found entirely new ways to have graduation during the pandemic. Many of those celebrations were meaningful and honored individuals rather than just the entire graduating class. Schools had parades of graduates, drive-through graduation with the entire family in the vehicle or drive-through booths set up by students to honor the end of this chapter in their lives. We need to find a new path forward in the area of recognition.

First, what is the true intent of the event? What response, thought or emotion is the event trying to generate? Gratitude, thoughtfulness, joy? How do we do that while avoiding Paula's experiences of disappointment and hurry? Is the event a pause to say 'thank you' or a rush to squeeze in as much as possible?

Second, what is the action we want to see? Recognition, engagement, collaboration, teamwork? Usually, we are trying to honor people, for their willingness to give of them-

selves for the good of others, for going above and beyond, for problem-solving. Does the event honor people as individuals or honor everyone?

Third, how can we find a new and entirely different way to honor people rather than focusing on the loss of an event that became a tradition. Even in events and recognition, we can fall into the trap of "We have always done it that way," which may keep us from trying something new or different.

Virtual recognition can be a powerful thing. When people share their video on a virtual meeting, not only do you see them close up, but often you get a glimpse of their home, their personal bookshelf, their dog. It is sharing of a personal nature, for the people we call our "work family."

With virtual recognition, there may be an opportunity for audience members to post messages in the chat, joining in the thanks and briefly sharing the impact of others. The virtual space creates an opportunity for greater connection. Team members may be able to at-

tend who had not been able to join in previously — people like Paula who are at a greater geographic distance or at a department with high service-window demands.

Recognition is only the beginning. Virtual retreats, strategic planning and teambuilding are all possible. Virtual meetings save us time. Before COVID-19, you went to a meeting, picked a seat, put down your things, chatted as everyone showed up at the meeting.

After the meeting, you packed up your things, checked your phone to see where you were headed next, chatted a bit more and said farewell, and walked down the hall or traveled to another building. All of that time is saved with virtual meetings. How do we capitalize on that time? How do we carve out even a fraction of that time for recognition, honoring people and maintaining culture?

This point in the pandemic is an amazing opportunity to pause and take time for recognition. Team members may need connection to colleagues, a word of thanks and being reminded of why they love working at the county.

Hearing the stories of others working hard makes us work even harder. Hearing stories of others excelling makes us proud to work in county government. And seeing the smiling faces and hearing the stories of those we are proud to call "colleague" allows us to honor and appreciate them as individuals. Appreciation of team members for who they are and what they bring to work each day is a powerful and contagious thing. It is a gift. And in this time of change, we could all use a beautiful and powerful gift. **CN**

From Coconino County, Ariz., HR gurus and contributors, Erika Philpot, human resources director and Rose Winkeler, deputy county attorney, address common and critical HR questions from their "boots on the ground" perspective.



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

• Emergency responders in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** unveiled the “Knox Box” program to keep homeowners safe during emergencies. Qualifying residents can receive a free lockbox through the program that stores their house key and is installed near their door so firefighters can get to it. The county fire authority installs the box to allow direct access to homes during a medical or wildfire emergency. The program improves accessibility by reducing barriers such as locked doors or windows that prevent first responders from reaching those in need.

• A readership literacy pilot project in **RIVERSIDE** and **TULARE counties** is providing virtual training for teachers to **improve literacy rates**. The counties’ offices of education each received \$500,000 grants awarded to develop the literacy program, *The Sun-Gazette* reported. The literacy program, called Readership, trained 60 teachers, leaders

and coaches on how to engage students in literacy.

COLORADO

County officials in **SUMMIT COUNTY** unanimously approved shifting their investment strategy to **environmental, social and governance investing**. The policy prevents the county from investing in energy services, oil and gas producers, refiners and pipe-liners, the *Summit Daily News* reported. The more sustainable investing approach minimizes potential risk by preventing investments that have a high environmental, social and governance risk level which indicates a company’s likelihood of experiencing loss that affects the county’s finances.



FLORIDA

Commissioners in **OKALOOSA COUNTY** accepted a



MARYLAND

• **FREDERICK COUNTY** Executive Jan Gardner stands in front of the **largest Maryland flag** in the state’s history that took to the sky over the county. The flag is located on a hot air balloon that measures 85-feet tall by 55-feet wide. The balloon is 80,000 cubic feet and had its inaugural launch in Frederick County.

