

CRF MONEY EXPANDS BEYOND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Many of the workers in tourism and hospitality industries in Bexar County, Texas are starting to look at the Battle of the Alamo with more than local pride. Their jobs have been under siege for months by the COVID-19 pandemic and the extended layoffs could soon become more than they can bear, with the local unemployment rate jumping to 12 percent, after years near 3 percent.

That has prompted the county to respond with a worker retraining program, funded in part by the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund, which distributed \$150 million to states and local governments with more than 500,000 residents. That money can be used to pay for unbudgeted expenses resulting from the pandemic over the last 10 months of 2020. Bexar County initially planned to dedicate half of its \$79.6 million in CRF funding to the program, and though parameters in the payments have forced changes in those plans, the county is ded-

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Across the country, some counties are seeing a resurgence in coronavirus and mandating that people wear masks. Here, Washington County, Tenn. Mayor Joe Grandy announces a countywide mask requirement following an increase in COVID-19 cases throughout the county. Grandy issued the order which requires masks to be worn in public places when it is not possible to follow social distancing guidelines. Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee (R) granted the 89 counties in the state the ability to issue their own face mask mandates. Photo by David Floyd, Johnson City Press

Counties support the unemployed

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

With the nationwide unemployment rate at 11 percent for the month of June, millions of Americans are currently experiencing job loss because of the economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Effingham County, Ill., Case Manager Joanna Davies is hoping to help those who lost their jobs and have been impacted by the pandemic.

The Effingham Library

launched the Case Manager Project, an outreach effort to help county residents file for unemployment claims.

Davies provides assistance for anyone who needs to sign up for unemployment, navigate the unemployment website or even locate stimulus checks.

Johnna Schultz, assistant

director of the Effingham Public Library, said the project launched when the Illinois governor enacted the shelter-in-place order. She applied for a temporary grant to hire a case manager who will serve in the position through October.

"We are a very rural community and we know that many of

our county residents don't have access to technology and they might have a phone, but the Illinois Department of Employment Security website doesn't work on a mobile device," Schultz said.

Davies explained how she

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Weekly discussions address racial equity in Franklin County, Ohio

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Kevin Boyce has served in state, city and county government and if the Franklin County, Ohio commissioner is sure of anything, it's that you can't legislate morality.

That isn't to say there's no

role for government in fighting racism and working toward racial equity. It just requires the right perspective and patience.

"This idea that we can do something with policy or legislatively is a false sense of security," he said, but adding "I do believe public policy and the actions that we take can be the

catalyst to changing long-term situations."

Franklin County has taken some of those steps, from a declaration of racism as a public health crisis to a 10-year, \$25 million commitment to address the causes of poverty

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Counties provide guidance to unemployed with help of case manager, online training

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works with an intern and sets office hours at the library where any individual can drop by to receive help. During each visit, she performs an initial assessment, provides help with filing for unemployment and gives additional information on resources for finding jobs or for job training in the community.

The majority of people who stop by the library need assistance with signing up for unemployment. Many who are facing rent payments and bills feel a huge stress release after receiving help, she said.

“If people have applied for unemployment and they just struggled to get through the application and they just are really frustrated, they’ll come in here and it’s almost like we just unlocked the door they’ve been struggling with and when they get to the other side, there’s a pot of money there,” Davies explained.

She said they are available at



Effingham County Case Manager Joanna Davies and Effingham County Case Manager Intern Blaze Harkte help individuals who are filing for unemployment in Effingham County, Ill. Photo by Kaitlin Cordes, Effingham Daily News

the library for four hours each day and usually see about seven people each day.

“Considering how long looking into someone’s unemployment

claim takes or to file one, it’s quite time consuming, so we’ve been pretty busy,” she said.

Davies created a countywide outreach schedule to identify other locations throughout the county to set up laptops, intake forms, referral sheets and meet with residents to help them sign up for unemployment.

In Alameda County, Calif., Workforce Development Board Director Patti Castro is also working to provide county residents with tools needed to find employment as they see little movement on hiring or “business as usual.”

She described the current situation in the county as “nothing like we’ve ever seen before.”

“Our unemployment rate is hovering around 14 percent,” Castro said. “Pre-COVID it was about 3 percent, so things are scaling up.”

Castro is encouraging county residents to utilize an online training platform called Metrix, which the workforce develop-

ment board has previously used to help county residents obtain the necessary skills for certain jobs.

“This year because of so many people getting services virtually or trying to do things at home, we relaunched the campaign to boost our enrollments,” Castro said.

The platform features a variety of skills and over 500 courses. Users can complete self-assessments and look at different career pathways for in-demand occupations. Courses include soft skills, leadership management, IT, sales, customer service and other industry-specific certifications where users can receive badges for programs such as Cisco, Microsoft or Oracle, among others.

Castro said the most popular course is project management.

“You can do courses that are one-off just because you are interested in the skill or you need the skill or you can do a real program where at the end of a series you get an industry certi-

fication,” she said.

The program is available to county residents who are members of the career center or workforce system. While the county’s career centers are still closed, there are many events happening virtually and county residents can work with career counselors over the phone, Castro said.

“The Metrix system provides a nice alternative because not only is it accessible, it’s free to our job seeker customers, but it doesn’t cost as much as maybe going to private post-secondary school or enrolling in or paying for it some other way,” she said.

Last year, the Metrix platform served more than 200 people who registered and received online training.

“The economic situation is concerning to the counties,” she said. “Workforce is just trying to hang in there as best we can in supporting individuals who can move to other jobs to the degree they are available that they can transition quickly.” **CN**

SNAP/STATS



WEARING A MASK TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

PERCENT WHO SAY THEY WEAR A MASK WHEN ENTERING A STORE OR OTHER BUSINESS:

All or most of the time:	65%
Some of the time:	15%
Hardly ever:	9%
Never:	7%
Haven’t gone anywhere:	4%

Source: Pew Research Center, June 2020

Documentation, eligibility are crucial aspects of CRF spending plans

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icated to seeing it through.

"We know that a lot of them have jobs that won't be coming back soon," David Marquez said of the furloughed and laid-off workers. He is the executive director of economic and community development for the county, overseeing human services in addition to traditional economic development roles. "They may never come back," he said. "The pandemic has had a horrific health impact, but it's had an equally bad economic impact, so if we can take advantage of this time to help people gain new skills, make them marketable in an uncertain economy... This is a chance to find aspirational work."

The nature of the pandemic's economic disruption has been more widespread than the 2008 financial crisis.

"During the housing crisis, if you were in construction, you could find a job in another field, but now all of the options are gone, and every job that was open to a lower-skilled worker is disrupted," Marquez said.

The retraining program will be coupled with research by the nonprofit SA Works to identify local employers' labor needs, assembling working groups and expanding beyond the traditional private-sector employers to get a full-scale view of the economy.

"Before the pandemic, it was a talent chase, and employers have been screaming for years about not having enough tradesmen to staff their projects," Marquez said. "This will be an opportunity for them to staff up, especially with some businesses preparing during the downturn to be able to be back at capacity when the economy opens up."

Workforce Solutions Alamo will do outreach to people who have filed for unemployment and do the assessments.

"Assessing the individual — their aptitudes, their interests — and trying to give them better guidance toward fields that you know are going to be hiring" is important, Marquez said. "In this environment, that's kind of a challenge, but

we're gathering as much information as we can to set people up for success. Otherwise we're working in the dark and that's not doing the best for our residents or our businesses."

Those efforts, however, have been stymied by the conditions of the CRF payments. Marquez said the \$39.5 million the county wanted to put into the program proved troublesome because executing it on the desired scope would mean spending beyond the end-of-year deadline.

"It's a short fuse to spend that money," he said. "Ultimately, we're only going to use about \$8.5 million of the CRF money for the program, but we're going to augment that with \$9.5 million from our general fund."

The job training will take different forms, some involving work-based learning, some purely classroom training to avoid running afoul of restrictions on unemployment benefits.

"We hope this will end up with our residents prepared to find a career that's COVID-resilient," Marquez said. "We will focus more on assessing the individual to give them better guidance toward the fields where they can have long-term success."

The decision-making

All of this money comes with some strings, and some concerns. Expenses have to be documented and justified if audited by the Treasury Department.

When Lake County, Ill. received \$121.5 million in CRF funding, the county gathered a lot of thoughts on how to use it. County staff members formed five task forces — operations, budget impact, financial assistance, community resources and business and economics.

They assessed the needs of human service providers and businesses in the community, analyzed the county budget and ensured the county's plans would stand scrutiny from an audit. Those committees report to County Administrator Gary Gibson's Recovery and Relief Coordination Committee, which report to the Special Committee on COVID Recovery, comprising five members of the Lake County Board's finance and administrative committee. At the same time, County Board Chair Sandy Hart convenes her own strategic advisory group — financial, business and nonprofit executives.

That will all come to a point July 27 when the County Board votes on the plan.

"It's grass roots information coming through the staff and

the board, meeting in the middle with the special committee to chew on it, talk about it and give us guidance on how to go forward," said Deputy County Administrator Jim Hawkins, who has been coordinating the process. "We've done the best diligence we can, and I feel like we've done enough to have a responsive ability for the county administrator to execute those funds."

"We have to flawlessly execute these programs," he said. "A lot of this looks awesome on paper, I can make you a nice shiny PowerPoint slide, but if we don't get the money and the resources to the folks who need it, it's all for naught."

Changing guidance from the Treasury Department has complicated the process and put more of an onus on the budget and financial assistance task forces to make sure documentation is up to snuff.

"There are gray areas that are pretty challenging," Hawkins said.

"It seems pretty easy but when you really start looking at it, and there are second and third order effects we've spent money on. It's understanding the big picture but also getting down to the smaller levels. It all comes down to risk mitigation and making sure the decision-makers understand the

risks from an auditing perspective.

"At some point we need to take the best information that we have and make the best decisions that we can," he said. "Then you tell the story of how something is indeed a COVID expense and determine the appropriate level of detail for the documentation."

Cobb County, Ga. for example, was hoping to use CRF funding to provide hazard pay for front-line workers, but the Treasury Department's classification of front-line workers differed.

Lake County moved quickly on things like rental assistance (\$4 million), utility assistance (\$1 million) and food assistance (\$2 million), all paid directly to suppliers.

The county plans to put \$20 million total into resident support and assistance, \$20 million into business and economic assistance, \$13.7 into public health support, \$35 million into municipal services, \$18.3 million into countywide essential services, with \$3 million to buy personal protective equipment for the looming "second wave" and \$11.5 million for contingencies.

"It would just be easier," Hawkins said, "if they just said we could replace revenue loss." **CN**



County official's weekly conversations on race attracting 4,000-5,000 viewers

From RACE page 1

and the racial wage gap. But to complement that “long game,” Boyce says counties can best create an atmosphere in which people engage with one another, and he’s doing that most Wednesday afternoons.

His regular video conversations via the county’s social media platforms — the Black Male in Franklin County, a brotherly discussion of race, health, wealth and more — feature guests ranging from academics to community leaders and fellow elected officials.

“We’re hoping it’s the conversation that happens at the barber shop or the community center or church,” Boyce said. “The kind of conversation you hope carries on for the people who were watching, spurring additional conversations and self-reflection.”

He started with a series of three video conferences a few weeks after George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis, but Boyce said viewership numbers convinced him to extend the series through the summer.

“We’re getting 4,000-5,000 viewers each time, so people are finding value, and there’s plenty to talk about,” he said.

For example, during the June 17 discussion, behavioral healthcare practitioner Jerry Saunders chimed in to voice his optimism that recent events in the United States’ racial awakening following this spring’s police abuses of Black men had galvanized a younger generation.

