

## Partnership gives Va., Miss. counties chances to grow

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

A fire truck Holmes County, Miss. received from its “sister county” agreement with Loudoun County, Va. recently came to the rescue in a profound way — it helped save the home of the person who spearheaded the effort — former Holmes County Supervisor Ed-die Carthan.

“My house caught on fire, and it was that fire truck that put it out,” Carthan said. “I said, ‘Isn’t that something?’”

While the second floor of Carthan’s home was badly damaged, everyone was able to get out safely and he is currently living on the first floor, he said.

His daughter Edelia created a GoFundMe page to help repair the home, which has raised over \$4,500 of its \$15,000 goal.

The sister county agreement came from a discussion Carthan had with Loudoun County Chair-at-Large Phyllis J. Randall at a NACo conference in 2019, but it wasn’t finalized until 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Loudoun County has one of the highest median household incomes in the country at about \$150,000, while Holmes

County is among the lowest at about \$24,000, according to the 2020 Census.

“Being one of the poorest counties in the United States, it was my intention to go outside to get assistance,” Carthan said.

Prior to the meeting in Washington, D.C., Carthan called Randall, who he had never met, to ask for a fire truck, Randall said.

“It caught me off guard because, well, it’s a fire truck,” Randall said.

“And he said that they literally don’t have [one] because they can’t afford it. So, we talked about how houses were catching fire and burning to the ground, and in the talking, what I realized right away is that this amazing man was really humbling himself by reaching out to help his citizens... I was just blown away by the courage and humility it took to make that phone call.”

Holmes County bought the 2008 Pierce pumper fire engine, which would be about \$700,000 new, for \$25,000 and Loudoun fire officials brought it down to Mississippi in April, said Keith H. Johnson, Loudoun County Fire and Rescue chief.

The county had replaced the truck, which holds 500 gallons

*See AGREEMENT page 4*



**Lee County, Fla. Chair Cecil Pendergrass surveys damage last week after Hurricane Ian made landfall there Sept. 28 packing 155-MPH winds. Photo courtesy of Lee County**

## Florida counties dig out from Hurricane Ian

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

Counties in southwest Florida are picking up the pieces after Hurricane Ian made landfall Sept. 28 near Cayo Costa Island in Lee County packing 155-MPH winds.

The deadly Category 4 storm

is being blamed for dozens of deaths across Florida, with many in Lee County.

“We’re hoping to find more survivors, we’re still in that process, it’s going to be a long road,” said Lee County Chair Cecil Pendergrass, at a news conference last week streamed live on the county’s Facebook

page.

President Biden visited areas decimated by the storm last week. Pendergrass took a call from the president before the visit, with FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell also on the call. They told the commission-

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### OCTOBER IS CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

## Do your part: #BeCyberSmart

by **Rita Reynolds**

It’s that time of year again when we recognize and focus on cybersecurity. In its 19th year, recognized by the U.S. president and Congress, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the National Cybersecurity Alliance (NCA) lead a collaborative effort between

government and industry to raise cybersecurity awareness nationally and internationally during the month of October.

Each year focuses on a different theme. This year’s theme is “See Yourself in Cyber.” Cyber protection isn’t just the responsibility of the technology professionals, it is a responsibility and a personal duty of everyone.

On an individual level, there are basic steps one should take to protect yourself online, while you travel, and when you conduct various transactions. Retailers, vendors, manufacturers and other suppliers are responsible for safeguarding the products they build, deliver and make available to us.

*See CYBERSMART page 4*



‘We’re going to have long-term effects here for the next few years’



Residents and pets evacuate from Pine Island in Lee County, Fla. after Hurricane Ian made landfall there Sept. 28. Photo courtesy of Lee County

From IAN page 1

er how they plan to support the county including search

and rescue efforts, power restoration and helping address challenges faced by local hospitals and damage to roads and

bridges. The president was set to visit Florida on Wednesday.

Other immediate concerns for Lee County included regaining power and water in some areas, removing debris from roadways and working with the Coast Guard to avoid an environmental disaster from oil and gas spills in the water from wrecked boats.

Some of the actions taken by the county after the storm included:

- Setting up eight distribution points for free food and water for residents impacted by the storm.
- Making transportation accessible to all courtesy of rides from the county sheriff’s office, the National Guard and LeeTran, the county transit bus.
- Keeping shelters open.
- Creating a “pop up” building permit center, where the county could issue building permits on the spot for things like roofs, fences, wells and water heaters.
- Setting up a staging area at

a local sports complex for first responders.

- Creating public drop-off sites for debris.
- Coordinating with the University of Florida mobile veterinary team to assist residents and their pets to offer medical care and pet food.

In addition to Lee Coun-



Lee County, Fla. Chair Cecil Pendergrass

ty, Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Lee and Sarasota counties also took a punch from the storm.

Lee County Manager Roger Desjarlais fielded a question from a reporter at the news conference about the county’s evacuation procedures, after the county was criticized for holding off on evacuation orders until just a day before the storm hit.

“Decisions for evacuation are based on the best information given at the time,” he said, noting that shifting forecasts from a number of different models had the storm making landfall in the Florida Panhandle or Big Bend area, and then Hillsborough County.

“It’s unfortunate,” Desjarlais said, that so many county residents decided not to take cover in county shelters, noting that “only 4,000 showed up. We had room for 40,000.”

“It’s regretful, no one feels worse than we do,” he said.

“Lee County hasn’t been hit by a storm like this ever,” he said. “You have to go back to the 1960s to a storm that even remotely caused this kind of damage...in modern history we haven’t had a storm like this. People become complacent.”

“Had I been living on a barrier island, where we had a 10-foot storm surge prediction and a Category 3? I would have gotten off the island. People should have vacated the barrier islands.”

Pendergrass noted that county officials and employees have their hands full now with recovery efforts.

“We’re going to have long term effects here for the next few years,” he said. “We were already struggling with housing and affordable housing. People are displaced and going to be looking for jobs.” **CN**

# SNAP/STATS

## MOST POPULAR HALLOWEEN CANDY

REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER CUP	TWIX	SNICKERS	KITKAT	BUTTERFINGER
1	2	3	4	5

Source: Thrillist



# Santa Clara County, Calif. offers immigrants ‘New Americans Fellowship’

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Through Santa Clara County, Calif.’s New Americans Fellowship, immigrants and children of immigrants conduct equity and social justice research to advise the county on how it can best serve its immigrant population. This year’s cohort, the county’s sixth of the fellowship, had 14 fellows.

“Santa Clara County has a lot of immigrant rights, immigrant serving organizations, but as a county, it wasn’t necessarily the lens that we were always using around, ‘How are the decisions that we’re making as a government impacting one of our most disenfranchised communities?’” said Zelica Rodriguez-Deams, director of Santa Clara County’s Office of Immigrant Relations.

“And so, we really wanted to bring it internally to have students look at our processes, policies, services and programs and offer insight and recommendations, so that we could do better.”

Lupe Vasquez, a UC Merced graduate and 2022 New Americans fellow, heard about the

fellowship through the MVLA Scholars program, which serves low-income first-generation college students from Mountain View and Los Altos, Calif. As a DACA recipient, Vasquez said the fellowship gave her a sense of community.

“It was my first time being in a room with people who were all also like me— either a DACA recipient or had their experience of being immigrants while also being young,” Vasquez said.

“A lot of the times throughout the educational system, I felt alone or I felt like I couldn’t really relate to my other peers, so seeing other folks have similar values to me of caring for the immigration population and the topics that affects them, really influenced me a lot and motivated me a lot to keep on fighting, keep on finding different ways to not only talk about the issues the immigrant community faces, but also the importance of how to uplift other people’s stories.”

San Francisco has a similar program that Santa Clara originally looked at when it was creating the fellowship, but it goes beyond the scope of coun-

ties, while Santa Clara was extremely intentional about staying county-focused, Rodriguez-Deams said. Out of the 63 fellows that have participated in the program, at least 10 are currently working for Santa Clara County, according to Rodriguez-Deams.

“One of the reasons why we continue to have this program is because we are seeing that there are more folks who are getting the opportunity to work in the county, but also we are seeing that the county is more responsive to the immigrant community, whether that be through community education and outreach, resources, immigrant services — there’s more of that lens,” Rodriguez-Deams said. “And we’re hoping that the more that we do this program, the more we’ll be able to see that immigrant

belonging infused throughout the county.”

Throughout the 10-week fellowship, fellows receive an introduction into what the office of immigrant relations does, learn historical context

and data about immigrant populations in the county, learn research practices from San Jose State professors, are assigned a county mentor and create a final project and presentation on their research that provides recommendations to the county, Vasquez said.

Two and a half years ago, the fellowship shifted from focusing on multiple projects with many recommendations to one project with clear and concrete recommendations, Rodriguez-Deams said.

“I said, ‘Well, what if it was actually a group project? Would we be able to have more robust research and have more

concrete recommendations?’ Because one of the things that we saw was that there were so many recommendations coming out that it was hard to track progress on whether or not people were taking that research and implementing anything or shifting anything.

“[Now], we do a lot of issue analysis, like what are the issues impacting the immigrant community? What are the root causes? What does the data say? Who can you talk to that can inform you about this issue?”

The focus of this year’s research project was around shifting the anti-immigrant narrative that has come out of the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic, Rodriguez-Deams said.

“We know that our community has been isolated [by] a lot of the anti-immigrant rhetoric, a lot of our communities have been scapegoated,” Rodriguez-Deams said. “We wanted to focus on how do we talk about our community in a way that we’re talking about immigrants and their contributions to cultural enrichment in Santa Clara County.”

The fellowship’s final project “Stories Within Us: Contributions of Immigrants in Santa Clara County,” featured 16 stories of people who had immigrated to Santa Clara County from all over the world, including Iran, Zambia, Laos and Mexico. The fellows collaborated with Kooltura, a local multicultural marketing company that places an emphasis on elevating diverse voices and stories, to design the booklet.

“Since we wanted to focus on changing the narratives of immigration stories, we wanted to expand on communities more than the Latino community, because we felt that the Latin X or the Latino community often was talked about a lot more when it came to immigration issues and they were kind of put as the face of immigration issues,” Vasquez said. “But part



**Multicultural marketing company Kooltura worked with the fellows to design the “Stories Within Us” magazine.**



**The 2022 New Americans cohort poses with their fellowship certificates. (Front row, l-r): Lupe Vasquez; Maria Montoya; Madeline Qu; Carmen Ochoa; Karla Venegas García; Natali Zepeda and Andrea Castro. (Back row, l-r): Isaac Zhang; Enrique Rojas Sanchez; Naz Nawabi; Juan Beltran; Britany Gutierrez; Juan Coronado and Victor Landaverde. Photo courtesy of Santa Clara County**



# Counties exchange knowledge, equipment

From AGREEMENT page 1

of water and can transport four firefighters, with a newer model.