Photo courtesy of the Frederick County Office of the County Executive



CALIFORNIA

• **SAN MATEO COUNTY** launched a **COVID-19 compliance team** to respond to reports of businesses not following health orders. The eight-person enforcement team aims to educate business owners about complying with health requirements such as wearing face coverings, posting and following social-distancing protocol and ensuring employees do not come to work sick. Photo courtesy San Mateo County

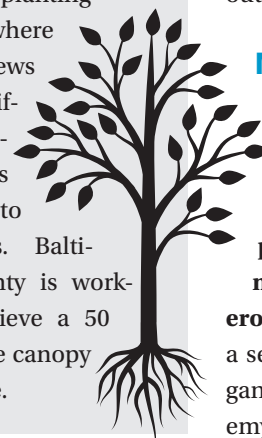
grant agreement to **restore an eroded shoreline** at a county park. Hurricane Sally brought storm surge and winds in September that damaged the shoreline of the park, which is located on Okaloosa Island. The county and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will split the cost of the \$3 million project to install a living shoreline to protect the park’s coast, *Northwest Florida Daily News* reported.

HAWAII

MAUI COUNTY announced a **free COVID-19 community testing program**. The program is sponsored by the county and allows residents to get tested for free without insurance. Participants must pre-register to be tested at one of three community site locations and do not need to meet any criteria to receive a test.

MARYLAND

• With six months until Earth Day 2021, **BALTIMORE COUNTY** Executive Johnny Olszewski is calling on county homeowners and property owners to use underutilized lawn space to **plant 5,000 new trees**. The goal is to reduce greenhouse gases and increase the county’s tree canopy. The county offers a free tree-planting program where county crews plant significant numbers of trees at no cost to landowners. Baltimore County is working to achieve a 50 percent tree canopy countywide.



MARYLAND

• **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY** is using CARES Act funds to **help restaurants and food-service businesses**. The county’s economic development corporation launched a new program that allows restaurants impacted by COVID-19 to apply for up to \$10,000 in aid. The county is also extending its expedited permitting process for establishments erecting tents for outside dining.

MICHIGAN

EMMET COUNTY, which is located next to Lake Michigan, participated in a pilot program to **provide resources to communities facing coastal erosion**. Officials met during a session as part of the Michigan Coastal Leadership Academy to learn about resources

to help create a long-term plan to protect coastline areas. The six-video course also features environmental and engineering experts who meet with participants about specific erosion issues in their communities, *Petoskey News* reported.

MINNESOTA

CARVER COUNTY is one of 24 counties in the state participating in the pilot **COVID-19 Test at Home saliva program**. Residents in the county are able to request free tests online through the program that is being run by the Minnesota Department of Health. The tests are performed at home under the supervision of a health care professional during a telehealth visit. The results are emailed within 24-48 hours.

NORTH CAROLINA

- A recent **cyber-attack** rendered **CHATHAM COUNTY's** network, email and phone lines inoperable. The incident did not impact early voting or the county's 911 system. "We are working with law enforcement and support agencies so we can recover from this incident as soon as possible," County Manager Dan LaMontagne told *The News & Observer* newspaper. "Our priority is to restore our systems in a secure manner and maintain the provision of critical services."

OHIO

Some lucky pups at the **RICHLAND COUNTY** Dog Shelter are beneficiaries of a generous resident who left the shelter \$30,000 in her will to be partially used to help with

adoptions. The shelter **plans to reduce the fees** by \$30 each (from \$199 to \$169) for one year or until the funding runs out. Another portion of the money was used to repair the existing play yard and to build a second one.

"With the additional space to play and ability to have more than one dog out, it enables us to offer more natural movement and exercise for the dogs in our care," said Missy Houghton, deputy warden at the shelter. "In doing so, we believe that the dogs will be happier during their stay and that will help promote adoptability. We are incredibly grateful that Mrs. Wilson thought of us and the dogs that are in our care."

OREGON

There's a **backlog of 6,000 criminal cases** in **MULTNOMAH COUNTY**. The situation is likely happening in other counties as well since the pandemic struck. Only two criminal cases have gone to trial, KGW8 reported. "Every month that we go on, it's gonna continue to get worse until we figure out how to bring those numbers down," said District Attorney Mike Schmidt.

TEXAS

HARRIS COUNTY created the \$40 million **COVID-19 Emergency Direct Assistance Fund** with CARES Act funding to give a one-time payment of \$1,200 to 33,333 families evenly spread out across the county's four precincts. The local Catholic Charities organization is running the program. The funds can be used for hous-



VIRGINIA

- FRANKLIN COUNTY** partnered with Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge to advertise the county as a destination by using the sides of a **new water tower** erected by Western Virginia Water Authority that will bring extra water supply, water pressure and additional fire protection to the county. The county and Virginia's Blue Ridge have prime advertising spots on the 102-foot high water tower, which can be seen by drivers heading north and south on U.S. Highway 220. The tower is painted in a forest green to blend in with the surrounding trees with lettering in white: "Virginia's Blue Ridge, VisitVBR.com" on one side and the Franklin County logo on the other.

ing, food, utilities, healthcare, childcare, transportation or other urgent needs.