“Brown v. Board of Education was 1954, when we switched away from ‘separate but equal,’ and it said ‘with all deliberate speed,’ but we’re over 60 years later and we still don’t have that equality,” Saunders said. “They’re busy making a change and they want immediate action. And I see it in them, and I think it’s great. I don’t have a question mark, I have an exclamation point.”

The format ranges from discussions Boyce moderates to fielding questions from the audience, and the panel shifts as Boyce finds personalities and perspectives to feature.

Boyce plans to take some of the promising ideas that come



Franklin County, Ohio Commissioner Kevin Boyce (center) discusses census outreach during a Capitol Hill event in July 2019. Photo by Hugh Clarke

out of conversations — like providing capital for minority entrepreneurs, home ownership strategies and fresh food options in food deserts — to the county’s innovation center, a two-year-old think tank that will help the concept find legs in the community.

“The pandemic of racism had been ravaging our country, no matter what part of the country you turn to, it’s very much a part of the social construct and some of the challenges that we face from poverty to all the social determinants of health,” he said. “There’s a role for all levels of government to play, some is rooted in economic contributions, some of it is rooted in policy and some is rooted in political and social contributions. It will be important going forward for us to bring them all together in a strategic way.”

Where he wants to be

A Columbus native, Boyce was appointed to the City Council and won reelection twice before being appointed state treasurer in 2009. He was then appointed to the state House in early 2012 and won two additional elections before running for the Franklin County Board of Commissioners in 2016. Why county government?

“This issue, poverty and rac-

SPEEDREAD

Watch the conversations, Wednesdays this summer at 3 p.m. ET: www.facebook.com/FranklinCountyBoardofCommissioners/. Videos are archived [here, too](#).

ism,” he said. “I got to the point in my career where I asked, ‘Where can I make the most difference? Where can I have the most impact?’ I really wanted to deal with poverty because it was part of our greatest challenge. The welfare system responds to the symptom, rather than the cause, so the county is where you can change that narrative and be a ‘difference maker.’”

County service was exactly what he thought.

“I think the county is doing exactly what I wanted to be doing,” he said. “Moving the needle on the quality of life for people.”

Again, he keeps it in perspective.

“You can’t reverse 100 years of building and planning overnight, you can’t undo the destruction of neighborhoods when an interstate is built,” he said. “You can work toward fewer manufactured barriers

between neighborhoods, making communities more walkable and keeping them from putting up the walls between them.

“It starts with how we do business and how we recognize racism in our own community,” he said.

Boyce said that the buy-in from white colleagues in county government was perhaps even more crucial than action by Black county officials.

“A lot of people ask me, particularly white people, ‘What can I do?’” he said. “I think white people are more important in terms of racism. I really feel like the greatest impacts will be my white counterparts.”

He praised fellow commissioners John O’Grady and Marilyn Brown for their eagerness to address racial inequality in Franklin County.

“We don’t have to agree on every single element, but they’re committed in a sincere way,” he said.

The future

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted three of the systems in which Boyce hopes to affect change: Affordable housing, employment and public transportation, he sees the crisis highlighting the inequalities in Franklin County and galvanizing public support

for change.

“The pandemic has enhanced the urgency of the blueprint,” he said. “It was an organic endorsement of what we’re doing. You can write it down, but then when a pandemic brings to light how one group of people is more vulnerable because of these social determinants of health, that gets people’s attention in a way you didn’t have it before. It’s enhanced the conversation around it.”

And so, he asked his guests June 17, “Is this a new chapter in American history, is this a new day in front of us?”

Reynoldsburg City Schools Superintendent Melvin Brown answered: “I’d like to think it is, the fact that it’s being driven by so many young people who seem to have a different perspective on the world and on life than some of us older folks do. They seem much more connected to each other, they seem much quicker to defend each other.”

Brown detailed the mid-June conditions that gave him optimism, mirroring Boyce’s — the COVID-19 situation, the economic upheaval, national strife and the motivation to make a change.

“I think all of these things have led to a convergence that feels like a movement.” **CN**

Faces on the Frontline: Probation Officer Hallie Metcalf

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

"Addiction doesn't go away because we're having a pandemic," said Hallie Metcalf, an Otter Tail County, Minn. DWI court probation officer.

Metcalf and her colleagues at the Otter Tail County Probation Department have transitioned to find new ways to help clients who are battling addiction during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Here's a look at how Metcalf continues her work as a DWI probation officer amid the pandemic.

Mornings

Metcalf, like many other county employees, has found herself spending some days each week working from home instead of heading to the office.

She starts her mornings with a workout before heading to her home office if she has no scheduled in-person visits, which she completes in addition to seeing clients virtually.

The transition to working from home was initially a challenge for Metcalf. She had to find a balance between teleworking and her children also telelearning at home. Metcalf also had to deal with the challenging aspect of the "hands on" DWI court limiting in-person contacts.

"We have contact with our clients on a very regular basis," she said. "All of a sudden we had to think, 'OK, how are we going to keep those contacts going?'"

Metcalf had to find the best ways to communicate with clients based on their type of cell phone and access to the internet to ensure they were able to stay connected to treatment. She's turned to Skype to reach the majority of her clients.

"Virtual is the next best because you're still seeing their body expressions, you're still seeing their environment a little bit," she said.

Additional services also transitioned to being held virtually,

such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings for clients still in treatment.

"A lot of these people rely upon staying connected in the community and staying connected with their sober networks and so the AA community really picked up and did a great job of being able to hold their meetings virtually," Metcalf explained.

Previously, court hearings were also held over Zoom before the recent reopening of the courthouse, where precautions are in place to prevent the spread of the virus, including prescreening employees and clients.

"I've probably seen more people whether it's virtually or in their home more than I did prior to COVID. I just don't want to lose that connection."

Afternoons

Metcalf still makes home visits and conducts drug testing out in the field, despite the pandemic.

"I still go out and see people on a regular basis face to face and so I haven't lost all of that," she said. "I've pulled back a little, but we've still been able to be in their homes and have some eyes and ears in those situations."

If the weather is nice, Metcalf will meet with clients outside. She wears gloves when drug testing.

When it comes to returning to the office, the Otter Tail County Probation Department has been rotating which officers are in the building to prevent having all the agents present at the same time.

Clients must make appointments and other precautions have been implemented including socially distancing



Otter Tail County, Minn. DWI Court Probation Officer Hallie Metcalf works from her home office, where she meets with many clients virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo courtesy of Hallie Metcalf

chairs in the waiting room, setting up plexiglass and wearing masks.

"We're taking the standard precautions that a lot of the businesses do," Metcalf said.

Evenings

Metcalf said at the end of the day, the COVID-19 outbreak has increased her workload.

"I've probably seen people whether it's virtually or in their home more so than I did prior to COVID," she said. "I just don't want to lose that connection, so I feel like we've definitely increased contacts."

Metcalf explained how the DWI program has four phases. As clients complete each phase, there is typically less contact with the probation de-

partment but because of the pandemic, officers decided to sustain these communications for all phases.

"We've been seeing people on a regular basis weekly throughout this whole pandemic," she said. "We've been able to have lots of hands-on and know where the struggle is and if the struggle is coming up, hopefully be able to put those fires out before it gets too big."

The most significant way the COVID-19 outbreak has impacted Metcalf's routine is when it comes to thinking out of the box to find ways to stay connected with clients.

She has been holding weekly challenges to engage clients using activities like bingo, scav-

enger hunts, flower planting, journaling and gratitude challenges.

"Our participants also stay connected with one another and when they're not able to attend their meetings or attend court sessions in person, they're kind of losing that connection, too, so we're trying to keep them engaged with one another as well," she said.

Metcalf said she still is able to test clients throughout the pandemic and help celebrate their milestones for certain marks of sobriety.

"We need to meet our clients where they're at and we need to continue to just help them and support them and not just pause because there is a pandemic," she said. **CN**

NACo to re-launch Live Healthy program in September

by John Losh

As the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis continues, county residents are seeking ways to save on health-care costs. Coming in September, NACo is relaunching the member-exclusive Live Healthy Prescription, Health and Dental discount program. Residents in participating counties will have access to new savings, and counties will receive new printed and digital marketing materials to promote the program.

To facilitate a smooth re-launch of the Live Healthy program, we need your help to verify your county's program contact(s) who will help promote Live Healthy savings to the residents. By Aug. 10, participating counties should visit NACo.org/health to update their information.

Available to residents in participating counties now are savings on prescriptions, health



services and dental care, including:

- 24/7 telemedicine access through the health discount program, providing unlimited calls with a clinician without co-pays, and
- An average of 30 percent

prescription savings at more than 66,000 participating pharmacies nationwide.

Live Healthy discounts are provided with no annual limits, no shopping around, no forms to complete, no waiting periods, no age or income require-

ments, no medical condition restrictions and no catch. Residents simply visit LiveHealthyCard.com to find participating locations and access these savings:

Prescription discounts*

Residents present their no cost discount card to save on prescriptions at more than 66,000 participating pharmacies across the country.* The discount card also offers instant rebates on 69 common prescriptions.

Health Discounts**

The health program provides: 24/7 telemedicine access and savings between 15 percent and 70 percent on vision, hearing, diabetic supplies, prepaid lab work and diagnostic imaging. For the new low price of \$5.95 a month for individuals and \$7.95 for families, residents can enroll online at LiveHealthyCard.com or call

877.573.2395.


Dental Discounts**

The dental program can provide savings up to 50 percent on most dental procedures with over 11,000 dentists, including check-ups, cleanings, x-rays, fillings, root canals, extractions and dentures. For the new low price of \$5.95 a month for individuals and \$7.95 for families, residents can enroll online at LiveHealthyCard.com or call 877.573.2395.

The Live Healthy discount program is not health insurance and cannot be used in conjunction with health insurance.

Learn more about the program or enroll your county by visiting NACo.org/health.

*Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy.

**Available in all states, except Washington. 

John Losh is membership outreach manager in NACo's Public Affairs Department.

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Nearly 60 counties untouched by COVID-19 cases still face impacts of global pandemic

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Counties with zero COVID-19 cases are still out there.

The number of counties that have yet to report a case of the coronavirus are declining, yet nearly 60 counties, boroughs and parishes throughout the country have zero confirmed cases of the virus. While untouched by the pandemic, these communities are still feeling the impacts of the public health crisis.

As of July 13, 58 counties reported zero coronavirus cases, according to state departments of public health.

These numbers have significantly trended downward throughout June and July. Over the last month, the number of counties with no COVID-19 cases decreased by nearly 100, from 156 to 58.

Testing is a key component in identifying positive cases and with over 40 million tests

reported throughout the country, states vary on the number of tests performed.

States with the highest number of tests completed include California with over 5 million tests, equivalent to 13 percent of the state's population, followed by New York with 4.5 million (23 percent of the population) and Florida with 3.2 million (15 percent of the population), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Montana, which has 15 counties with zero COVID-19 cases — the state with the highest number of counties unaffected by the virus — has performed over 100,000 tests (9.6 percent of the population.)

Nebraska, which has 12 counties with no COVID-19 cases, performed over 330,000 tests (17 percent of the population.)

Even though some counties have never reported a confirmed case, they are still feeling the effects of the virus in

their communities.

Hillary Hanson, who chairs the Association of Montana Public Health Officials and who is also a Flathead County, Mont. public health officer, said she attributes several factors to the low number of cases throughout Montana, including the state's rural characteristics and the immediate steps taken by counties when the pandemic began.

Prior to the governor's actions, Hanson said counties took the lead by putting in place health officer orders to look at cancelling events and closing businesses.

"There was some pretty fast action taken from across the state that started at the local level and the larger jurisdictions and then funneled statewide," she said.

Flathead County had previously gone seven weeks with no cases before a case was confirmed on June 13.

"I think definitely not having cases means that it's not at the

forefront of our communities' mind," she said.

Hanson said she cautions residents against the false sense of security that COVID-19 is not present as counties and states reach points where they haven't had cases for prolonged periods of time.