"We gave it to them fully loaded with hoses and nozzles and equipment and all that, and then we sent my battalion chief and one of our mechanics down there to actually train their staff on it," he said.

Johnson recently offered to have Holmes County Fire Services come up to Loudoun County's training academy and is hoping to have firefighters from the two counties come together, he said.

"Chair Randall and her staff and the other supervisors we met embraced us well, and her fire chief, when they came down to bring the truck, it was awesome," Holmes County Supervisor Debra Mabry said. "They were elated to share this with us, and all of the volunteer fire departments around our county were there that day to see the official signing [of the agreement], which was special."

It was important to Randall from that first call that the relationship between the two counties was reciprocal, she said.

"I said to Mr. Carthan, 'We can form a relationship, and I will do my very best to get you what you need if you agree to let me call you when I need to or talk to you or advise me and if you can tell me what your county is doing and how they're making it on that in-

come.'

"I said, 'So, this cannot be a one-way relationship where we give you something. What you will give me is your time and your knowledge and allow me to learn from you.'"

As part of the mutually beneficial agreement, in return for some of the resources, like the fire truck, that Loudoun can provide, Holmes County will help the county with agricultural practices, Mabry said.

"When we took the fire truck down to Holmes County, we found out that the county is trying to do something called hydroponic growing," Randall said.

"They have a man down there [Calvin Head, director of Mileston Cooperative Association] who's pretty much an expert on how to do that, but we're just starting that process of doing hydroponic growing. So now, Holmes County is helping us by giving us knowl-

edge and insight."

Randall said her first conversation with Carthan led her to reach out to NACo Executive Director Matt Chase, which resulted in the creation of the Economic Mobility Leadership Network (EMLN) in 2019.

Loudoun and Holmes counties are two of 26 counties across the country in the EMLN, which examines economic mobility issues including housing affordability, workforce development and access to technology.

"It's concerning for me that in one country we have some counties where the median income is \$24,000 and some counties where the median income is \$151,000, and there are counties that can't afford to have a fire truck," Randall said. "So, I said, 'This can't just be about Loudoun County and Holmes County — this has to be a bigger discussion that goes to a higher level.'" **CN**



Loudoun County, Va. Chair Phyllis Randall and Holmes County, Miss. Board of Supervisors President Leonard Hampton sign "Sister County" agreement.



Pictured above: A Loudoun County, Va. firetruck donated to Holmes County, Miss. in "Sister County" agreement. Photo courtesy of Loudoun County

## It's Cybersecurity Awareness Month!

From CYBERSMART page 1

And, of course, those in the IT (Information Technology) profession have the responsibility to implement the tools and best practices to protect critical data and the systems in which it resides.

While CISA and NCA are focusing this year's education on the critical action steps listed below, I will take it another step further. Each week (through CN Now), I will explain what that action step is, why you should care and what you can

- Recognizing and Reporting Phishing - If a link looks a little off, think before you click.

- Updating Your Software - Don't delay; act promptly if you see a software updated notification.

In the meantime, let me leave you with valuable resources that will help guide you in this cyber journey.

### Education for protecting yourself on a personal level

- Resources + Guides - National Cybersecurity Alliance



do to improve the protection of yourself and the critical data you touch every day. Throughout October, I will be sharing best practices, resources and recommendations to help all of us fulfill those responsibilities.

- Enabling Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) - You need more than a password to protect your online accounts, and enabling MFA makes you significantly less likely to get hacked.

- Using Strong Passwords - Use long, unique, and randomly generated passwords.

([staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org)) is a collection of digital resources that provide education in cyber awareness, both in your work and personal life

**Call to action:** Become a Cybersecurity Awareness Month Champion. Visit CISA's campaign partner, National Cybersecurity Alliance, to sign up for their campaign updates, newsletter, and more! **CN**

Reynolds is the chief information officer at NACo, overseeing the internal technology operations of the association.

## Program connects immigrants

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of changing the narrative was explaining that immigrants are such a big group that they are way more than a Latino population, and we really tried our best to try to reach out to different ethnicities, different races."

Vasquez interviewed Linda Yang, a Chinese immigrant and former New Americans fellow, about learning to celebrate her Asian identity in the United States and the way she uses food to share her culture.

One of the main things Vasquez took away from the project was how valuable the everyday experiences of immigrant communities are, she said.

"Even just them existing is

so significant and so important," Vasquez said. "Because every day they wake up, they go to work in order to provide for their families or for themselves, and they have to experience certain things that maybe to them is normal, but when they talk about it or when you talk to them about it, they're like, 'Oh, maybe this isn't how things should be.'"

The recommendations the fellows presented to the county this year were continuing to shift the anti-immigrant narrative, establishing a county-wide anti-displacement strategy, having authentic decision-making and creating a universal income program and a "no wrong door" approach to services. **CN**



# Ranked choice voting remains a rarity in county-level races

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

A special election for a congressional seat in Alaska this summer caught national attention in part because of the twists resulting from the state's debut of a ranked-choice voting system.

A ranked-choice voting system is an electoral system in which voters rank candidates by preference on their ballots. If a candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, he or she is declared the winner. If no candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated. First-preference votes cast for the failed candidate are eliminated, lifting the second-preference choices indicated on those ballots. A new tally is conducted to determine whether any candidate has won a majority of the adjusted votes. The process is repeated until a candidate wins an outright majority.

For all of the flair that the Alaska race brought to the elections discourse, the system has been slow to spread to county-level races, and in one case did not last long at the county level.

When nine Salt Lake County, Utah municipalities chose ranked choice voting for their elections in 2021, one race in particular showed Clerk Sherrie Swensen where the system broke down in her state.

"We discovered there were problems with our statute, not with the ranked choice process

itself," she said. "Utah did not have an option to rank only two or three candidates, you could rank as many candidates as you wanted."

Fortunately, five mayoral candidates dropped out, letting the system operate under the wire.

"If we had all 13 candidates who file stay in the race, we would not have the ability with the current system to lay them out and have the choices," Swensen said.

Ranked choice system creates an instant runoff, where, if no candidate garners more than 50 percent of the votes, the candidate with the fewest number of votes is eliminated and that candidate's votes



**Benton County, Ore. produced an educational video teaching voters how to use the ranked choice system in 2020.**

are distributed to the voters' second choice. Voters select candidates in order of their preference.

Proponents tout potential cost savings from not having to conduct separate run-off elections and an increased sense of civility in campaigns. Critics say the process is complicated and requires involved educa-

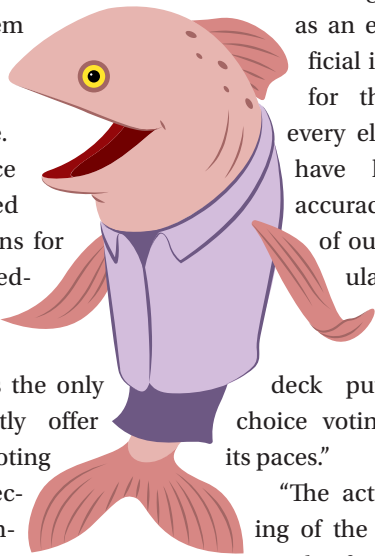
tional outreach to teach voters a new system and some contend that runoff elections are valuable. Most ranked choice systems in the United States serve elections for city, municipal or federal roles.

Thus far, Benton County, Ore. is the only county to currently offer ranked choice voting for county-level elections, though counties in Hawaii will be able to use the system to fill county council vacancies starting in 2023.

Multnomah County, Ore.; King, Clark and San Juan counties in Washington and Arlington County, Va. are considering adopting ranked choice voting, with voters in several counties making the decision in November.

Benton County first used the system for two county commissioner races in 2021, but in Clerk James Morales' estimation, the races were anticlimactic because the winners both claimed a majority on the first ballot. But the process of preparing the electorate to rank their choices, Morales said, was valuable in and of itself.

"We did receive some pilot funding from the state of Oregon to help with the cost for educating voters and to implement it," he said. "One of



the challenges for me as an election official is prepping for that...before every election, we have logic and accuracy testing of our vote tabulation, so creating that test deck puts ranked choice voting through its paces."

"The actual counting of the ballots after the fact, that the voters have marked submitted, that's pretty much the easy part."

Swensen said Utah's vote-by-mail system would make wider adoption of ranked choice voting impractical, based solely on the amount of paper it would require.

"The vote for the Sandy City mayor, it took up the whole page of a 14-inch ballot," she said. "The real estate on a ranked choice contest is very large, so if we try to apply that to our regular elections, for example, this time, for this election we have a double-sided 19-inch ballot and three columns. If we try to apply that in a vote by mail election and use ranked choice and those contest, I don't even know how many pages it would be."

Pierce County, Wash. was an early adopter of ranked choice voting in 2006, but voters ended the experiment in 2009 after two elections with the system. The Sightline Institute reported that a court restoration of top-two primaries, the ranked-choice system was unnecessary. The cost of writing new rules, purchasing new equipment and printing twice as many ballots was also a deterrent. **CN**

## SAMPLE BALLOT

	1st CHOICE	2nd CHOICE	3rd CHOICE
Sally Salmon	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bill Beaver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Frieda Tree Frog	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olivia Otter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Santiago Sturgeon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



# New initiative focuses on coal-centered communities



A barge pushes coal containers on the Ohio River.

by Jennifer Kuiper

NACo is pleased to announce the launch of the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities (BRECC) initiative. Through the support of the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the American Rescue Plan funding, the BRECC initiative will create a knowledge-sharing and peer-learning community of practice to empower local leaders and other champions to develop new ideas, approaches and fundable projects as coal communities seek to retool local and regional economies.

“Counties play a key role in fostering conditions for economic strength and positioning our economies for the future,” said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase. “We are pleased to lead this initiative to help communities overcome coal-related economic challenges, and we thank the EDA for investing in our local economic resilience.”

NACo is excited to partner

with the West Virginia Community Development Hub and Colorado-based Community Builders to develop this national network and support forum. A cross-sector Advisory Council of government, business and nonprofit experts will ensure BRECC activities and resources reflect the pressing needs and emerging opportunities for BRECC participants. The BRECC team will build on previous NACo and partner programming and efforts to convene and support coal-reliant communities through four core activity areas:

- BRECC National Network of local, state and national stakeholders focused on coal communities
- The coalition of 20 local government leaders building a peer-to-peer learning leadership network
- Team-based challenge cohorts receiving coaching and individual capacity building for 15 coal communities
- Storytelling campaign to share local experiences with a national audience

## BRECC National Network

The BRECC National Network is an open forum and peer network connecting coal community leaders representing local governments, regional organizations, community nonprofits, education and workforce providers, utilities, private business and other local stakeholders. The BRECC network bi-monthly virtual learning and coordinating sessions will feature issue-specific presentations, peer breakout discussions, community case examples and critical funding and resources available to coal communities.