VIRGINIA

- LOUDOUN COUNTY** was recently awarded a \$250,000 **Farmers Market Promotion Program grant** from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which will be used to ramp up the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace. In response to the COVID-19 crisis,

Loudoun Economic Development launched an e-commerce platform to help Loudoun's 1,200 farmers better reach their consumer base. The marketplace currently showcases 643 Loudoun-sourced products from 42 Loudoun farms on a no-cost e-commerce platform.

WASHINGTON

- KING COUNTY** has recently extended its mandatory **work-from-home order** for

hundreds of county employees through July 5, 2021. County Executive Dow Constantine's order applies to all executive branch employees who are currently telecommuting, except where there is an operational need for them to physically return to the workplace. That includes employees of the Department of Assessments, Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, Department of Executive Services, Department of Community and Human Services, Department of Human Resources, Department of Judicial Administration, Department of Local Services, Metro Transit Department, Department of Natural Resources and Park, Department of Public Defense, Department of Public Health, Executive Department and King County Elections.



- PIERCE COUNTY** is using \$7.5 million in CARES Act funding to pay for 30 percent of the bill when diners **visit restaurants** that have signed up for the program, KIRO-7 reported. To help undo some of the damage the pandemic has caused, Pierce County Council voted to fund the new program they're calling Restaurant Rally. Sundays through Thursdays in mid-November, diners get 30 percent off their bill.

"There's no limit, you could go breakfast, you can go lunch, you can go dinner," said Dave Morell, Pierce County council member. Residents are encouraged to make the rounds and try out different cuisines. Across Pierce County, there are close to 500 dine-in restaurants that qualify. So far, about half have signed up. For more on the program, visit: <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7032/Restaurant-Rally>.

NORTH CAROLINA

- When Hurricane Zeta zoomed up the eastern seaboard, **knocking out power** and creating flooding along the way, **GUILFORD COUNTY's** Board of Elections was ready, when the storm blew power out at four early-voting sites.

"Before every election my office works closely with our Emergency Management team to develop a continuity of services plan of action for events such as power loss, water damage and other unforeseen issues that can occur during an election season," Charlie Collicutt, elections director, told the *Rhino Times*. "In this case, we had a plan for emergency generators to be deployed to keep the polls open without interruptions. Voting is still occurring, and things are moving smoothly at all of our polling sites."



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

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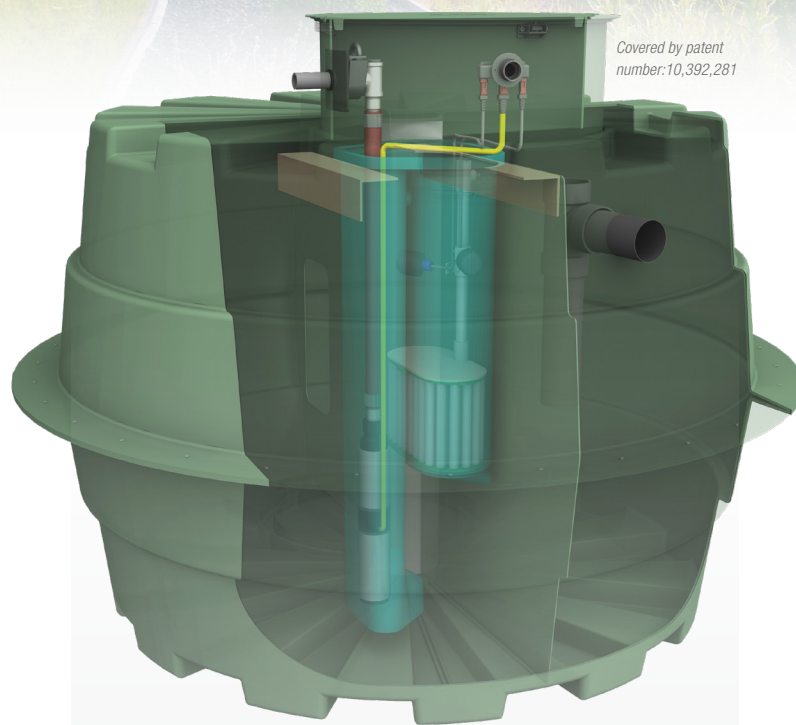
- Brundtland Report, United Nations, 1987

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*WERF Fact Sheets C1, C2, & C3, “Performance & Cost of Decentralized Unit Processes,” 2010.



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