"I think I would encourage communities to know as cases decrease, [it] does not mean that you should be altering your safety precautions like masking and social distancing," she said. "If anything, it means what you're doing is working so continue to do it."

Larry Dix, executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials, said the 12 counties throughout the state with no cases all have significantly low populations and are not located near spots where testing is being offered.

"Most of these folks are farmers or ranchers and so the majority of their day is spent outside and very rarely are they around any groups of people,"

he said.

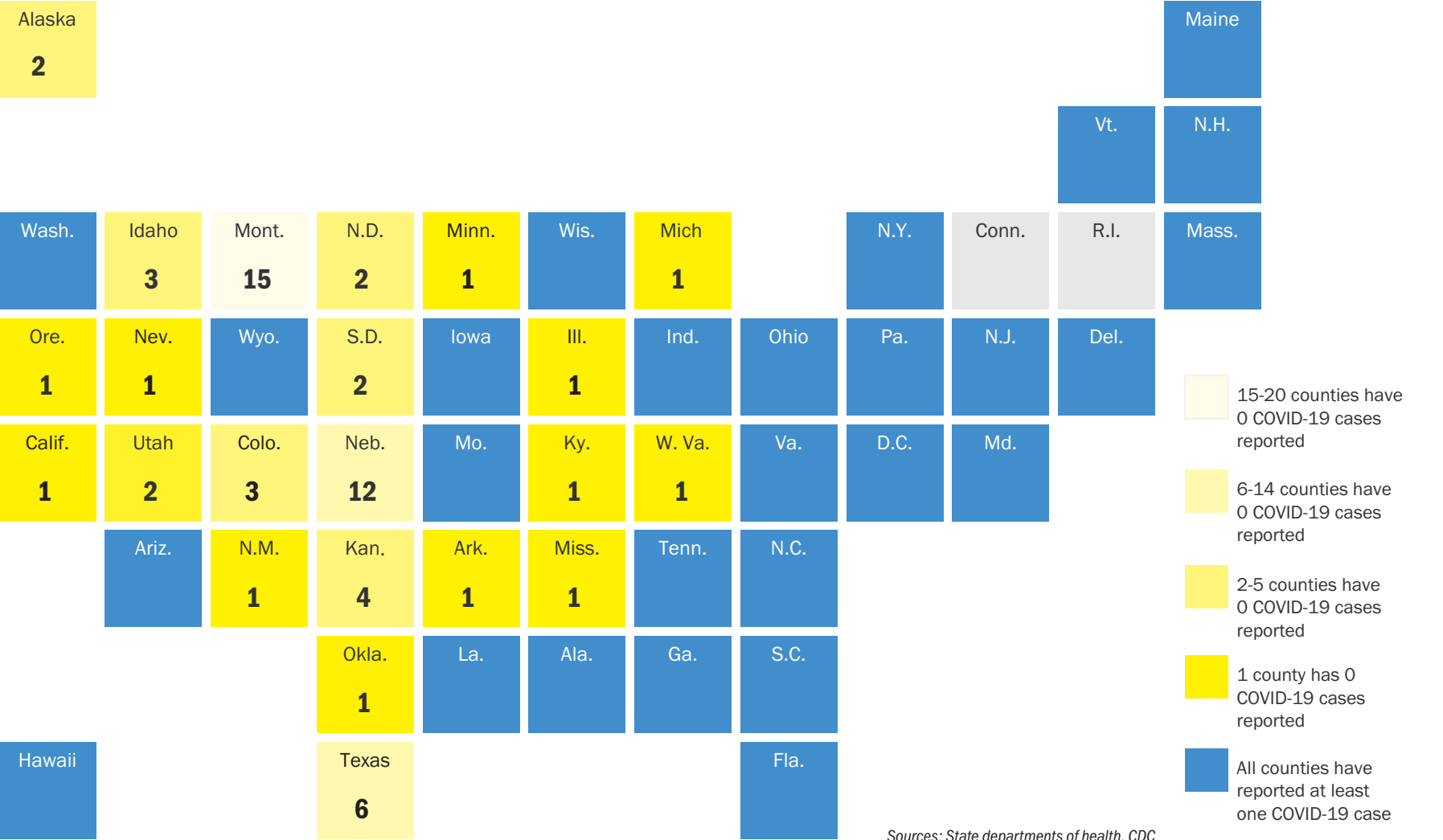
Dix described how counties with zero cases are feeling economic impacts to a small degree from statewide limitations on bars and restaurants opening. However, he said the greater impact for these counties is on rural hospitals.

In Denali Borough, Alaska, Mayor Clay Walker said the borough "has been practicing social distancing since statehood." There had been zero cases of COVID-19 in the borough until the first case was announced on June 25.

Walker said the borough's low population and rural environment played a part in having no confirmed cases for a prolonged period of time. The borough has been following mandates and recommendations, even with a large number of residents who are essential workers providing services such as coal mining, power production and defense instal-

See COVID-FREE page 8

Number of counties in each state with zero confirmed COVID-19 cases (as of July 13)



Sources: State departments of health, CDC

'We should have been hit a long time ago'

From COVID-FREE page 7

lation.

Beyond these essential services, Walker said the borough is facing massive economic impacts from COVID-19.

"Granted, the public health emergency has been light here in terms of impacted folks, but the economic crisis has hit us acutely," he said.

The borough's economy is strongly tied to the tourist industry, which has collapsed because of the pandemic, impacting small businesses that rely on visitors, he said. The borough is prioritizing small business support in the upcoming months.

Walker explained that the borough previously had one of the lowest testing rates in the state before launching a community testing program, which has significantly increased testing rates throughout June with many visitors and employees screened for the virus.

"It's going to continue. Our testing rates are going to con-

"...as cases decrease, [it] does not mean that you should be altering your safety precautions."

— Hillary Hanson
Flathead County,
Mont.

tinue to climb and at the same time the more you test, the more you're going to find," Walker said.

In Missouri, Hickory County was the only remaining county with zero COVID-19 cases until two individuals tested positive on July 10.

Hickory County Commissioner Keith Mertz said the majority of the county's population is older than 65 and the county is one of the poorest in the state.

"The statistics show that we should have been hit a long time ago," he said.

The county, which is central-

ly located in the state, is a popular tourist destination for the surrounding cities of Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield. Mertz said when the cities began implementing stay-at-home orders before the state of Missouri, people flocked to the county, resulting in the sales tax remaining at the same mark as it was at this time last year.

"We've had the visitors here and the population has definitely been higher for what it has been from a typical year," he said. "With the tax revenue the way it is, that tells you everybody's shopping here and people are coming here because you can't double the tax rate like that in six months."

The state of Missouri has performed over 615,000 tests and Mertz said there has been no shortages of tests for anyone in Hickory County who has symptoms.

"It kept us free this long, but I guess it's 'wake up and join reality.' You're going to get it, it's just we held out longer than most," he said. **CN**

CN SPOTLIGHT

Drop boxes give Wayne County voters more options

With the COVID-19 pandemic likely to continue through the November general election, Wayne County, Mich. is using \$100,000 of its CARES Act money to fund 60 secure drop boxes for absentee ballots.

The drop boxes will be placed in libraries, firehouses and community centers, allowing voters to save time

and money recording their votes. The system will also reduce the burden on election workers and in-person voters, and ease crowding at polling places. Roughly 50 of the boxes are expected to be placed in Detroit. Absentee voters still will have the option to mail in their ballots.

"Clerks and Detroit municipalities make them secure and would pick up the ballots from each location," Commissioner Monique Baker-McCormick told the *Detroit Free Press*. "They will know that their ballot is secure and only touch their hand and the clerk's hand." Photo by Michael Richard




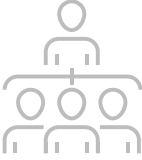





HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



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

THE ACADEMY FOCUSES ON FIVE ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

LEAD **ORGANIZE** **COLLABORATE** **DELIVER** **COMMUNICATE**

The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy empowers frontline county government professionals with fundamental, practical leadership skills to deliver results for counties and residents.

Find out more at NACo.org/Skills

With a curriculum developed by **General Colin Powell** and public and private sector leaders, NACo High Performance Leadership Academy gives students the opportunity to learn from world-class faculty. All content is guided by an expert facilitator.





2019-2020
ANNUAL REPORT

NOW MORE
THAN EVER
**COUNTIES
MATTER**

COUNTIES ANSWER THE CALL

Now more than ever, counties matter. Our nation is facing unprecedented challenges, and America's counties, parishes and boroughs continue to answer the call, seizing opportunities to save lives and restore our economy.

Led by 40,000 elected county officials, America's 3.6 million county employees are on the front lines of our nation's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Our "We Are Counties" campaign expresses gratitude for the countless sacrifices these employees are making to serve our communities.

COVID-19's far-reaching impacts — public health, economy, workforce, technology, human services — add to the strain on our budgets and staff. Before the pandemic, we were already facing mounting challenges like the opioid epidemic and other substance abuse; mental illness, especially in our jails; natural disasters; infrastructure needs; economic disparities; and the list goes on.

Yet, county leadership, ingenuity and courage are enabling us to overcome historic obstacles. Through NACo, counties have achieved significant victories at the federal level.

Bipartisan legislation has provided substantial new resources for our communities. Federal coronavirus relief packages delivered support for public health, small businesses and nonprofits, mental health services, nutrition assistance, workforce development and other expenses related to our COVID-19 response. We

continue to advocate in a bipartisan fashion for direct, flexible aid to counties of all sizes — while balancing our concerns about the federal debt and deficit.

We secured full funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes and a two-year reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools, key programs for public lands and forest counties. We secured additional federal resources for the 2020 Census, election security and FEMA disaster assistance, and a full repeal of the "Cadillac Tax" on employer-sponsored health coverage.

We celebrated several major milestones over the past year. We reached an all-time NACo membership high, with 79 percent of the nation's counties. Now in its fifth year, more than 520 counties participate in our Stepping Up initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders in jails. And with over 30,000 downloads, NACo's TestIT app drove improvements to the FCC's broadband mapping process.

At a time when we need it the most, NACo has invested in nurturing current and emerging county leaders through world-class online professional development. More than 1,600 county officials from more than 900 counties have enrolled in our High Performance Leadership Academy and Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership Academy.

Tremendous challenges lie ahead — from our ongoing economic and public health recovery to our efforts to advance

racial equity and social justice. But one thing is clear: Counties are answering the call. Through our diversity, we are united as one NACo, fostering healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America.

The 2019-20 Annual Report provides a snapshot of NACo's successes on behalf of the nation's 3,069 counties.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our members and partners and look forward to continuing to work with you. Together, we can accomplish anything.

Mary Ann Borgeson

Hon. Mary Ann Borgeson
NACo President

Matthew Chase

Matthew Chase
NACo Executive Director



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MISSION:
Strengthen America's Counties.

VISION:
Healthy, Vibrant and Safe
Counties across America.



CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND COUNTIES

The coronavirus pandemic is having a devastating impact on our counties, parishes and boroughs. Through our federal policy advocacy, cutting-edge research and solutions-driven programs, NACo has supported our members every step of the way. We developed a coronavirus online hub, including county-level examples of response efforts, county-specific data and analyses of federal actions.

COVID-19 Federal Advocacy

- Secured the passage of The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which resulted in funding for counties to implement federal child welfare reforms.
- Worked with our federal partners on the passage of the CARES Act, which created a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund available to counties of 500,000 residents or more. While the Coronavirus Relief Fund provided direct relief to our largest counties, only 5 percent of America's counties were eligible for direct assistance. Most counties have received allocations through their states. Counties have used CRF funds in innovative ways, such as for small business and nonprofit relief, mental health services, nutrition assistance and workforce development.
- Helped secure bipartisan support of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, also known as the "COVID-19 3.5" relief package, which contained important public health funding.
- We continue to work in a bipartisan fashion to ensure direct and flexible funding for counties is included in the next coronavirus relief package that reflects the roles and responsibilities mandated by federal and state laws and regulations.