In addition to these virtual discussions, NACo will hold in-person workshops at our national conferences.

## The coalition

The BRECC coalition is a network of local leaders dedicated to advancing economic development and community revitalization initiatives and sharing their experiences with peers nationwide. Through the coalition, up to 20 individual

leaders will be selected to participate in this peer-learning and capacity building network. Participants will travel to four coal communities across the country, while forming valuable collaborative relationships and sharing strategies through regular virtual discussions. More information on the application period and timeline for the coalition will be forthcoming.


## The challenge

Building on NACo's past programming in support of coal-reliant communities and BRECC partner expertise, the challenge will work with selected coal communities to provide in-depth, individual coaching and mentoring. There will be two challenge cohorts, each receiving support for 12 months to create an implementable action plan for economic diversification and community revitalization. The challenge application will call for communities to form cross-sector and multidisciplinary teams of both government and non-government community leaders. In partic-

ular, the challenge will prioritize applicants representing under-resourced communities in the early stages of economic diversification planning with a demonstrated commitment and readiness to take action for plan implementation. More information on the application period and timeline for the first challenge cohort will be forthcoming.

## Telling the coal community story

The BRECC initiative will capture and share inspirational and educational stories of coal communities and coal community leaders. These stories will include challenges, promising approaches, and celebratory accomplishments that reflect the diversity of coal community experiences. BRECC will create a resource hub to readily share these community stories.

For more information and questions, please reach out to [coal@naco.org](mailto:coal@naco.org). 

*Kuiper is NACo's associate program director for resilient economies and communities.*





# ELECTIONS:

Counties grapple  
with shifting  
landscape





# Changing times lead to challenging days for elections

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

After years spent toiling in obscurity, election officials are getting the spotlight. And they hate it. They don't want it.

The partisan rancor that accompanies political campaigns, fueled by misinformation, has caused collateral damage to infrastructure and people surrounding the elections, and elected officials and their staffs alike are facing abuse and threats. Professional associations that once focused on software updates and poll worker management are now becoming peer support groups for rattled registrars.

Chris Harvey was the elections director for Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger for six years, a second career after working in law enforcement in Fulton and DeKalb counties.

"In 20 years as a police officer working homicide in Atlanta I never was ever threatened, but I received death threats after the 2020 election, right before the Senate runoff," he said during NACo's 2022 Annual Conference. "It took leaving the police world and going into the elections before my life was threatened. I had to have the police outside of my house."

Harvey has returned to law enforcement and is now deputy director of the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council.

For all of the legal challenges launched at American election processes over the years, none have come up with more than one-off election law violations. They're typically people trying to vote twice, or forge a signature on an absentee ballot, and they come to light because the safeguards have worked. Yet rumors abound and ag-

grieved losing candidates lash out like a pinball player throwing his weight against the machine for a favorable bounce.

"Since November 2020, the losing, disappointed parties have responded with denial, blame, interference and threats of violence," retired Fairfax County Elections Director Scott Konopasek wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee in July. "No one was prepared for the threats of physical violence to election officials and family members, the threats to professional credibility and the threats to livelihoods that followed the presidential election and which continue still."

A survey by the Brennan Center for Justice found 77 percent of election officials believe threats against them have increased in recent years, with one in six reporting having been threatened because of their jobs, mostly over the phone, though half of those did not report the threats to law enforcement. One in five election officials reported that they were somewhat unlikely to stay in their jobs through the 2024 election, though more than half of all respondents were at least somewhat concerned that their successors might believe that widespread fraud occurred in the 2020 election.

The turnover in election officials hasn't spared a demographic, affecting urban

and rural counties alike across the country. The six most populous counties in Georgia have lost their elections directors. Increasingly, counties where election results have not been in doubt are seeing tensions rise.

The entire three-person staff of the Gillespie County, Texas elections department resigned in August, citing unspecified threats over the prior 18 months after a lopsided 2020 result. The small county still does not list a director of elections.

One third of Brennan Center survey respondents who indicated plans to leave in the next two years said that too many political leaders are attacking a system they know is fair and honest, and nearly as many said their job as an election official added a lot of unnecessary stress.

Leslie Hoffman laughed off calling the sheriff when she got two phone calls in one day from friends, recounting seeing Facebook posts about her work as the Yavapai County, Ariz. recorder.

"They wanted to make sure that I had protection, that I had my doors locked. Both of them offered to come and stay with me that night because they said they had read some nasty things about me after the 2020 election," she said. "The

King County, Wash. voters prepare their mail-in ballots. Photo courtesy of King County

See CHALLENGES pg H3



**From CHALLENGES pg H2**

next morning, I was telling my chief deputy about it, and she told me to call the sheriff. She said if I didn't do it, she would."

What Hoffman thought was just a little social media dustup would turn into a storm that forced her out of office in July.

"I've lived here my entire life and I've had the same cell phone number for 30 years," she said. "It turns out these were people I've known for decades, and if they had a question to ask me about how the elections are run, they could have called me directly. They weren't interested in that, in a conversation."

The sheriff would drive by her house once a day, but he wasn't the only one visiting her neighborhood. For months, unknown cars would slowly cruise down her block at night. Emails started coming in via untraceable accounts: "You better watch your back. 'We have you now.' 'You should be in jail.' 'You should be

a little, but for more than a year I really couldn't."

Now working in another county, it's exhausting for Hoffman to imagine the high-profile job she once held, but she remains in awe of the work her colleagues do across the country in spite of the acrimony.

"I'm not sure what their [people who are harassing election officials] goal is, but it's all a distraction campaign to keep you from doing your job," she said. "If they keep it up, it's going to drive people out of election work, but they don't understand why we do it. [Elections workers] don't want any particular candidates to win, we just want our audits to come back clean. We want to do a good job running elections."

**How did it get this way?**

Noah Praetz, now a private consultant, worked for Cook County's elections department in a variety of roles for 19 years

and attendance, became metropolitan voting centers thanks to the space they offered for physical distancing. Months before vaccines were available to the general public, voting by mail became the easiest way to relieve congestion in polling places, staffed heavily by older adults who were more vulnerable to the virus.

And it worked. In Durham County, N.C., for example, 92 percent of voters cast their ballots by mail or via drop boxes.

"I think it mitigated a lot of what we had to control on Election Day just because of the limited numbers of individuals that voted in 2020," said Derek Bowers, Durham County's director of elections.

With that ease of voting came a longer processing time to count the votes, particularly in states like Pennsylvania that forbid its elections workers from canvassing mail-in ballots ahead of election day. The Keystone State decided the presidential election, after being called four days after Election Day.

weapons."

Likewise, Adams County, Colo. has spent more than \$50,000 remodeling its clerk's office to provide physical barriers for employees.

"We've had a number of different instances in our office with irate voters to the point where we no longer will just allow the public into our office," said Josh Zygielbaum, Adams County, Colo. clerk and recorder.

Zygielbaum said the threats had subsided throughout this past summer, but he anticipates an increase ahead of the 2024 election.

Even though Johnson County, Mo. hadn't received any election-related threats as of July, Clerk Diane Thompson was had her eye on security improvements, she wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee, including practicing active shooter drills, devising an Election Day evacuation plan and establishing safe areas for her staff.

**Coordination with law enforcement**

County election workers are approaching the 2022 midterm election with trepidation.

"It's only a matter of time until someone is injured or worse," said Ingham County, Mich. Clerk Barb Byram. She counts herself fortunate to not have received any threats or heard of anything reported by her staff, but a fellow clerk's story typifies the feeling of powerlessness county elections personnel feel.

A fellow Michigan county clerk received a threat that her pizza would be poisoned, but the threat was deemed incredible, Byram relayed. Police deemed the threat incredible, Byram related, because the person who made the threat did not work for a pizzeria.

Zygielbaum said law enforcement has to walk a fine line investigating threats.

"During the 2020 election, we received lots of things that we would consider to be veiled threats, they weren't actually direct threats and so the issue is, what I'm told, is that prosecutors are reluctant to actually prosecute because it's difficult to convict and it falls under First Amendment rights. You can tell somebody that you're going to, you know, do something to their family, but unless you get specific about it and provide the details of how and when it's going to happen, there's not much that can happen in those instances."

With experience in both elections and law enforcement, Harvey is quick to credit both with knowing their own realms but lacking when it comes to coordination.

"Law enforcement doesn't realize that voting is going on for about a month, public testing is going on before that and af-

**See CHALLENGES pg H4**



A Baltimore County, Md. sheriff's deputy collects ballots from a drop box in 2020. Photo courtesy of Baltimore County.

lynched."

It didn't make any sense to her — the 2020 election was not in doubt in her county. If any election-related agenda item was on the Board of Supervisors agenda, the protesters would come out in droves and deputies would be on hand.

Finally, an incident near her home indicated to Hoffman that the danger was expanding to her friends, neighbors and pets. She resigned, and soon after, the pressure abated. The elections director, appointed by the supervisors, also resigned after harassment.

"I am still very cautious when I'm at home, I'm still looking out for cars driving up and down my block," she said. "But people have moved on, they're going after the people in office now. They just take a pack animal mentality. I'm able to relax

and traced the increase in public scrutiny at NACo's 2022 Annual Conference.

"We called it the 'wedding planner era' of elections," he said of 2000, when he started. "The elections were on one day, you bring people and stuff together, throw a party, put it to bed at night."

The wake of the 2000 election ushered in a 16-year era of legal compliance and technology requirements.

"Then the Russians got involved in 2016 and we recognized the threats that foreign adversaries could play, getting inside of our heads, threatening to get inside of our networks in elections," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 added another weight on the backs of elections officials. Sports arenas, mostly vacant while gathering restrictions limited



Photo courtesy of Pierce County, Wash.

Some states, however, allowed counties to canvas ballots ahead of time, and the lack of uniformity fed suspicions that a fix was in.

That was the first time the enormity of the problem appeared to Joe Gloria, registrar of voters for Clark County, Nev., where nearly three-quarters of the battleground state's population lives.