COUNTIES MATTER:
COVID-19

America's counties are on the front lines of our nation's response to the coronavirus pandemic. During this unprecedented public health emergency and the aftermath of an economic crisis, counties are committed to strong intergovernmental cooperation to mitigate COVID-19 and its far-reaching impacts on America's people and places.

COMMUNITY HEALTH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counties support 903 hospitals, 824 long-term care facilities and over 1,900 public health departments In 26 states, counties are required to provide health care for low-income, uninsured or underinsured residents Counties contribute to the non-federal share of Medicaid in 26 states. Of these states, 18 mandate counties to contribute to the non-federal share of Medicaid costs and/or administrative, program, physical health and behavioral health costs Local governments, mostly counties, contribute \$26 billion to the non-federal share of Medicaid annually Mandated county contributions are the highest in New York. Counties in New York and New York City spend 	COUNTY MANAGEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by 40,000 county elected officials, counties employ 3.6 million people, or 3 percent of the entire U.S. population Every two years during elections, counties fund and oversee more than 100,000 polling places
JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counties typically operate 911 call centers, county Emergency Operations Centers and emergency planning and response functions Counties provide essential public safety services from law enforcement to fire and rescue to even coroners and medical examiners Counties operate 91 percent of all local jails, with 11 	

COVID-19 Resources and Best Practices

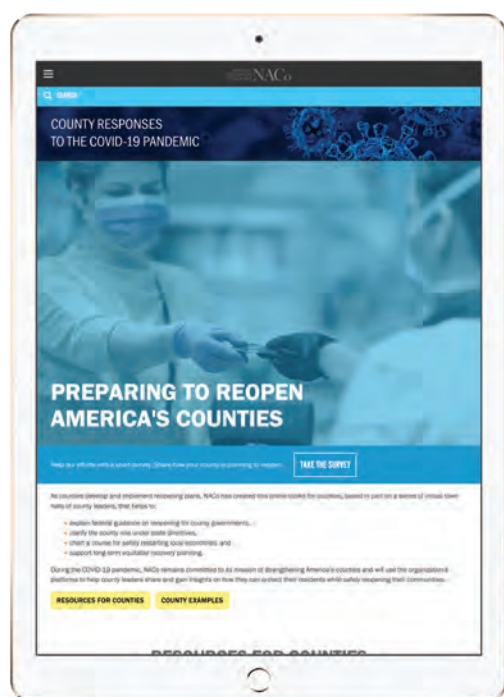
Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, NACo has produced a variety of resources to help county leaders understand and implement federal guidelines and pursue innovative solutions, including:

- A tool to compare how counties are using Coronavirus Relief Fund allocations
- More than 60 articles about COVID-19 in *County News*
- Maps of county public health emergency declarations
- Maps and analyses of county safer-at-home-orders
- Research on the fiscal and county workforce impacts, and
- Issue briefs highlighting county approaches to maintaining and adapting service delivery, including health, behavioral health, perinatal supports, childcare, housing, homelessness, child welfare and victim services, unemployment, justice services and first responders and supporting resident-owned small businesses.

NACo hosted 26 membership calls, providing federal policy updates and connecting members with White House officials and representatives from federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FEMA and the U.S. Department of Labor.

As counties lead frontline response efforts, NACo elevated the county story, hosting weekly national media teleconference calls.

NACo's We Are Counties campaign is putting faces on the many frontline services counties provide — including 328,000 hospital workers, 330,000 law enforcement officers, 93,000 first responders and many more. The interactive campaign expresses gratitude for county employees' sacrifices in service to our communities and underscores the need for direct, flexible federal investments in the critical county services.



Preparing to Reopen America's Counties

To assist counties in developing and implementing safe reopening plans, NACo launched an online toolkit and a series of town halls to share noteworthy practices and insights.

In partnership with the Professional Development Academy, **NACo's High Performance Leadership Academy** and **Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership Academy** – world-class online professional development designed for county employees enrolled **1,600** county officials from nearly **900** counties and state associations.

POLICY
ADVANCEMENT



In addition to COVID-19 policy advocacy, NACo and our members achieved key victories on federal policies that impact counties.

Significant Accomplishments

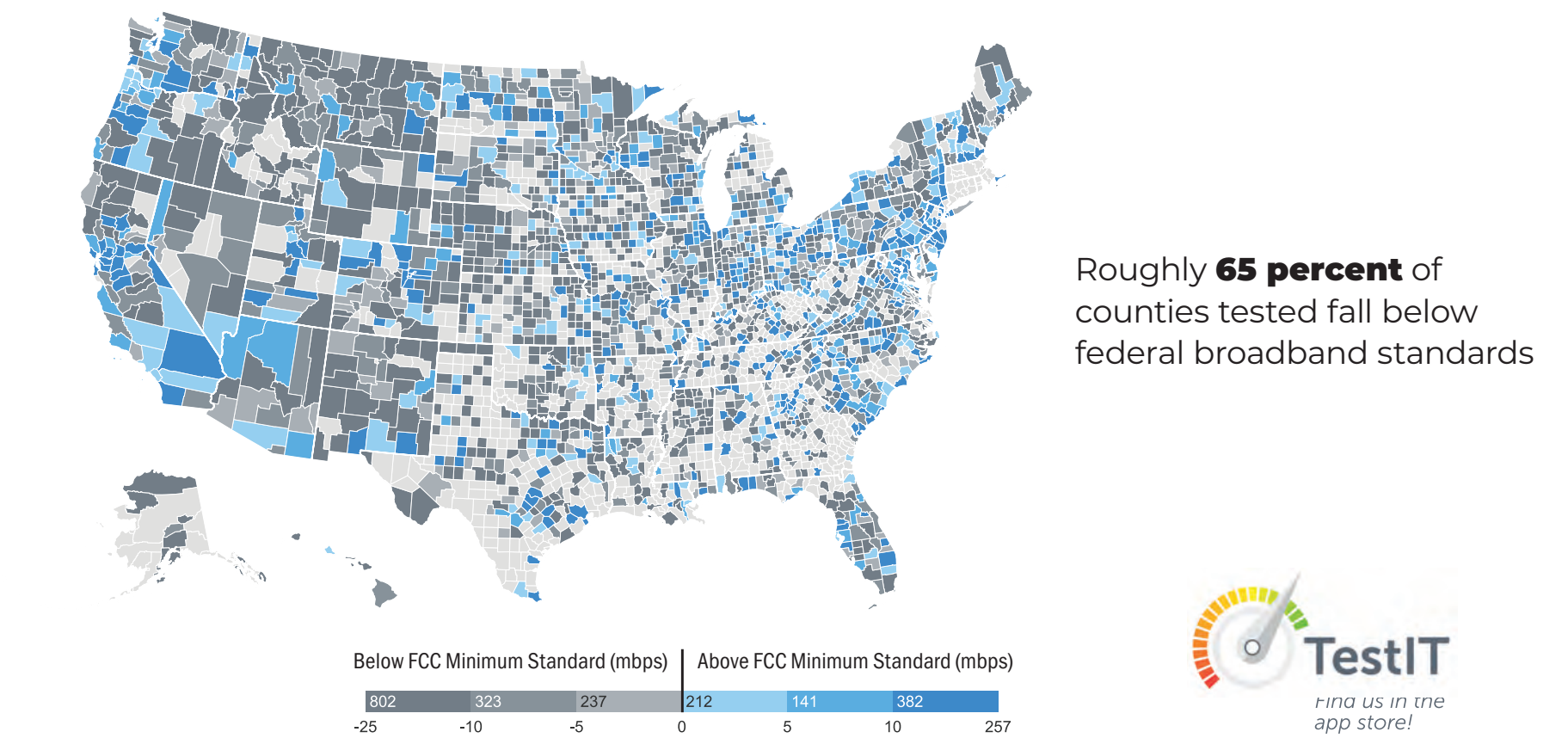
- The NACo TestIT app, drove improvements to improve the FCC’s broadband mapping process and subsequent federal funding decisions
 - ◇ Over 30,000 app downloads with over 148,000 tests
- Full funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program and a two-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program
- 2020 Census: \$6.7 billion, a \$2.8 billion increase
- A full repeal of the 40-percent “Cadillac Tax” on employer-sponsored health plans
- Increased investments in housing, economic and workforce development programs
- County priorities included in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization
- A final EPA rule to replace the 2015 “Waters of the U.S.” rule
- Additional investments in election security and administration
- Funding and financing priorities in federal infrastructure proposals, including increased funding for off-system bridges to over \$1 billion, as well as funding for local infrastructure through the Surface Transportation Block Grant
- Short-term funding extensions for key health programs, including the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital Program, Community Health Centers funding and the National Health Service Corps
- Enactment of the Family First Transition Act, which secured funding for counties to implement federal child welfare reforms

Policy Opportunities and Threats

- Additional COVID-19 federal aid to counties of all sizes to help cover increased expenditures and revenue losses
- Racial equity and justice
- Transportation and infrastructure
- FCC regulations that impact local zoning authority
- Long-term PILT/SRS certainty and active forest management
- National Flood Insurance Program
- Entitlement program reform
- “Waters of the U.S.” rule finalization
- Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Reauthorization
- Election security
- Opioid epidemic and substance abuse
- Medicaid Jail Inmate Exclusion policy



County Average Cellular and Fixed Wireless Download Speeds vs. FCC Minimum Standard



THOUGHT
LEADERSHIP



Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails

Stepping Up, a partnership between NACo, The Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation formed to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails, celebrated its fifth anniversary.

520 counties have passed a resolution or proclamation to join this national initiative



Counties Investing in Early Childhood Development

NACo launched Counties for Kids, a public awareness campaign designed to arm county leaders with knowledge, tools and resources to improve and expand high-quality services and support for young children and their families.



Healthiest Cities and Counties Challenge

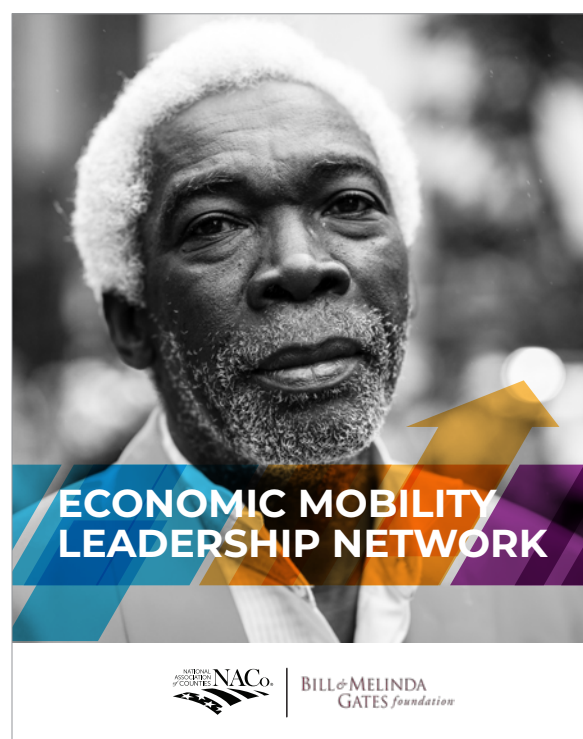
In partnership with the Aetna Foundation and the American Public Health Association, NACo launched the Healthiest Cities and Counties Challenge through a competitive application process that produced 10 county and 10 city challenge participants.

NACo Technology xChange

The newly formed NACo Tech xChange and Portal has over **430** county technology members and growing. Features include online networking and collaboration, as well as an IT library of policies, job descriptions and best practices.

2020 Census and Beyond

With the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the New Venture Fund, NACo is providing counties with up-to-date information and the county perspective on the Census 2020, including best practices to ensure fair and accurate counts and overcoming challenges associated with shifting timelines and restricted canvassing capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



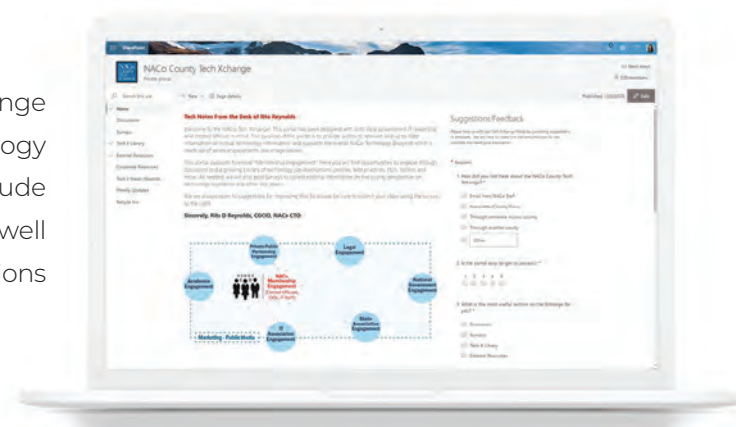
Counties Advancing Economic Mobility and Opportunity

Launched a partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to assess the barriers to economic mobility and share scalable, transferable programs across the country.

Additional signature projects include:

- Safety & Justice Challenge (with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation)
- Data-Driven Justice (with Arnold Ventures)
- Housing, Health and Equity Project (with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)
- Getting Social about Smoking Cessation and E-Cigarette Use
- Healthy Counties Initiative
- Resilient Counties Initiative
- Rural Economic Development Innovation Challenge (with the United States Department of Agriculture)
- Future of Work (with Walmart)
- Strengthening Coastal Counties' Resilience Program
- SolSmart Initiative (with the Solar Foundation, United States Department of Energy)
- Creative Counties Placemaking Program (with National Endowment for the Arts)

- *My County Works* – an activity book for elementary students – distributed more than **4,600** copies, and thousands more through **1,500** online downloads
- Counties Work online game – more than **2.5 million** game plays since its 2017 launch
- County Solutions middle and high school curriculum – over **19,000** all time page views since April 2017 and more than **6,300** page visits this year



Digital Outreach

During the coronavirus pandemic, as we adjust to social distancing and travel restrictions, NACo's digital outreach is more important than ever. Through video, pre-recorded and live event streaming, NACo.org, our social media channels and email outreach, we are keeping members up-to-date and activating counties to drive progress at all levels, from national to county.

NACo ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Join us online July 20th at 2 p.m. EDT

Visit NACo.org/annual to learn more



County News

Produced **24** issues of *County News*, along with special editions on substance abuse treatment, health care in jails, serving aging populations and economic development



Achievement Awards – Celebrating 50 Years of County Excellence and Innovation

This year, NACo recognized **522** entries from counties and state associations in **30** states



We Are Counties - Thank You

Video

(YouTube, Twitter and Facebook)

More than **68** new videos, contributing to more than **75,600** views and **66** days of watch time



Social Media

(Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn)

Reached over **4.8 million** user impressions, an increase of **60 percent**

NACo.org and County Explorer

Nearly **3.26 million** page views and over **1.37 million** sessions, an increase of nearly **60,000** page views



Livestreaming and Webinars

Delivered **96** webinars, conference workshop recordings and livestreamed events – including the NACo-Appalachian Regional Commission Opioid Epidemic Capstone Event, the NACo- National Sheriffs' Association Health Care in Jails Town Hall, Capitol Hill briefings and topics including responding to the coronavirus pandemic, early childhood development, supporting our aging populations and Census 2020 – with over **16,000** attendees and viewers



40 interactive toolkits and reports, utilizing infographics, interactive charts and maps, photos, videos and more





COST-SAVING
SOLUTIONS

Nationwide Retirement Solutions

NACo's Defined Contribution and Retirement Services Program offers county employees a voluntary, tax-deferred savings opportunity to supplement employer-sponsored retirement plans. It also offers a 401(a) match and stand-alone defined contribution plans.

More than **424,000** county employees participate in the program with over **\$21 billion** in assets

Over **3,000** counties and county jurisdictions participate

Since the partnership began, we've served more than **1.6 million** county employees and retirees

41 state associations of counties endorse the program



Nationwide[®]
is on your side

Live Healthy U.S. Counties

1,298 counties participate in the Prescription Discount Program

33 state associations endorse Rx;
22 endorse Rx, Health and Dental

County residents have saved **\$712 million** since the program's inception



New: Three+One

cashvest® by three+one provides a new and unparalleled level of cash liquidity analysis and data services for local, county, school district and college governing bodies. This new partnership comes at an opportune time for counties in fiscal dire straits, allowing the ability to maximize the value of taxpayer dollars while we face this pandemic.



Revenue Recovery

The Revenue Recovery Program allows any eligible debt owed to local government agencies to be repaid by withholding state personal income tax refunds, lottery proceeds and other state-level revenue events. This proprietary software managed by NACo FSC shares a vision of healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America through offering an affordable, tailored and efficient method for debt collection.



New: Cybersecurity Collaborative

In partnership with the Cyber Risk Alliance, state associations of counties and affiliate government organizations, NACo FSC provides a knowledge transfer platform that gives access to top tier public and private cybersecurity professionals. The NACo Cybersecurity Collaborative increases the access to information, intelligence, best practices and resources that creates an agile, cooperative ecosystem. The collective purpose of this network is to proactively strengthen America's counties to better defend and protect themselves, their communities and our economy from cyberattacks.

NACo
LEADERSHIP





Executive Committee



President
Hon. Mary Ann Borgeson
Commissioner
Douglas County, Nebraska



First Vice President
Hon. Gary Moore
County Judge/Executive
Boone County, Kentucky



Second Vice President
Hon. Larry Johnson
Commissioner
DeKalb County, Georgia



Immediate Past President
Hon. Greg Cox
Supervisor
San Diego County, California



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Hon. Cindy Bobbitt
Commissioner
Grant County, Oklahoma



Northeast Region Representative
Hon. Christian Leinbach
Commission Chair
Berks County, Pennsylvania



South Region Representative
Hon. Ray Jeffers
Commissioner
Person County, North Carolina



West Region Representative
Hon. Joe Briggs
Commissioner
Cascade County, Montana



NACo CEO/Executive Director
Matthew D. Chase
Washington, D.C.

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NACo Audit Committee Chair
Mr. Gene Smith
NACo Board Representative
National Association of County
Administrators, Michigan



Finance Standing Committee Chair
Hon. Gary Moore
County Judge/Executive
Boone County, Kentucky



Information Technology Standing Committee Chair
Hon. Christopher Constance
Commissioner
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Hon. Jimmy Odom
Associate Commissioner
Cass County, Missouri



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Hon. James Gore
Supervisor
Sonoma County, California

Caucus Chairs



LUCC Steering Committee Chair
Hon. Sally Heyman
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Hon. Robert Post
Commissioner
Banner County, Nebraska



Western Interstate Region President
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Commissioner
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Hon. Kevin Boyce
Commissioner
Franklin County, Ohio



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Hon. Phillip Serna
Supervisor
Sacramento County, California



Human Services and Education Steering Committee Chair
Hon. Deborah Lieberman
Commissioner
Montgomery County, Ohio



Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee Chair
Hon. David Hudson
County Judge
Sebastian County, Arkansas



Public Lands Steering Committee Chair
Hon. Greg Chilcott
Commissioner
Ravalli County, Montana



Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee Chair
Hon. J.D. Clark
County Judge
Wise County, Texas



Transportation Steering Committee Chair
Hon. Randy Maluchnik
Commissioner
Carver County, Minnesota

Please visit
[NACo.org/2020AnnualReport](https://www.naco.org/2020AnnualReport)
for the listing of NACo's Board
of Directors and our partners.



Stronger Counties.
Stronger America.

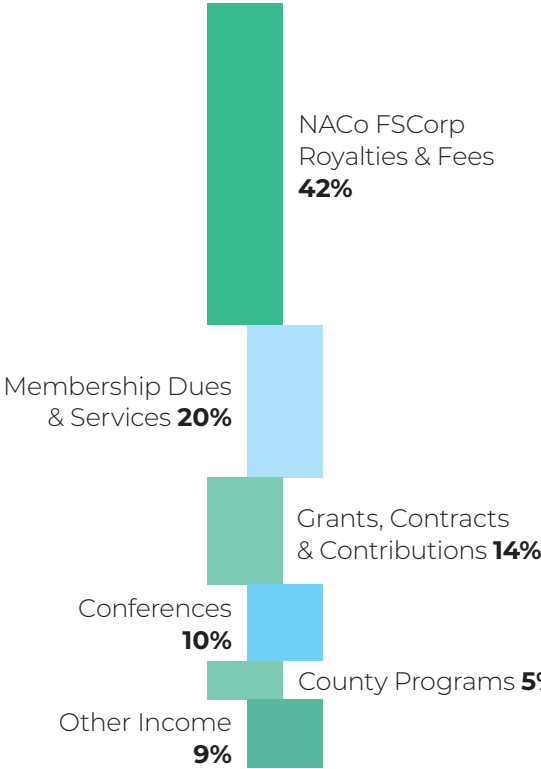
Thank you to our members and partners.
We look forward to seeing you at future NACo Events:

Legislative Conference
Feb. 20 - Feb. 24, 2021
Washington, D.C.

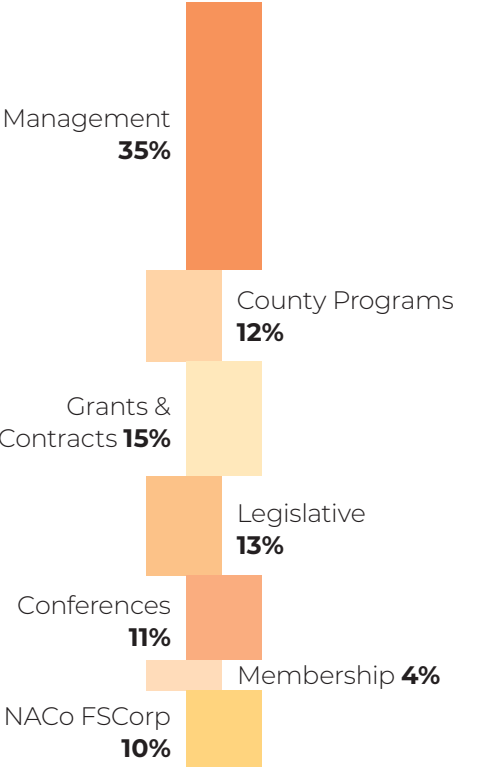
Annual Conference And Exposition
July 16 – July 19, 2021
Travis County/Austin, Texas

Financial Health

Operating Revenues





Operating Expenses





STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

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Oklahoma ruling changes law enforcement of crimes involving Native Americans

by Lisa Soronen

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court held in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* that for purposes of the Major Crimes Act (MCA) 3 million acres, including most of the City of Tulsa, is a Creek reservation.

Per the federal MCA, only the federal government may prosecute Native Americans who commit specific crimes within “Indian country.” Oklahoma state court convicted Jimcy McGirt, a member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, for three serious sexual offenses.

McGirt claimed his crimes took place on a Creek reservation and therefore that the state of Oklahoma had no jurisdiction to try him.

According to Justice Gorsuch, writing for the majority, because “Congress has not said otherwise,” the treaty between the Creeks and the federal government creating a reservation in 1932 remains a reservation.