"It became very clear that what we needed to make sure we were reaching out to our employees, providing a safe environment literally in that we had to get law enforcement to escort them from the employee exit to their cars, because it was not unusual on a daily basis for us to have about 100 protesters not more than 100 feet away from our front door," he said. "Nevada is an open-carry state, so it was a little scary for them, because we had people who were out there carrying



# Congress considers bill adding protections for election workers

From CHALLENGES pg H3

terwards you've got about a week or two weeks of certification and audits and re-counts and all that stuff," he said. "If law enforcement was planning for an event like the Super Bowl or the [MLB] All-Star Game, law enforcement would be planning for months if not years to host something like that. They would have all their transportation that has all their communication, they'd be holding these summits, they would be doing all this kind of stuff. But with elections, it's like 'Well, is there an Election Day? I guess we better hit the streets.' They're not thinking the same way."

Harvey acknowledged that crime and public safety don't start and stop at elections' convenience, but there are logistical considerations that could make law enforcement more flexible.

"The police would not want to have their bomb-disposal team training in another state on Election Day," he said. "You don't need to have your SWAT team in a polling

place [but] do you want them on standby? Or in a position where they could respond if you get a bomb threat or if you get something like that?"

Harvey suggested county elections offices and law enforcement agencies designate liaisons who check in regularly, developing long-term partnerships. Tarrant County, Texas Elections Administrator Heider Garcia suggested to the Senate Judiciary Committee that legislation should protect the addresses of elections officials.

"While some may argue that our job exposes us in one way or another as public officials, it is not fair that our families are exposed and subject to threats," he wrote in July. Congress has taken notice. The Election Worker Protection Act, introduced in September, would authorize the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to make grant funds available to states (and counties should their respective state opt not to apply for funding) for:

- the recruitment and training of poll workers and election volunteers



Ballots collected from a Baltimore County dropbox.

- physical security services and social media threat monitoring for election workers

- grants for state and local governments to establish or expand programs designed to protect the personally identifiable information of election workers

- make the harassment and "doxxing" of election workers' efforts a federal offense, as well as the intimidation of tabulation, canvas and certification

- ensure that the U.S. Department of Justice offers training and resources to

assist federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies in understanding, detecting, deterring and investigating threats to election workers

- allow state or local election officials to remove poll observers from a polling location or location where votes are processed, scanned, tabulated or canvassed for a federal election if the observer has engaged in intimidation, deceptive practices or disrupted the vote counting process.

Despite all she's faced in the last two years, Leslie Hoffman is still optimistic about the work county elections personnel do, as is her boss, Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richter.

"I am blessed with an incredibly supportive county, a fantastic big brother who looks after me in our County Sheriff Paul Penzone, wonderful local police departments and a vigilant Arizona Department of Homeland Security (among others). Most of all, I am blessed with a wonderful team that is religiously committed to the preservation of democracy." ■

## Counties try to ensure all who are eligible can vote

by **Chelsea Thomson**

Counties are ensuring that all eligible voters, particularly community members currently in jail or formerly incarcerated, can vote.

Nearly all people detained in county jails – 658,000 – are eligible to vote, but many don't because of obstacles with registration deadlines, voting processes, lack of access to educational resources and confusion about eligibility. These challenges are exacerbated for people with felony convictions who lose their right to vote at least while incarcerated and potentially indefinitely, except in Maine, Vermont and the District of Columbia.

Counties are educating residents who are in jail of their voting eligibility and increasing access to voting registration and polling. These efforts are often spurred by and developed in tandem with local advocates, volunteers and community-led

organizations. Furthermore, sheriffs and election officials, each playing key roles, can benefit from collaborating to uphold and facilitate the voting process for eligible community members. Unlocking the vote is not only a fundamental pillar of our democracy but can help reduce recidivism, contribute to a sense of community and enhance prosocial behavior.

### Enhancing educational resources and outreach

One of the biggest barriers is that many residents who are impacted by the criminal legal system often don't realize they are eligible to register and vote. Not only is education critical for people who are justice system involved, but it's also critical for county leaders and staff, so they can provide correct and accurate information.

In Yolo County, Calif., the county elections office, public defender's office and probation department are reminding all

residents that they retain the right to vote regardless of any prior convictions. These efforts include holding voter registration drives, providing voter registration cards and sending mailers to individuals in the jail with information about voter eligibility and the voter registration process.

"We not only want people to know about their voting rights; we also want to make voting accessible," said Emily Kochly, chief mitigation specialist with the public defender's office. "Access to voting empowers people with lived or direct experience with the criminal legal system and allows them a means of changing the system and their community for the better."

The Voting Access for All Coalition (VAAC) works with jail and election officials within Michigan's 83 counties to expand its Vote by Mail in Jail program, assist incarcerated voters to register and request absentee ballots, provide voter educational materials and host Jailed Voter Information Sessions.

VAAC also held a webinar for county clerks to find ways to register eligible people detained in jail. In Genesee County, Mich., the sheriff held a candidates' forum in jail featuring candidates on the ballot.

After the Washington Legislature funded voter registration and voting within county jails, the Spokane County, Wash. auditor hopes to use the resources for educational videos and posters.

Prior to elections, detention staff ask individuals if they are registered to vote and if they would like to receive a ballot but

very few request ballots. The educational material aims to increase turnout and help people learn about their rights.

### Increasing ballot access

Corrections and elections officials can make a commitment to ballot access by opening polling places in jail and reducing the barriers to receiving and submitting absentee ballots when in-person polling is not feasible.

In 2020, Cook County, Ill. opened in-person voting at several places in the jail complex.

This opportunity, with same-day registration, contributed to a higher voter turnout in the jail than the city as a whole in the 2022 primary. The Will County, Ill. Detention Center recently opened a polling place for primary and general elections, an option available to all counties after the state enacted legislation in 2021. Los Angeles County, Calif. and Washington, D.C. also offer in-person voting in local jails.

After several years of local advocates hosting registration drives in the jail, Harris County, Texas opened an in-jail polling place in 2021.

The organization developed public service announcements encouraging people detained in jail to vote. Individuals can use jail-issued identification to satisfy voter identification requirements, which can be a barrier. ■

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# COUNTIES RECRUIT THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLL WORKERS

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

Facing a shortage of poll workers leading up to the midterm elections, counties are trying to recruit high school students and military veterans to help fill the gap.

Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough recently put out a call on National Voter Registration Day — Sept. 22 — for military veterans to sign up and work the polls, with the county in a “potential crisis” with a couple thousand positions to fill just over a month before the midterms.

“Rather than saying, ‘We want you,’ like they did for the military, we’re saying, ‘We need you,’” Yarbrough said at the press conference.

Cook County is working with the Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Administration Hospital, Jesse Brown Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the We the Veterans Society for American Democracy to recruit veterans, according to Cook County Clerk Deputy of Elections Edmund Michalowski.

We the Veterans launched a national campaign, Vet the Vote, in June with the goal of recruiting 100,000 veterans and

their family members to become poll workers. It has currently signed up over 60,000 poll workers across the country.

“[Vet the Vote] gave us a direct line to resources to make sure people know when we sound the alarm here that this isn’t a local problem, but it’s a national problem,” Michalowski said. “And when we work with other election authorities and election organizations like Vet the Vote, it just brings credibility, because you want your election authority to be a trusted source.”

We the Veterans board member Joe Plenzler served as a poll worker in Charles County, Md. for the gubernatorial primaries and will again for the midterms, he said.

“It’s kind of like a singularly unifying experience to come together at the level of civics and put politics aside to do something productive and help your fellow citizens exercise the right to vote,” Plenzler said. “[We the Veterans] has a saying that democracy runs on elections and elections run on volunteers, so if a community can’t recruit enough volunteers to your polling stations, that means longer lines and it’ll ultimately disenfranchise voters.”

We the Veterans has teamed up with

counties across the country in its recruiting efforts, including Allegheny County, Pa.

Allegheny County officials and We the Veteran board members set up a sign-up table at the Pittsburgh Steelers home opener against the New England Patriots, according to Ingrid Sundlee, We the Veterans’ director of civic engagement.

“We think that counties are particularly important because they have such a big population and I feel like you can almost do more at the county level in a lot of ways,” Sundlee said. “Like you can have those close relationships with election officials and really work to personalize and meet the needs of county official — is there a huge gap in Allegheny County, for example?”

“[Allegheny] needed like 2,000 people well, okay, we can reach out to our coalition’s membership and say, ‘Hey, can you go into your CMS, find everybody in Allegheny County, and let them know that we need poll workers and that kind of thing. So, because we can divide our data up by county, we can get quite a bit of outreach in that way.”

Allegheny County’s Division of Elections has also made efforts to recruit high school students to become poll workers with its Student Poll Worker Program.

Amie Downs, the county’s communications director, said that Allegheny saw an increase in student interest over the COVID-19 pandemic that they want to continue. According to a 2017 Election Assistance Commission study, nearly 60 percent of poll workers are at least 61 years old — and roughly one-quarter of all poll workers are 71 or older.

“I think that during COVID, we were working so hard to protect particularly the elderly in our community, and students were seeing that their grand- or great grandparents that would be really active and engaged on election day were no longer able to do so,” Downs said. “And so, I think students were suddenly like, ‘Well, wait a minute, that’s something that I could do, so grandma or grandpa doesn’t have to do it.’

“So that’s why I think that we have continued to target and talk about students. Particularly with so much in the media these days, they are absolutely I think more engaged and interested and involved, and so even if they aren’t able to vote yet, they still want to do some things to participate in the process.”

Montgomery County, Md. has a program called Future Vote for students even younger — as young as eleven — to get involved in the election process. Gilberto Zelaya,

See POLL WORKERS pg H8



by Isaac Cramer

As polls closed in a local municipal election in 2015, the room filled with buzz from the candidates and observers, eagerly waiting for the announcement of who won the mayor's election. I was excited as well, since I had only been working at our Board of Elections' office for just over seven months, and I was still learning a lot of the processes and procedures for Charleston County, S.C. Two candidates were current town councilmen, elected previously on the same equipment used in this election. However, what ensued was quite surprising as a rookie election administrator.

Elections, by nature, will always have a winner and a loser (ties do happen, but resolved based on current laws). When I give advice to people seeking office, I always start by saying, "Prepare yourself for the possibility that you might lose." While this seems like harsh advice, it is a reality that most prospective and current candidates don't consider. However, it is a reality that is well known to election officials.

That night, I witnessed two candidates see the election outcome from two different perspectives. The mayor-elect was excited and congratulated his opponent on a tough election. The candidate who was defeated immediately challenged the legitimacy of the election. He called into question the machines used, and I remember him talking to our executive director about how these specific voting machines could be manipulated. My former boss's words still ring true: "When you were elected to be on town council, you were elected using these same machines. You didn't have an issue with the machines then."