“[O]nly Congress can divest a reservation of its land and diminish its boundaries. So, it’s no matter how many other promises to a tribe the federal government has already broken. If Congress wishes to break the promise of a reserva-

tion, it must say so.” But Congress didn’t in this case, the Court opined.

Justice Gorsuch recounted the history of the treaty in which the Creeks agreed to relocate to what is now Oklahoma from Alabama and Georgia.

Even though the treaty didn’t refer to the Creek land as a “reservation” — “perhaps because that word had not yet acquired such distinctive significance in federal Indian law,” it was a reservation, according to the majority.

Justice Gorsuch acknowledged that over time the federal government “broke more than a few of its promises to the Tribe.”

Most relevant to this case, in 1901, the Creeks agreed to allot 160-acre parcels to individual tribe members who could sell them to anyone they liked. But what Congress never did, according to the Court, was pass a “statute evincing anything like the ‘present and total surrender of all tribal interests’ in the affected lands.”

Justice Gorsuch states that the ruling in this case only applies to the Creeks because “[e]ach tribe’s treaties must be considered on their own terms, and the only question before us concerns the Creek.”

But Chief Justice Roberts notes in his dissent that “the Court’s reasoning portends that there are four more such reservations in Oklahoma” because four other tribes also agreed in treaties to move to what is now Oklahoma. Justices Thomas, Alito, and Kavanaugh joined the Chief Justice’s dissent.

According to Justice Gorsuch the impact of this decision on criminal prosecutions in Oklahoma won’t be significant because “only between 10 percent and 15 percent of its citizens identify as Native American.”

But Chief Justice Roberts’ dissent warns of the big impact of this case beyond the MCA. Specifically, tribes may regulate non-Indian conduct on reservation land in some instances and “impose certain taxes on non-Indians on reservation land.”

Justice Gorsuch acknowledges that “recognizing the existence of the Creek Reservation for purposes of the MCA might potentially trigger a variety of federal civil statutes and rules.” He asks, “What are we to make of this? Some may find developments like these unwelcome, but from what we are told others may celebrate them.” **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

WENDY PIPER

Board Member
Commissioner
Grafton County, N.H.



PIPER

Number of years involved in NACo: One

Years in public service: Six

Occupation: County commissioner, retired college professor

Education: BA from Florida Atlantic University, English Major; MA from Florida Atlantic University, English; Ph. D. from Binghamton University, English and American Literature

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Being at my mother’s side during her passing.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: Abraham Lincoln, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Angela Merkel

My favorite way to relax is: Read or exercise

I’m most proud of: Raising my beautiful son, who’s now 17

Every morning I read: *The Valley News* (local newspaper) and a chapter from whatever book I’m reading at the time.

My motto is: “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.” I grew up in a Yankee family of very limited means and so I’m very frugal. It was a double whammy!

The last book I read was: *Earning the Rockies: How Geography Shapes America’s Role in the World* by Robert D. Kaplan

My favorite movie is: *Crimes of the Heart*, starring Jessica Lange, Sissy Spacek and Diane Keaton

My favorite music is: 1970s rock and pop!

My favorite U.S. president is: Abraham Lincoln. Even outside of his professional achievements, I admire his personal story of growing up on the frontier and becoming self-educated. His was a story of true grit and hard work.

My county is a NACo member because: NACo provides invaluable help and resources to Grafton County. The legislative advocacy, affiliate organizations and educational opportunities help us to better serve our community.



A dream I have is to:
Visit Norway— ever since I wrote a Christmas story about Norway when I was in the eighth grade. I did a lot of research!

Tell Your Story

TALK TO

CN

CountyNews

WRITERS...

email us at cnews@naco.org
and we'll be in touch.

Looking forward to hearing from you, }
Mary Ann, Charlie and Rachel }

New international trade deal impacts local economies, workforce, housing

by Daria Daniel

On July 1, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) became effective, officially replacing the former North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) governing international trade between the United States, Mexico and Canada. Enactment of the trade deal follows Congress' passage and President Trump's approval of the USMCA Implementation Act (H.R. 5430/S. 3052) in January 2020. Mexico ratified the agreement in June 2019, followed by Canada in March of this year.

The new agreement makes sweeping changes to the current international trade system and offers updates to NAFTA outlined below, that would impact counties as key players in promoting local economies, workforce readiness and housing affordability. Major highlights of the USMCA trade deal for counties include:

New supports for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME): USMCA is the first-ever U.S. trade agreement to include a chapter on increasing trade opportunities for SMEs. The deal establishes new information-sharing tools aimed at helping SMEs improve their understanding of trade rules in specific global regions. USMCA also eliminates the local presence requirement for cross-border service providers, which could ease the burden of opening a physical foreign office for small business. To ensure stakeholder engagement in these processes, USMCA also creates a committee on small business issues that

includes government leaders from each member country.

These updates could be beneficial to counties, which work with state and local financial institutions to promote the viability and expansion of small businesses in our communities.

NACo supports the use of county partnerships with entrepreneurs and state and federal governments in improving small businesses' access to business planning resources, advisory networks and financing opportunities.

Update to rules of origin: USMCA makes updates to NAFTA's rules of origin for several products, including auto parts and industrial products such as glass, chemicals and optical fibers.

These rules determine where and how much of a good are produced in a given country and, in the content of USMCA, aim to provide incentives to "source goods and materials in the United States and North America."

Under the new agreement, for instance, the percentage of a vehicle's parts produced in the U.S. must equal 75 percent, up from 62.5 percent under NAFTA, to qualify for tariff exemptions. In some cases, USMCA links the updated rules of origin to new wage requirements. For example, 40 percent of an automobile and 45 percent of a light truck must be produced using an average labor wage of \$16/hour. This provision could help companies attract skilled local workers, while ensuring individual earn appropriate wages— a priority for counties as partners with federal and state governments in

the national workforce system.

Update to intellectual property rules: The new trade agreement makes updates to intellectual property protections under NAFTA with the goal of increasing the global economic competitiveness of North American firms. In addition to creating a Committee on Intellectual Property Rights, USMCA streamlines trademark application procedures and makes information on a range of intellectual property issues available online.

The trade agreement also updates NAFTA to include new rules for digital trade, such as prohibiting customs and duties on products distributed electronically (e.g., videos, software and music).

Other changes under USMCA could impact counties: For instance, according to an initial analysis by Housing Wire, the trade agreement's price stabilization measures for construction materials could help improve the housing shortage in the United States. Housing availability and affordability are major priorities for counties, which play a central role in determining funding streams and zoning strategies for housing.

Next steps on USMCA implementation

Although the new agreement took hold July 1, next steps on its implementation remain uncertain as governments and manufacturers transition away from NAFTA and bring their policies into compliance with USMCA's new rules. The trade deal's enactment could also be complicated by the economic recession

brought on by COVID-19 and the costs of addressing the pandemic for federal, state and local governments, as well as companies.

More information on USMCA can be found on the U.S. Trade Representative landing page. NACo will continue to engage with federal partners to represent the county perspective as implementation of the trade deal moves forward. [CN](#)

Daria Daniel is an associate legislative director in NACo's Government Affairs Department; Valerie Brankovic, legislative associate, contributed to this article.

WORD SEARCH

RAVALLI COUNTY, MONTANA

Created by: Mary Ann Barton

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

BEVERAGES: The county is home to small craft breweries and wineries.

BITTERROOT: The county is located in the Bitterroot Valley, named for the Bitterroot flower.

COPPER: The late "copper king" Marcus Daly, an Irishman who made his fortune at a nearby mine, lived in a 24,000-square foot mansion in the county open for tours today.

COURTHOUSE: An early county courthouse built in 1900 is now home to Ravalli County Museum.

ELEVATION: The county is in the Mountain Time Zone and the elevation at its county seat in Hamilton is at 3,570 feet.

HAMILTON: The county seat for Ravalli County, it was founded by copper king Marcus Daly.

HISTORY: The county was created in 1893 by the legislature, annexing a portion of Missoula County.

LYME: The scientist who discovered Lyme disease, the late Wilhelm "Willy" Burgdorfer, is from the county.

MOUNTAINS: The county is bordered by the Sapphire and Bitterroot mountains.

PRIEST: The county is named for an Italian priest, Antony Ravalli, who came to the Bitterroot Valley in 1845.

RECREATION: Residents and visitors enjoy mountain biking, fly-fishing, hiking, rock-climbing and wild-life-watching.

RESEARCH: The county is home to at least two biological research labs: Rocky Mountain Laboratories and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

TEMPERATURES: In July, the average high temperature is 85 degrees; the average low is 50.2 degrees.

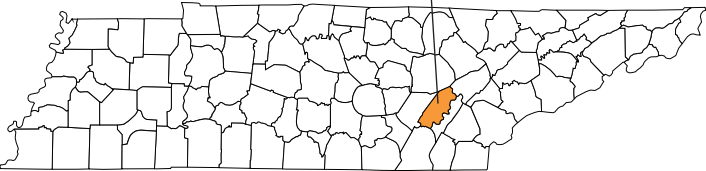
WILDLIFE: Some of the wildlife found in the county includes whitetail deer, mule deer, elk, ducks, pheasant and geese.

YELLOWSTONE: The county is a backdrop for the popular TV series "Yellowstone," starring Kevin Costner; Chief Joseph Ranch stands in as Dutton Ranch.



GET TO KNOW...

Rhea County, Tenn.



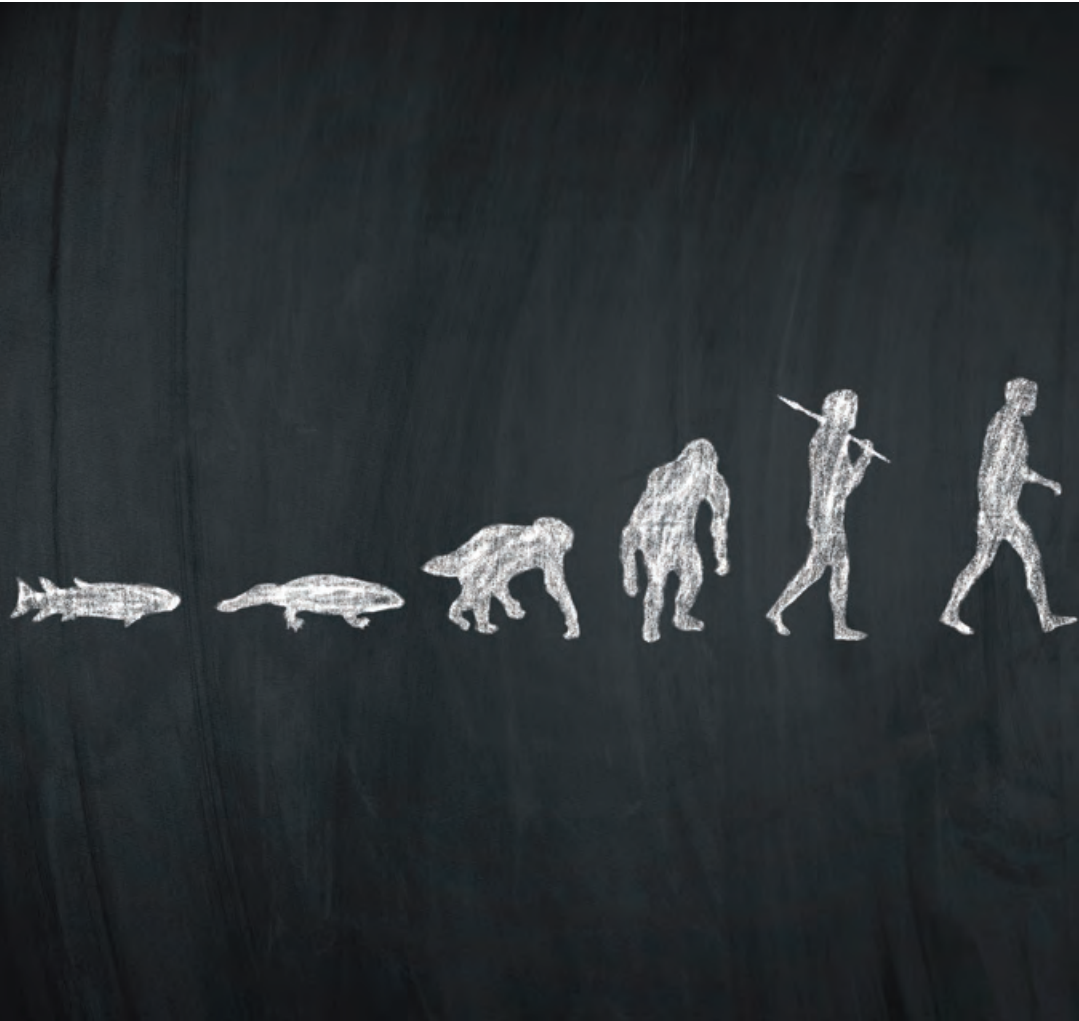
Welcome, Rhea County, Tenn.