My colleagues across the country likely have a similar story from a pre-2020 election. It isn't new to election administrators when local candidates call into question the legitimacy of an election based on the equipment used. Candidates often decide to direct their frustration at the election equipment, instead of their campaigns. Pre-2020, we successfully combatted this sort of misinformation at the local level. However, that all changed after November 2020. Overnight, the public perspective of election officials went from quiet bureaucrats to villains of democracy.

### The challenges: Pressure and threats from outside groups

Over the past year, I have received over 50 FOIA requests about the 2020 election. Many of these requests ask for data or information that does not pertain to South Carolina. These FOIA requests are from "experts" with no election experience or knowledge in election administration. They have given themselves the title of "expert" because they have par-

# Tell the stories that build trust in our elections



Isaac Cramer examines sample ballots in the Charleston County, S.C. Board of Elections and Voter Registration office, where he is executive director. Photo by Ben Leeson

ticipated in national summits on election integrity or they are a part of a "telegram group" that supports the idea that the 2020 election was stolen.

These same activists threatened our poll workers during the June 2022 primary election. Our poll workers called law enforcement to remove the activists, but they were told it was only a clash of personalities. State law requires law enforcement to remove someone by request of the poll managers; there is no gray area. During the runoff election, the activists were running into polling locations with video cameras recording our equipment and intimidating the workers. Another conspiracy theory emerged that we quickly debunked. This time, however, these observers called law enforcement on the poll managers working at the location, which is not allowed under state law.

Poll workers have begun asking themselves, "Why do I even want to go through something like this?" Their concerns are

// **'These challenges distract from the actual work we do on a day-to-day basis.'**

understandable and valid. In Charleston County, we have explored new ways to recruit and attract prospective poll managers through partnerships with our local sports teams. We even partnered with a local brewery that created the "I Voted" limited edition beer. The misinformation from 2020 has negatively impacted the retention of poll managers. The growing sentiment is that it is not worth it to work an election. Why be a volunteer in high stressful situations while being verbally attacked? This has adverse effects on our elections because they are "people powered." Elections cannot happen without the thousands of poll managers that enlist to work.

Perceived and actual threats have also revealed physical security vulnerabilities. Our office has worked with county officials

to assess our buildings, upgrade our security cameras and optimize our secure badge entry. Election planning is now emergency management preparation. I have weekly briefings with our Counter Threat Project Manager with Public Safety. It is hard to ignore that our office is a national and local news headline. The spotlight has turned on the need for action, and I am very thankful to our county administrator and leaders who have invested their time and resources to ensure we are successful.

### The solution: Election administrators telling the true story

There is a tightrope to walk when communicating with local community groups, citizens and activists. Respect is crucial, and the ability to listen and hear concerns is necessary. That is how we get better at serving our local needs. However, the level of disinformation has grown to the point where, if we intend to do our jobs faithfully, we need to be more vocal about the threats we see. Disinformation is a form of voter suppression, dramatically affecting trust and confidence in our election process.

Here is the reality: I have worked alongside many election administrators across the country. I have sat in workshop classrooms tackling real issues we face to make elections better for our voters. We have all shared stories of the challenges we face. The names and locations may differ, but the issues are the same. It boils down to telling our specific stories to build trust in elections. Through our time, I gained so much respect for these people and established lifelong relationships with many of them. See, they are

also your neighbors, friends and people you see at the grocery store; your kids are probably playing with their kids at daycare or school. And yes, they care very deeply about free and fair elections.

At a recent national conference, it hit home for me. Anytime I speak to organizations or people about my election process, I keep it local. I would claim, "I don't know about Michigan, but in Charleston County, we do things correctly. I can't speak to other jurisdictions." One of my colleagues, and now a close friend from Idaho, reminded everyone that we needed to speak as one voice on this issue. "In light of everything we are hearing and seeing across the country, I believe that as election officials, we need to stand by



# Misinformation, frivolous record requests bog down election offices

by Meredith Moran  
staff writer

While preparing for Election Day 2022, election workers across the country have found themselves spending time and resources addressing record requests regarding the 2020 election.

Sean Drasher, Lebanon County, Pa.'s director of elections, said that his county usually receives one right-to-know request a month, but has started to see multiple requests daily over the past few weeks.

"Those right-to-know requests have very specific legal requirements — who can make them, how we can respond, what we can share," Drasher said. "Legally, we can't do anything that would violate a voter's privacy just because someone demands it."

## Identical public record requests

"We have to be very careful how we respond," he noted. "Our commissioners really want us to take the time to look at each individual one and make sure we give it the full attention that it deserves, and I respect that, but it also is very time consuming."

Election offices across the country have seen identical public record requests. Almost all requests received by Jackson County, Ore. have been from a copy-and-pasted template or have near-identical wording, specifically for cast vote records, which is an electronic representation of how voters voted, said Jackson County Clerk Chris Walker.

What seems like a grassroots interest in civic awareness is more of an "Astroturf campaign," inspired by election fraud conspiracy theorists, who urge people to file the CVR (which stands for "cast vote record") requests.

"Part of our job is the transparency in elections — it's hugely important — but really at a time when we are just inundated with work to do for an upcoming election, it has just really distracted us," Walker said. "We're doing close to 160,000 ballots in about a 225,000 to 230,000-person county — I have a 2 1/2 full-time staff, so all of the records requests, the inquiries, all have just added on top to an already very small staff, and it has been overwhelming."



**'At a time when we are just inundated with work to do for an upcoming election, it has really distracted us.'**

— Chris Walker,  
Jackson County, Ore.  
county clerk

## 'We want to be as transparent as possible'

Brian Sleeth, director of the Warren County Board of Elections and president of the Ohio Association of Election Officials, also said he's continued to see identical requests and has struggled to meet demand.

"It's something that our election officials here in Ohio just aren't used to," Sleeth said. "And we're not complaining about being transparent — all of the counting of our ballots are done in public, we have big glass rooms where people can watch us do the tabulation on election night, they can watch us do our public test of the machines."

"So, we want to be as transparent as possible, but these record requests are from an election that happened two years ago, on the cusp of these records scheduled to be destroyed, so it kind of put the brakes on everything."

Federal law requires governments to keep election records for 22 months. The deadline for the 2020 presidential election is what has prompted the influx of record requests,

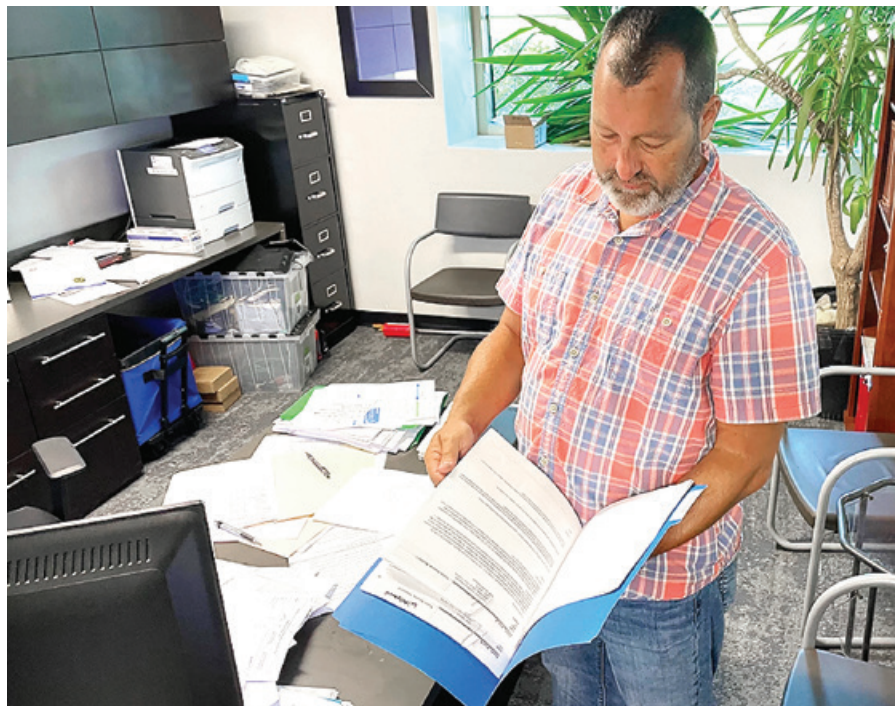
Sleeth said.

"There are boards of elections that don't have the space to keep ballots longer than they are required," Sleeth said. "I don't know anybody rushing out to destroy the materials from 2020 because of all these active requests, but normally we would, I mean these ballots go to destruction."

## Record requests bust budgets

"The election record never gets destroyed, and that's what some people don't understand — we're just getting rid of the paper documents. I have an electronic record of who voted, I have electronic signatures on file to show that they signed the poll book at the polls or in our office, so it's not like we're wiping the whole election off the face of the Earth."

The uptick in record requests are increasing costs in Jackson County's elections office, because the department has to pay chargebacks in its budget for the next fiscal year depending on how much it uses county counsel, which Walker uses as a resource for record requests, for the



Brian Sleeth, director of elections in Warren County, Ohio looks at public records requests. Photo by Karen Kasler/Ohio Public Radio



Sean Drasher, director of elections, Lebanon County, Pa.

current fiscal year, Walker said.

"I reach out for an hour, half-hour conversation, which seems to be more regular — I would say at least sometimes two to three times a week, if not more," Walker said. "Those are all costs incurred during this and if the people never move forward with that records request, well we've already utilized the timeframe with county counsel to assist in this process. But I would not navigate this without them."

"They are amazing, and I'm very grateful to have a counsel that makes me feel confident knowing I have great counsel, and they are very experienced in navigating the waters of records requests."

## Combating misinformation

Jackson County recently contracted with a marketing company, committing \$12,000 to address election security misinformation that has contributed to the record request influx, Walker said.

"We're doing ads on Pandora and some different social media sites as well as radio, on standard media as well," she said. "And that is something in the last couple of years that we're now just building of course into our regular elections

budget because of the mis- and mal-information that's being spread out there. We're trying to combat it, but just like anything, it's expensive."

The county has received funding from the Center for Tech and Civic Life and Oregon's Secretary of State Office to help deal with election costs, Walker said.

"The cost of elections is just going up and up and with no end in sight," she said. "Our Secretary of State reached out and said, 'What can we do?' And I give them credit for that. One-time infusions of cash are great, like what we've gotten, especially during the pandemic, really helped us where we could get new scanners."

## Paying for the added costs

"But what we really need is a solid funding mechanism, because right now in Oregon, in primary and general elections, the county jurisdictions fund 100 percent of election costs."

Drasher said Lebanon County has also received grants to help deal with election costs, including from Help America Vote Act election security funds, which have helped the county adapt to the added expense that mail-in voting brings and the state Department of Community and Economic Development's Election Integrity Grant.

"Just because there's money sitting there doesn't mean you can use it for a lot of things, so the Election Integrity Grant is pretty great because they gave us a little more broad range of how we can apply



# Record requests overwhelm counties

From RECORD REQUESTS pg H7

the funds,” Drasher said. “We are a small department and we don’t have a very big budget, so doing anything outside of day-to-day operations for us without grant money is pretty much impossible, so these grant funds are going to allow us to invest in some technology with big capital investments that we’ll be able to use that’ll help us process ballots.”

With the increase in record requests affecting operations across the country, election officials are coming together and trying to come up with ways to help each other in whatever ways they can, Drasher said.

“There’s no training manual for this job,” Drasher said. “There’s no other resource except other people that are also doing it ... Say one of the counties down near Philadelphia, they’re a lot larger and they have a much larger budget than we do -- they can develop things, like videos they throw up on their website that show voters how the machines work or how the process works, that maybe we don’t have the resources to do, but they do, so we all share that stuff.

“We collaborate a lot, and the other directors in larger counties have been incredible in supporting us and we try to support the counties that are smaller than us.”

# ‘County leaders must support the work of elections departments’

From TRUST pg H6

each other. Claiming we don’t know how other election officials follow laws or procedures is wrong. I know that all of us in this profession are working to support our democracy in every way we can.

So, as a group, I ask that we commit to supporting each other as we navigate this time.”

Not only is it important to have fellow election officials across the country defend each other, but it is also important that our county leaders support our work.

Support is not limited to funding. County employees can serve as poll managers on Election Day (we call it “Day for Democracy”, the administration can clear barriers to technology needs and security assessments, and ultimately, we can work together to ensure the government is serving our citizens to the best of its ability.

People who head to the polls once or twice a year often ask me if election administration is a full-time profession. Our work is a year-round operation that requires dedication and nuanced planning. We work to continuously improve the vot-

ing experience and provide better services to residents. Without the buy-in of county leaders, we are limited in our ability to grow and innovate to meet the needs of our voters in a dynamic environment. Successful election administration requires participation and support at all levels of government, from the poll workers on Election Day to our elected and appointed county officials.

Isaac Cramer is the executive director of the Charleston County, S.C. Board of Elections and Voter Registration.

# ‘It’s kind of like a baseball farm program’ for training poll workers

From POLL WORKERS pg H5

community empowerment and public information officer for the county’s Board of Elections, created Future Vote in 2003 to be both a current and future resource, he said, to educate younger students on the democratic process, as well as creating a pipeline into becoming a poll worker once they turn 16 and become eligible. The program is for sixth through 12th graders and currently has 709 students enrolled in it.

“I was looking around the nation and there’s a lot of similar high school programs, but they’re really focused on juniors and seniors, because they meet the state requirements to serve as a poll worker,” Zelaya said. “But what I did, it’s kind of like the baseball farm program —

how they start in the minor leagues, and kind of work their way up for the major league.”

While Future Vote participants are too young to handle voting equipment, ballots and the books, they greet voters at the door, instruct them where to go and make sure there’s no partisan literature left in the polling booths, Zelaya said.

“When we first started, our chief judges, they were kind of like are we running a babysitting service? They were wary, like, ‘how old are these children?’” Zelaya said. “...But now, what’s funny is the judges will say, like in the midterms, if they technically should have six students because only two students can serve every shift, they’ll say, ‘I only got five. I need another student for the evening shift.’”

Zelaya said it’s been amazing to see what he calls Future Vote alumni continue on as election officials, and even come back to be involved in the program again.

“I went to observe a chief judge training, and I had a gentleman who was like mid 20s and he looked at me and said, ‘You look like Dr. Z with Future Vote,’ and I was like ‘Yes, I am’ and he was like ‘I did your program back when I was in middle school.’ And he said he came back because he saw the advisory and that Future Vote was recruiting.

“That’s really cool, and so that’s an added benefit — the fact that the kids who originally started the program right now are young adults stepping up to help out.”

# ELECTION RESOURCES

## Bipartisan Policy Center

The policy center created a report for tech and election officials on how they can best collaborate to protect elections online, including mitigating harm to cybersecurity and working with community groups to boost election information: [bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-protect-elections-online](https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-protect-elections-online)

## Center for Tech and Civic Life

CTCL created a collection of resources for election officials, including an information training series on communicating trusted election information and elections technology toolkit, as a response to high turnover rates in the election administration field: [techandcivicliflife.org/our-work/election-officials](https://techandcivicliflife.org/our-work/election-officials)

## Committee for Safe and Secure Elections

CSSE has a step-by-step guide to make elections safer for officials and a list of resources, like The Election Official Legal Defense Network, which

connects election officials to pro-bono attorneys: [safeelections.org/about](https://safeelections.org/about)

## Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency

The agency’s election library offers an election infrastructure insider threat mitigation guide and incident handling overview for election officials: [cisa.gov/election-security-library](https://cisa.gov/election-security-library)

## Democracy Works

The organization works with election officials to streamline the logistics of mail-in voting, including a tool called Ballot Scout, which helps election offices add USPS Intelligent Mail barcodes to absentee ballot envelopes and allows administrators to track each ballot: [democracy.works/support-for-election-officials](https://democracy.works/support-for-election-officials)

## National Association of State Election Directors

In a partnership with the National Association for Media Literacy Education,

NASED developed a library of materials for election offices that includes customizable social media graphics and election-specific media literacy tip sheets: [nased.org/electioncommstoolkit](https://nased.org/electioncommstoolkit)

## Power the Polls

Created out of an attempt to recruit new poll workers, the Power the Polls site has some helpful resources to demystify the job including “25 Questions to Ask in Your Official Poll Worker Training,” “You’ve signed up to be a poll worker — now what?” and an Election Day checklist: [powerthepolls.org/resources](https://powerthepolls.org/resources)

## The Carter Center

The center has a well-being guide for election officials that includes mental health and physical security resources: [www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/health\\_publications/mental\\_health/mental-well-being-guide-for-election-officials.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/health_publications/mental_health/mental-well-being-guide-for-election-officials.pdf)



## The Elections Group

The group created a series of documents to assist election workers, including a ballot proofing guide, how to create a complete map of voting sites and a walkthrough on the ballot box retrieval process: [electionsgroup.com/resources-for-election-officials](https://electionsgroup.com/resources-for-election-officials)

## U.S. Election Assistance Commission

Provides education and training on election cybersecurity and dispelling misinformation, as well as resources such as the chain of custody best practices for election officials: [eac.gov](https://eac.gov)



## BRIGHT IDEAS | LASSEN COUNTY, Calif.

# County Program Aims to Build Trust and Support for Non-Custodial Fathers

### PROBLEM:

There were no local child support agencies that tried to directly appeal to fathers, leading to a lack of trust in the system.

### SOLUTION:

Amplify fathers' voices through an outreach media campaign.

by **Meredith Moran**  
staff writer

The Lassen County, Calif. Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) has created the Fatherhood Initiative, an outreach media campaign, with the aim of establishing trust with non-custodial fathers, so they can become more educated on — and feel more support within — the child support system.

DCSS Director Kelley Cote started the campaign in 2019 after she realized that there were no child support initiatives geared toward fa-

thers in the rural Northern California county.

"I knew that child support has a bad name, so I was trying to figure out how to market to a group of people, who really, we should've been marketing to in the first place, because there's quite a few men paying child support," she said.

The initiative was jump-started around "The Brandon Story." Brandon Gutierrez is a Lassen County father who became a case manager at DCSS after opening a child support case through the department and having Cote as his case manager.

"I was talking to him about his experience within our office and the other agencies that he's dealt with from his own case, and what he would

have liked to have happened to him had he had a voice," Cote said. "I asked him if he would tell his story, because I thought he would be a perfect voice to communicate with those men.

"When it comes to opening up cases within an office or even talking about fatherhood issues, you have to have credibility, and I think part of that is you have to be a man in order to connect with another man to talk about things that only really men can grasp."

DCSS contracted with a documentary filmmaker who interviewed Gutierrez about his experience on both sides of child support services, as a father and case worker, and created a video campaign out of it for fathers who want to open their own child support case. The video was released on all of the services' social media platforms and sent out to related organiza-

tions, Cote said.

"My team, they're extremely competent, they're going to hear you out, they're not out to get you, they're not there to take all your stuff," Gutierrez said in the video.

"It's the opposite of that. They're going to inform you about how the system works, about what can and can't be used.

"They're not going to represent her [the mother], they're not going to represent you, they're going to represent your child. When people walk through the door, they're treated like people — you're a person with a story, with concerns, with questions, and we address them."

Since the campaign launched, many Lassen County non-custodial fathers have expressed surprise at their respectful treatment throughout the case process and have reported they would have opened cases themselves or would have cooperated earlier had they realized the experience would be pleasant and helpful.

After the video's positive response, the Fathers and Families Coalition of America contacted Cote to also use Gutierrez as a spokesperson and the DCSS created an international Webex. The Child Support Directors' Association of

California has also shared components of the program to help other departments implement their own initiatives.

As the next part of the media campaign, DCSS is in the middle of working on a documentary.

"This one's [geared] toward the value of child support and the stories of people — whether you're a mother, father or a child of the program," Cote said. "I've heard so many stories, especially from adults, that as children, had their view of the Child Support Program impacted."

The Fatherhood Initiative is in its early stages, but the DCSS plans to analyze and provide feedback to practitioners and policymakers at the county and state level. Cote is looking to have the initiative evolve into a council, and she is working with a public affairs company to create a report of father-focused councils in rural counties that have had success that Lassen County can replicate, she said.

"When legislation is being created, fathers need to be in a seat at the table to discuss what's going to impact them," Cote said.

The two counties the DCSS is basing the future of the program on are Cuyahoga County, Ohio and Merced County, Calif. DCSS plans to take inspiration from the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative's steering committee, whose membership consists of organizations with strong points of contact with fathers, and Merced County's fatherhood program All Dads Matter, which has designated staff specifically for serving as a father advocate. **CN**

*Lassen County won the NACo Achievement Award "Best in Category" in the Human Services category this year.*







FORSYTH COUNTY, Ga.

Forsyth County was established in 1832 by the state legislature. It is named for John Forsyth, who was the governor of Georgia from 1827 to 1829. The county developed a formal digital seal in July to match the imagery, colors and font of its official logo, according to Russell Brown, assistant director of the county's department of communications.



The seal includes a tree to represent the county's natural resources, as well as its growth and prosperity

five stars for the county's five districts and olive branches for peace and friendship.

Would you like to see your county seal featured? Contact Meredith Moran at mmoran@naco.org.