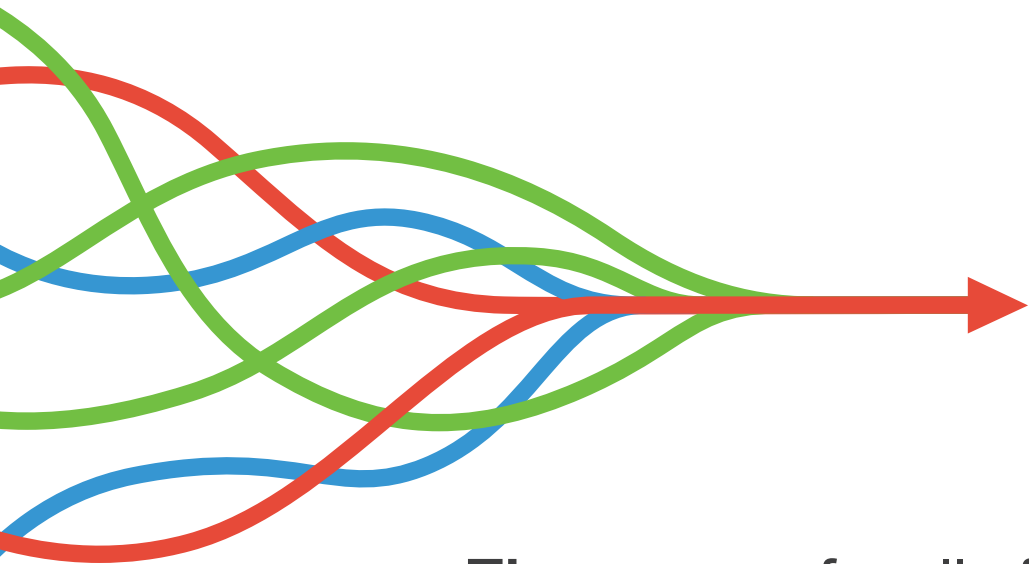
Located in eastern Tennessee, the county is named after John Rhea, a Tennessee politician and Revolutionary War veteran. The current population is around 31,000 and the county’s three major cities are Dayton, Spring City and Graysville.


During the Civil War, the county had the only female cavalry company consisting of teenagers who called themselves the Rhea County Spartans. The company delivered care packages to the family members of those in the military.

Dayton, the county seat, is

known for the **1925 Scopes trial, known as the “trial of the century.” The trial was one of the first highly publicized events involving teaching evolution in public schools.** It involved John Scopes, a science teacher, who was prosecuted for teaching evolution in a Tennessee public school in violation of the Butler Act, which made teaching evolution illegal. Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100. The Rhea County Courthouse where the trial was held is a National Historic Landmark and the Rhea Heritage and Scopes Trial Museum is located in its basement.









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BRIGHT IDEAS | SAN DIEGO COUNTY, Calif.

Open Data Portal Brings Transparency to County Medical Examiner's Office

PROBLEM:

The medical examiner's office staff faced an increased workload responding to public records requests and had a limited ability to analyze data surrounding deaths.

SOLUTION:

Release records and standardize data using an accessible portal where information can easily be obtained by the public.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

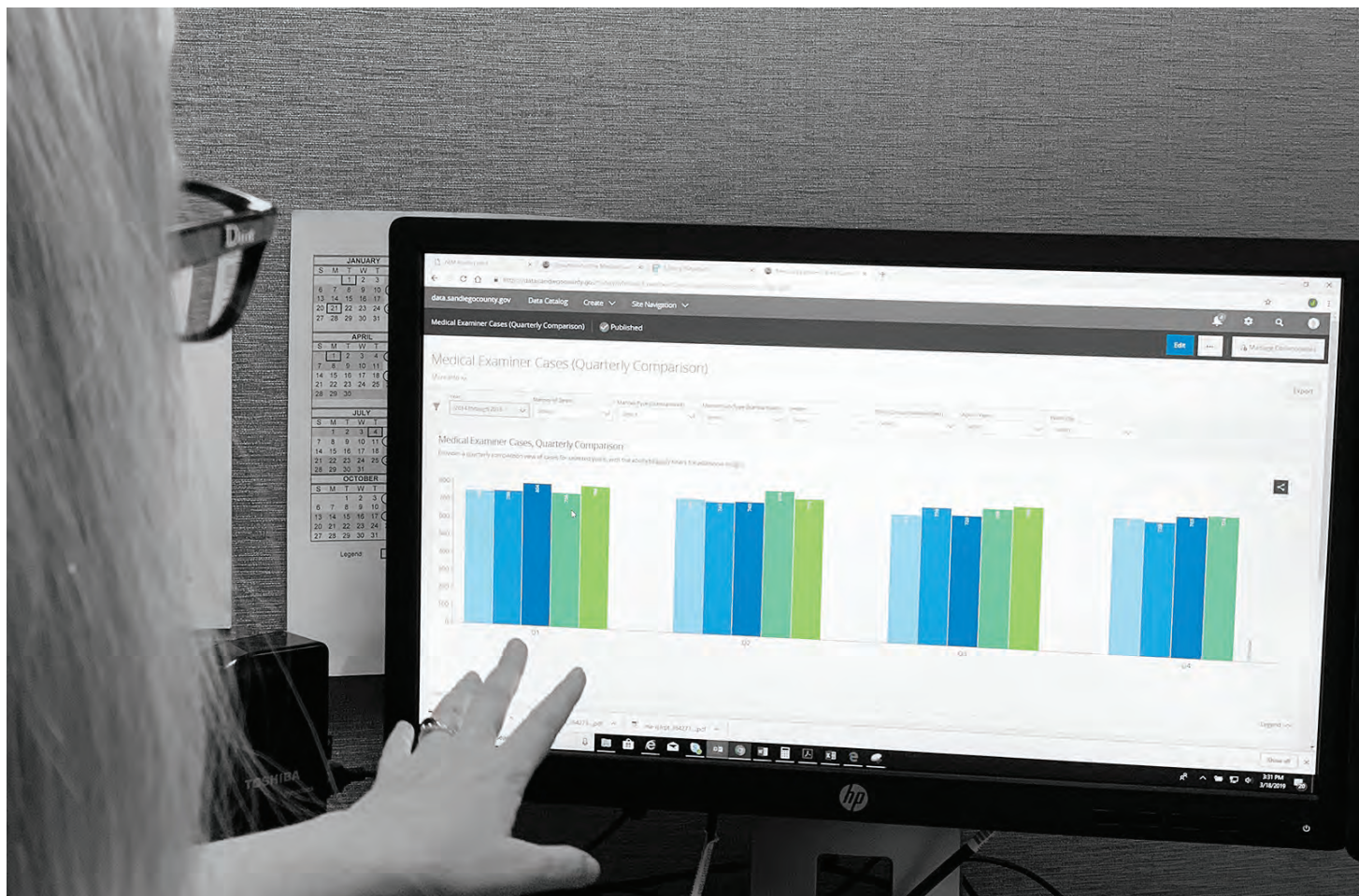
It was a significant undertaking for Jennifer Effie to organize more than 60,000 records at the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office, but she knew it would be helpful to the community.

Effie, a San Diego County group program manager, standardized all of the data for the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Open Data Portal.

The medical examiner released more than 22 years of death record information in 2019 to the searchable public internet portal. The portal makes data available to the public, members of the media and other agencies who can take a closer look at its information and provide insights or analyses to improve public health and safety.

The office processes 5,000 requests for information each year by researchers, policy makers and other members of the general public who are all looking for more details as to how or why someone died. The portal reduced the amount of time the department takes to respond to Public Records Act requests, saving an average of 15 hours in staff time per month.

Chief Deputy Medical Examiner Steven Campman said organizations often seek specific information related to deaths.



Jennifer Effie, group program manager with San Diego County's Public Safety Group, points to information on the Open Data Portal. Photo courtesy of County News Center

He described how law enforcement agencies use the data to see if there are certain drugs in specific parts of the county.

"Each decedents' information is valuable to our community," he said. "How people die and recognizing how people die is very important to knowing how we can prevent further deaths or protect the public's health."

Effie said it was a major undertaking to prepare the information for the portal. Instead of making only five or 10 years of data available, Effie opted to incorporate every available electronic record.

To ensure all records on the portal were accurate, Effie read through individual cases to check the accuracy of each case.

San Diego County already had a contract for the platform that houses the medical examiner's open data portal. The data has been viewed over 16,000 times and downloaded

'We didn't just push out the data, we also did custom visualizations...to answer trend questions.'

- Jennifer Effie
San Diego County

nearly 600 times.

While working on the project, Effie handled all public records act requests.

"I could continue to learn what's important to the media, what's important to the public, what are they wanting to see in this and how can I develop this in a way that they're going to be able to go to one place to get a majority of the information they need," she said.

Effie said internal stakeholders also benefited from the project because the portal gave better insight into what was going on in the community.

"Behavioral health [services] is able to access it, our emergency medical services access it, we look at it on a regular basis as we provide information to our board of supervisors," she explained.

Prior to the creation of the portal, the medical examiner would release information once a year through an annual report. Now, reports are released every quarter with a summary highlighting the latest findings.

Campman said the portal provides information in a timely manner and is more accessible and user friendly.


"Being able to localize if there's a certain part of the county where there are many pedestrian fatalities may allow decision-makers the ability to change traffic patterns or safety measures around the areas where the pedestrians are most likely to be killed," he said.

Effie created charts and graphs to help users understand

demographics, age groupings and ethnic groups related to deaths. She said the most commonly requested information is for drug overdose cases.

"We didn't just push out the data, we also did custom visualizations that helped to immediately answer trend questions," Effie said.

The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Open Data Portal can be viewed here <https://bit.ly/306T5dj>.

"It's an effort for government transparency, which in these times especially, is really important," Campman added. "I just think it's a really good thing for agencies, coroners and medical examiners to be able to do if they can to help with transparency." 

San Diego County's Medical Examiner's Open Data Portal is the recipient of a best in category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Information Technology category.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

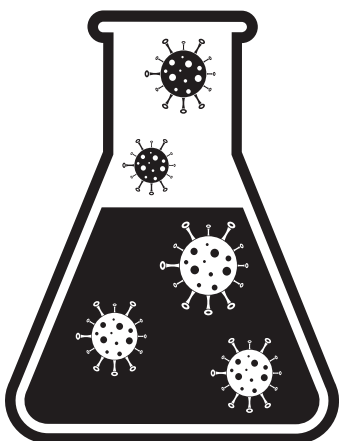
Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a pandemic budget that allows the **withholding of \$2.5 billion from cities and counties** if they do not follow rules implemented by the state aimed to stop the spread of the coronavirus, *The Sacramento Bee* reported. The \$202 billion budget with emergency pandemic funding gives Newsom the ability to withhold money from counties that do not follow orders to roll back reopening steps, such as reinstating stay-at-home orders, if directed by the state. Rules currently include a statewide mandate for wearing masks.