WORD SEARCH JEFFERSON COUNTY, Ala. Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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

**JEFFERSON:** The county is named for Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States.

**POPULATION:** According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of the county is 674,721, making it the most populous county in the state of Alabama.

**BIRMINGHAM:** Founded in 1871, the county seat is named for Birmingham, England. From its founding until the 1960s, it was known to be the industrial center of the South – like its sister city was for England.

**MINING:** The county has a deep-rooted history in iron, coal and limestone mining.

**ALABAMA:** Jefferson County is located in the northern-central portion of Alabama.

**HEIGHT:** The county houses the second-tallest building in the state of Alabama, Shipt Tower. At 454 feet and 34 stories tall, this building is 291 feet and one floor shorter than RSA Battle House Tower in Mobile County, Ala.

**COX:** TV and film actress Courtney Cox was born and raised in the county. She is most noted for her time playing Monica on the sitcom "Friends," which hit the airwaves in 1994.

**MOUNTAINS:** Within the county sits the southernmost edge of the Appalachian Mountains.

**SIZE:** The county is 1,124 square miles.

**GAMES:** This summer, the county hosted the 2022 World Games. The Games brought over 3,600 athletes from more than 100 countries around the world to compete in 11 days' worth of unique sports.

**COURTHOUSE:** The Jefferson County courthouse was constructed in 1931 in an Art Deco style by Chicago architecture firm Holabird and Root. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**EDUCATION:** Jefferson County is home to many colleges and universities including University of Alabama at Birmingham, Samford University, Miles College, Birmingham Southern College and more.

**JUSTICE:** Hugo Black, associate justice to the U.S. Supreme Court from 1937 to 1971, lived and practiced law in Jefferson County. The federal courthouse in the county seat is named for him.

**REFUGE:** The county houses the 25-acre Watercress Darter National Wildlife Refuge containing Thomas Spring, a pond essential to the endangered freshwater fish, the Watercress Darter.

**VULCAN:** Within the county sits the largest iron figure cast, a 56-foot tall, 60-ton statue of the Roman god of fire and blacksmithing, Vulcan. This statue is the second tallest statue in the country, just behind the Statue of Liberty.

GET TO KNOW... Switzerland County, Indiana

Welcome Switzerland County, Indiana!

First established in 1814, Switzerland County was named for the Swiss immigrants who organized the county and referred to it as "Little Switzerland." **The county seat is Vevay, which is home to what is considered the first commercial winery in the country and hosts an annual celebration called the Swiss Wine Festival during the last weekend of August -- the most well-known event of which is the Midwest Championship Grape Stomp. Teams of two compete, with one member as the "stomper," who stands in the barrel and flattens the grapes, and the other as the "swabbie," who stands below the barrel and catches the grape juice.**

Switzerland County measures about 223 square miles and its population, according to the 2020 census, is slightly under 10,000. The Ohio River flows through the county, making it part of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Experience, which is administered by the National Park Service.



The county has two newspapers, The Switzerland Democrat and Vevay Reveille Enterprise.

The Benjamin Schenck Mansion, which is said to be one of the most haunted places in Indiana, is located in Switzerland County. The mansion is supposedly home to six to seven ghosts and guests have reported mysterious flickering, odd sounds and "ghostly kisses" in the night. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently owned by celebrity tattoo artist and makeup brand owner Kat Von D.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



Hire Quality Staff @ Jobs Online  
www.naco.org/jobsonline



# PROFILES IN SERVICE

## DEVON WEST SEAGO

**NACo Board Member**  
Legislative Policy Advisor  
Broward County, Fla.

**Number of years active in NACo:** Seven years

**Years in public service:** 10 years

**Occupation:** Legislative Policy Advisor

**Education:** Master of Arts, International Relations and Homeland Security, East Carolina University, 2012; Bachelor of Arts, Communications and Public Relations, Michigan State University, 2006

**The hardest thing I've ever done:** Relocate to Japan.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** Princess Diana, Coco Chanel, Dave Grohl

**A dream I have is to:** Win the lottery so I can move to the South of France with my husband and our rescue dogs.

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:** Speak French.

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** Skydive

**My favorite way to relax is:** By international travel.

**I'm most proud of:** Being a first-generation American.

**Every morning I read:** Florida Politics

**My favorite meal is:** Detroit-style pizza and anything my grandma makes.



WEST SEAGO

**My pet peeve is:** Establishments with a "no dogs allowed" policy.

**My motto is:** "Guard well within yourself that treasure, kindness. Know how to give without hesitation, how to lose without regret, how to acquire without meanness." – George Sand

**The last book I read was:** "Circe" by Madeline Miller

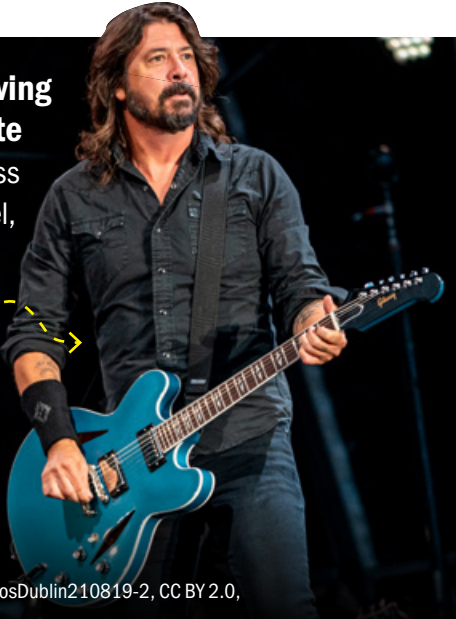
**My favorite movie is:** "Amélie"

**My favorite music is:** Classic Rock, New Wave, Folk Rock and Brit Pop

**My favorite U.S. president is:** President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**My county is a NACo member because:** NACo is a member-driven organization that allows county commissioners and staff the opportunity to take on leadership roles that affect policy decisions at the federal level. The NACo executive leadership team, staff and members collaborate to support every aspect of county government, fostering networking exchanges and best practices across the spectrum of local government services.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** Princess Diana, Coco Chanel, Dave Grohl



By Raphael Pour-Hashemi - FoosDublin210819-2, CC BY 2.0,

# ON THE MOVE

## NACo OFFICERS

- President **Denise Winfrey**, Immediate Past President **Larry Johnson** and Executive Director **Matt Chase** attended the Hawai'i State Association of Counties Annual Conference held Sept. 28-30 in Hawai'i County.
- **Winfrey** and Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas Conference held Oct. 3-6 in Bastrop County.

## NACo STAFF

- **Victoria Irobereachi** has joined NACo as a technology networks administrative assistant. She previously worked as a membership assistant for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language and a marketing assistant for Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English and American Literature from the University of Notre Dame.
- Associate Research Director **Jonathan Harris** made a presentation on the County Explorer at the Radical-ly Rural Summit held Sept. 21-22 in Cheshire County, N.H.
- Director of Government Affairs **Eryn Hurley** and Associate Legislative Director **Paige Mellerio** made



Irobereachi



Harris

presentations on policy issues of interest to Southern counties at the Conference of Southern County Associations conference held Sept. 14-16 in Chatham County, Ga.

- Associate Program Director **Rashida Brown** made a presentation on diversity, equity and inclusion issues and justice diversion programs at the New Hampshire Association of Counties' Annual Conference held Oct. 2-4 in Merrimack County.
- Associate Membership Director **John Losh** attended the North Dakota Association of Counties Annual Conference held Oct. 2-4 in Burleigh County.

# finally!

NACo swag is now available online!

[naco.org/store](https://naco.org/store)



## ARIZONA

**COCONINO COUNTY** recently launched The Pathways to Community program to help formerly incarcerated people become re-engaged in their communities. The program is housed in a building adjacent to the jail and there are plans in motion to renovate the space to make it feel more welcoming, according to Erica Shaw, the division manager for recovery and resiliency at Coconino County Health and Human Services. "They're getting connected to services before any of them leave the actual campus of our facility," Coconino County Sheriff Jim Driscoll told the *Arizona Daily Sun*.

"These people leaving the jail would have to go wait in line or come back the next day to get around town to different social services. I think that gap, that time, created problems, because many of them did not follow through. Many of them went right back to the neighborhood or the behavior or the company that got them into trouble to begin with." Since its creation in August, the program has assessed the needs of more than 140 people and connected them to services related to transportation and housing, as well as substance use disorder and mental health.

## ILLINOIS

**COOK COUNTY** recently announced the creation of a **domestic violence** program that will provide resources to victims

## ILLINOIS

**LAKE COUNTY** has recently seen an increase in **federally endangered rusty patched bumblebees**, which the county is partially attributing to a new program that trains volunteers to monitor and be more aware of the species. Nine rusty patched bumblebees were found at six of 13 Lake County forest preserves that were recently surveyed. "The preserve was largely agricultural, so the likelihood of rusty patched bees living there was quite low before restoration efforts took place," said Patti Vitt, the



For Lake County, Ill. courtesy of Alma Schrage

county's director of natural resources. The rusty patched bumble bee population has declined by 87 percent in the past 20 years, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, due to habitat loss, pes-

icide use, climate change and intensive farming. "Restoring land provides a place for native plants and wildlife," Vitt said. "It also increases biodiversity and makes our landscapes sustainable for future generations."

staffing of crisis hotlines.

## FLORIDA

**PINELLAS COUNTY** now has a specialized **mental health service** for its first responders, the Mental Health for Heroes Foundation. About 30 percent of first responders develop behavioral health conditions including depression, aggressive behavior and PTSD, but less than 5 percent of agencies across the country have suicide prevention or mental health programs. Since it launched in late September, 50 members of the sheriff's office have accessed the program's mental health services.

"Early intervention, getting them on the right track, getting them the services is going to allow them to be healthy, mentally healthy and more importantly do what we need them to do which is to help keep

the community safe," Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri told WFLA-TV.

## MICHIGAN

**OTTAWA COUNTY** is holding its annual **Water Quality Forum**, which focuses on native landscaping and water conservation, next month. Presenters are set to discuss groundwater studies, how plantings and "rainscapes" impact water quality and quantity and how municipal water systems can create partnerships. Registration for the forum ends October 30.

## MONTANA

**GALLATIN COUNTY** is launching a program called "Handle With Care," that will alert school teachers and counselors if a **student has been traumatized** so they can feel supported and access the resources they may need. Because a variety of circumstances might qualify, each situation will be handled differently, and a solution can be counseling or even something as small as offering a child a nap, according to Erin Clements, Gallatin County's director of Youth and Family Outreach.

## NEW YORK

• **ALBANY COUNTY** is offering free cameras to school dis-



See NEWS FROM page 11

## MARYLAND

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** is opening the first **affordable housing** development to use funding from the county's new Housing Investment Trust Fund. County leaders had a ribbon cutting event for the development, the Gateway at Peerless, in late September and residents are expected to start moving in to the more than 60 apart-

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



## ARIZONA

**MOHAVE COUNTY'S** Sheriff's Office has a new program called "Take Me Home" that creates a registry of people who have a propensity to wander off, including those with **autism, Down syndrome or other cognitive or developmental disabilities**, to make it easier for law enforcement to find them if they go missing. Enrolling a vulnerable family member in the program is free; each enrollment includes information on the family member's height and weight, as well as a current photograph and emergency contact information. The program was originally developed by the Pensacola Police Department and was brought to Mohave County after the death of an autistic boy who had wandered from his home and was found in the Colorado River.



From NEWS FROM page 10

tricts that would record vehicles **illegally passing stopped school buses**. In November, the program will go live. Any revenue from tickets issued will fund the cameras. The first-time penalty for illegally passing a school bus is a \$250 to \$400 fine, five points on a driver's license and/or possibly 30 days in jail. Operation Safe Stop estimates that 50,000 motor vehicles illegally pass New York State school buses daily.

- Two state agencies will monitor **YATES COUNTY's** IT infrastructure. The county signed an agreement with the **Joint Security Operations Center**, a partnership between the state offices of IT Services and Homeland Security will be headquartered in Brooklyn and will be staffed physically and virtually by cybersecurity experts from around the state.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The **PITT COUNTY** Soil and Water Conversation District and the town of Winterville have created a program called "SNAG & DRAG" to **clean debris out of local waterways**. Crews remove things fallen trees, trash and other debris that can lead to flooding, but the work will also eliminate large pools of standing water, which will reduce mosquito breeding grounds.

## PENNSYLVANIA

- DAUPHIN COUNTY** District Attorney Fran Char-do has launched a **conviction integrity unit** to review problematic convictions of people still in prison. Dauphin County is the fourth county in the state to start its own unit, but *The Patriot News* reported that it is likely the first to operate the unit independently from where prosecutors work.



Ladder trucks arch the entry into the Carbon County, Pa. Emergency Operations Training Center dedication ceremony on Sept. 11. Photo by Amy Miller/Times News

## PENNSYLVANIA

- CARBON COUNTY's** Emergency Operations Training Center will enable realistic emergency responder training in and around a four-story fire training tower and pad areas for propane props and vehicle extraction. The site includes a water capture and recycling pond for using high volumes of water typically used during trainin, avoiding discharge into the storm water system.

## OREGON

The **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** Board of Commissioners reduced property taxes for people who own **manufactured homes**. "It might feel like a small tweak to our tax structure, but it's going to make a real difference for thousands of households in Multnomah County," said Board Chair Deborah Kafoury.

Under state statute, all property is taxable and manufactured homes are taxed as personal property unless otherwise exempt. Rising home values were threatening to push homeowners above a threshold of \$38,000 that would have tacked on additional tax bills. That threshold is now \$50,000.



## VIRGINIA

- FAIRFAX COUNTY** is considering a **home-sharing program** for older adults, letting a homeowner provide accommodations to others in exchange for rent assistance and household tasks or both. Board Chairman Jeff McKay said he would likely lean toward pushing forward a public awareness campaign about the possibility of home sharing, which requires a special permit from the county, FFXnow reported. The county's zoning ordinance allows the program if the home is functioning as a single household for up to four people unrelated by blood or marriage.

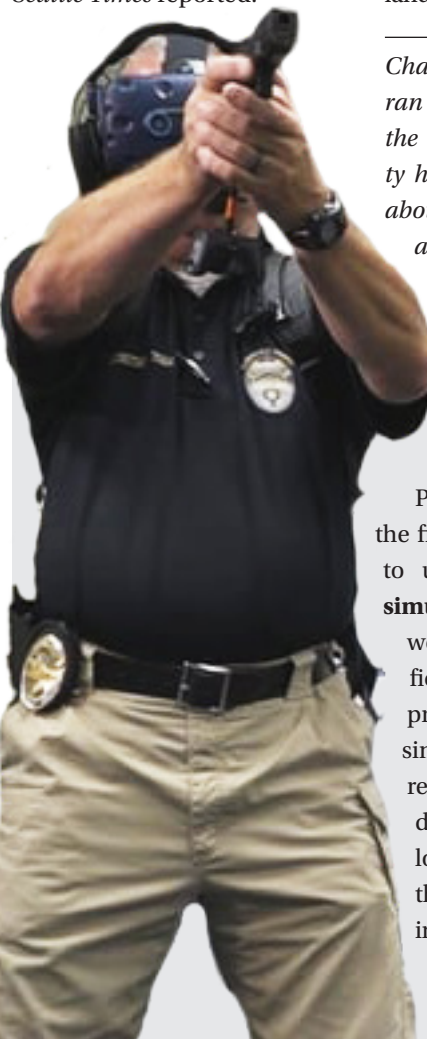
## WASHINGTON

**KING COUNTY** will create a new community-based, **hate-crime hotline** to help victims access services more easily and to improve the county's data collection on reported crimes motivated by hate and bias, *The Seattle Times* reported.

## WISCONSIN

The **DANE COUNTY** Department of Waste and Renewables is funding a **food scraps collection** pilot program at the Dane County Farmers Market. The program aims to reduce the amount of food waste in the landfill, while creating compost.

*Charlie Ban and Meredith Moran compile News From Across the Nation. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org) and [mmoran@naco.org](mailto:mmoran@naco.org).*



## VIRGINIA

- The **ALBEMARLE COUNTY** Police Department is the first agency in the state to use a **virtual reality simulator program**. While wearing the VR set, officers can do target practice and experience simulations that mimic real-life situations. The department tells Charlottesville's WCAV-TV that it helps police train in de-escalation and decision-making during high-stress scenarios.

ments this month.

"When we bring together quality housing and services in the way you all are in this type of project, it really helps us to know that we are investing in communities that are going to be stable, that are going to be sustainable over the long run," said Angie Rodgers, Prince George's County's Chief Administrative Officer.



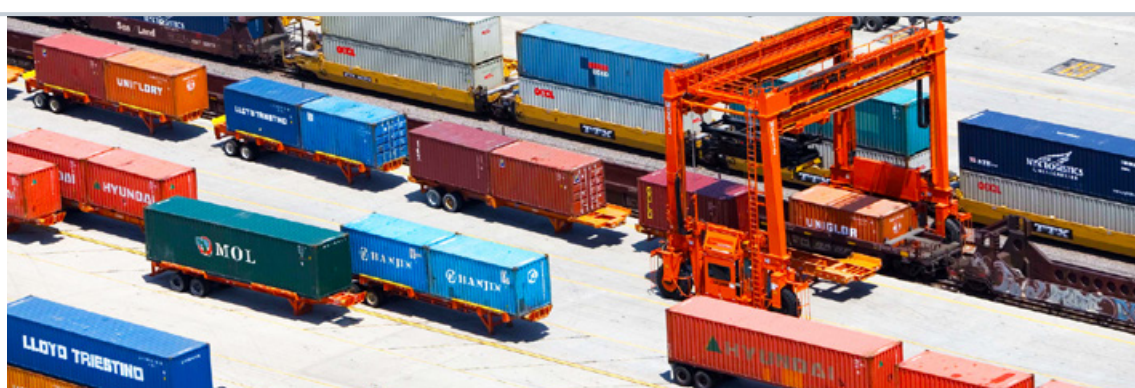




# UPCOMING EVENTS

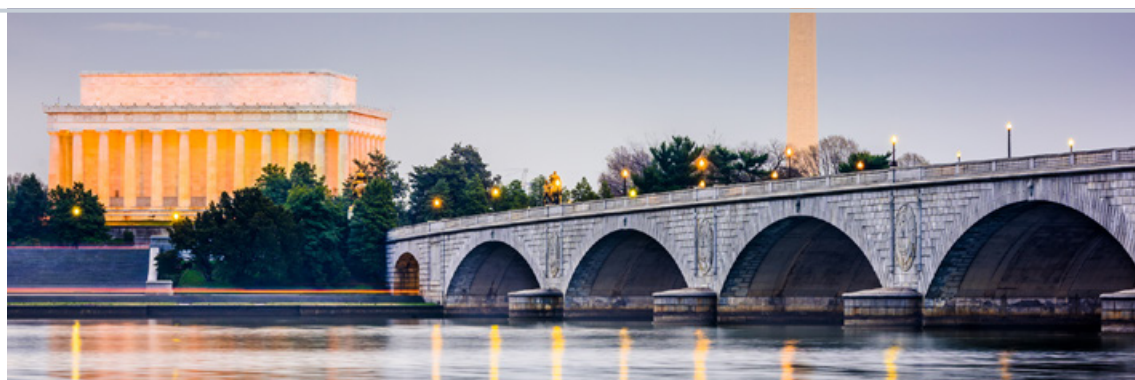
## 2022 FALL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING & LUCC SYMPOSIUM

**November 30-December 2**  
Will County, Illinois



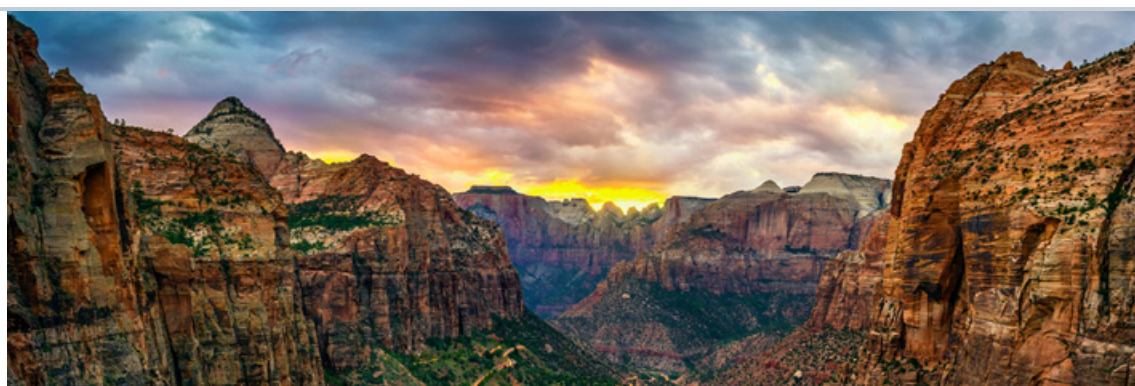
## 2023 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

**February 11-14**  
Washington, D.C.



## 2023 WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION CONFERENCE

**May 17-19**  
Washington County, Utah



## 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

**July 21-24**  
Travis County/Austin, Texas