Supervisors in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** approved a **small business stimulus program** for both profit and non-profit businesses to apply for grant money. Businesses with fewer than 100 employees that are headquartered in the county are eligible for the program if they prove they experienced losses from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supervisors previously approved using \$17 million from the CARES Act to help restaurants and small businesses in May.

DELAWARE

The Public Works Department in **NEW CASTLE COUNTY** is searching for **samples of COVID-19 in wastewater**. The effort is in partnership with Biobot Analytics, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology startup that uses wastewater to estimate how many people in certain areas have the virus, determine if cases are increasing or decreasing and



MARYLAND

With the help of conservancy youth campers, **HOWARD COUNTY** named **Bee Balm their official pollinator plant**. The county became a certified "Bee City" last year and is committed to reducing pesticide use and creating habitats for pollinators throughout the county. Bee Balm, a type of flowering plant in the mint family, is attractive to bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. *Photo courtesy of Howard County Bee City*

locate hotspots. According to *Delaware Online*, the state coronavirus data dashboard reported nearly 5,500 positive cases of the virus as of June 26, while the Biobot estimate was over five times larger at nearly 29,000 positive cases as of June 24.

GEORGIA

Gov. Brian Kemp (R) issued an executive order July 15 explicitly banning counties and cities from enacting **mandates to wear masks**.

INDIANA

The Prosecutor's Office in **MADISON COUNTY** launched a new program using forensic interviews in cases of allegations of **abuse against the elderly**, the *Tribune-Star* reported.

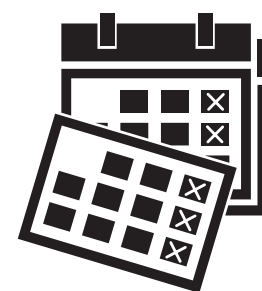
KANSAS

SEDGWICK COUNTY launched a new **online feature to track cases of COVID-19**. County officials are asking businesses to voluntarily report the number of employees who have tested positive for the virus each week. The online tracker aims to help monitor trends and identify hotspots, KWCH reported. Officials will post a weekly summary of cases after collecting the data.

MARYLAND

Local election officials in Maryland are asking Gov. Larry Hogan to reject the state board of elections option to **mail absentee ballot applications instead of absentee ballots** to voters for the November election. The letter calls for all ballots to be mailed directly to voters in September to ensure voters will have the ballots in a timely manner and allow local boards of elections to accurately tabulate the ballots. The letter also calls for increasing access to in-person voting centers during early voting.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY formed a **task force for police reform measures**. The task force will make recommendations on hiring, training and the use of force in policing. The task force's formation follows the resignation of the county's former police chief who resigned after a court filing portrayed a racist culture in the agency, the *Associated Press* reported.



MICHIGAN

JACKSON COUNTY is **closing all 17 departments on Fridays** in an effort to save money.

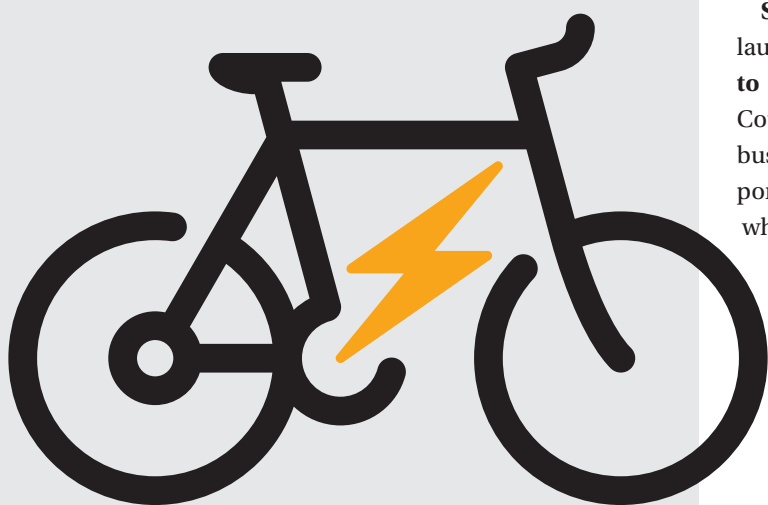
FLORIDA

County residents in **PALM BEACH COUNTY** are receiving a **package of face masks** from county officials that were paid for by using federal dollars. Two cloth and two disposable masks will be sent to each county resident following the county's mandatory mask order. The order came after the county and state experienced the largest one-day increase of new COVID-19 cases, *The Palm Beach Post* reported. Commissioners unanimously approved the mask mandate.



COLORADO

The **LARIMER COUNTY** Natural Resources Department is studying the **impacts of electric bikes** on natural surface trails throughout the county. The department currently prevents electric bikes and motorized vehicles on unpaved trails. Officials issued permits to a limited number of riders to study the public's perception on expanding motorized uses on the county's trails, the *Coloradoan* reported. Riders, trail users and community members will take surveys about the electric bikes throughout the study.



following a budget shortage from the COVID-19 outbreak. The closures are part of Michigan's Work Share Program and will last through August. The county is expected to save between \$300,000 to \$400,000, MLive.com reported.

NEW YORK

• When eight attendees at a house party tested positive for COVID-19, they refused to assist **ROCKLAND COUNTY**'s contact tracing team to help figure out who they were in close contact with, and might have infected. So, the county **subpoenaed** them. With \$2,000 fines hanging over their heads, all eight complied.

"I will not allow the health of our county to be compromised because of ignorance, stupidity or obstinance, or anything else," Ed Day, the county executive, said at a news conference, *The New York Times*

reported.

• If COVID-19 infections spike in **ULSTER COUNTY**, County Executive Pat Ryan has a contingency ready. The county's five-step **Rapid Response Plan** will identify cases through "robust" testing, followed by investigation and contact tracing, isolation or quarantine of affected individuals for at least 14 days, communication to the public and enforcement of the "New York Pause" order issued by Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D).



NORTH CAROLINA

WAKE COUNTY will be the first in the state to cele-

brate **Juneteenth** as a paid county holiday. The Board of Commissioners also declared that racism is a public health crisis, *The News & Observer* reported. The holiday commemorates June 19, 1865, when slaves in Galveston, Texas learned the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, and slavery had been outlawed, more than two and a half years earlier.

OHIO

CUYAHOGA COUNTY has set up a hotline to collect complaints about people and businesses not complying with Gov. Mike DeWine's (R) mask mandate. The county will record complaints issued by phone or via an online form. People can also file complaints directly with the Board of Health or their local governments, though County Executive Armand Budish told *The Plain*

Dealer that the county established its hotline to better allow the Board of Health to focus on contact tracing and testing rather than mask enforcement.

TEXAS

HARRIS COUNTY is tripling the number of people in its corps of **compliance monitors** to respond to complaints of businesses not following guidelines in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The county will consider the 10 additional temporary employees for full-time jobs. The county's five current monitors field roughly 50 calls per day, Click2Houston reported.

VIRGINIA

Aiming to reduce barriers to access for marginalized communities, **ARLINGTON COUNTY**'s public library will **stop assessing fines** on overdue materials. The library will

not waive fines accumulated before July 1, the local CBS affiliate reported. The elimination of fines will reduce the library's fine budget by an expected \$155,000 in anticipated revenue to \$10,000 in FY 2021.

News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. What has your county been up to? Let us know at cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.



MONROE COUNTY, FLA.

The Monroe County seal features an anchor in the center with a palm tree on the left and a conch shell on the right. The county, home to the Florida Keys, is the southernmost county in the United States, which is stated at the bottom of the seal. Waves represent the ocean in the seal's background.



The date of 1823, the year the county was established, is incorporated in the seal. In 1995, it was discovered that the incorrect date of 1824 was used on the seal and it was corrected.

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



PENNSYLVANIA

The shows went on for the **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** summer concert series, despite its in-person cancellation. The 10-show series will be recorded at two county parks for **broadcast** throughout the summer. The concerts will be televised on Sunday nights and then available on-demand through the county's YouTube and Facebook pages. Here, video crews film The Clarks. Photo courtesy of Allegheny County

the HR DOCTOR

by Stephenie Overman

Protecting Your County Employees From COVID-19

Counties are battling to protect their employees from the dangers of COVID-19. Some are providing free virus testing and face coverings and are taking steps to deep clean office buildings. It can be trickier to protect employees from members of the public who are angry about virus-related restrictions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines call for wearing a mask in public settings and observing social distancing to prevent infection, but there is no federal mandate requiring these practices. Some states and municipalities do have ordinances requiring face masks; the list changes as new hotspots develop around the United States.

Miami-Dade has provided a reusable face mask with filter for every county employee, noted Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez.

"We must set the example for our community. We must all take the precautions to reduce the spread of coronavirus COVID-19. By wearing a face mask, you are taking care of yourself, your family and your co-workers and our community," he said in a statement.

In the statement, he added: "As is the case with any dress code, it is expected that all face masks worn by Miami-Dade County employees are appropriate and represent Miami-Dade County well."

Angry citizens

Some county offices provide free disposable face coverings not only for employees but for anyone conducting business in county facilities so that they can comply with state or local ordinances.

But county employees everywhere have seen the videos and heard the stories of angry people who refuse to wear masks when they are required to do so in public: A Colorado worker who was shot by a customer

who refused the restaurant's request for customers to wear masks. A Target employee who suffered a broken arm in California during a fight with customers who refused to comply with a city ordinance.

And in Bexar County, Texas, a customer who refused requests to wear a mask slapped the hand of the county judge — who signed the county's mask order — when the judge tried to intervene in the dispute.

How can workers be equipped to handle tirades, and possibly assaults, from irate citizens in government offices?

In Morris County, N.J. government buildings are mostly closed to the public, Communications Director Larry Ragonese said July 8. But there are sheriff's officers and security officers at each building and "they would enforce requirement of use of face coverings by anyone entering or in the buildings."

It's not just law enforcement officials who should know how to handle irate, potentially violent people, according to Oscar Villanueva, managing director

of Security Services for R3 Continuum.

Employees in all types of settings should receive training on how to defuse workplace conflicts.

"It's important to socialize all

"It's important to socialize all employees in what hostility is, and how to respond," said Villanueva.

employees in what hostility is, and how to respond," said Villanueva, who consults with organizations on crisis response and workplace violence preparedness.

He offers tips for any worker who feels threatened by a member of the public:

- Communicate your concerns professionally. Keep in mind that it is not personal.
- Reference the safety needs of both parties reminding people, "Wearing a mask is a good

idea to keep us both safe from infection."

- Work to understand their position and show empathy with comments such as, "I understand wearing a mask is uncomfortable, it takes a while to get used to it."

- Ask for the person's help in resolving the issue.

- Present alternatives to defuse the issue. If applicable, say, "They are hard to come by, but I happen to have an extra mask you can use today."

- Seek assistance from a manager or superior.

In addition to providing conflict-resolution training, another way to reassure employees that their safety is important is to make sure that proper cleaning procedures are being followed.

Beyond routine janitorial services, employees should see that high-traffic-area cleaning is being done and that deep cleaning is performed after any known or suspected COVID-19 case in a facility.

Disability claims

Managers and supervisors should be mindful of employ-

ees who have health-related concerns. Counties may face claims from employees who say they have disabilities that prevent them from safely wearing masks and officials need to provide clear guidance for handling such claims.

Alameda County, Calif., for example, states that exceptions to the requirement will be made and a face covering will not be required if:

- A medical professional has advised that wearing a face-covering may pose a risk to the person wearing it for health-related reasons. The guidelines require that documentation from a medical provider be provided to the employee's supervisor;
- Wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines. **CN**

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

