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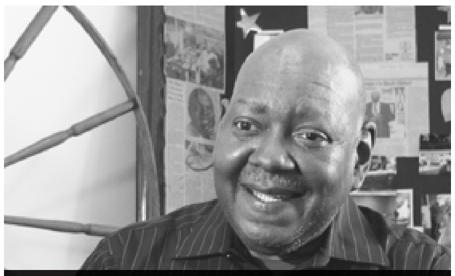
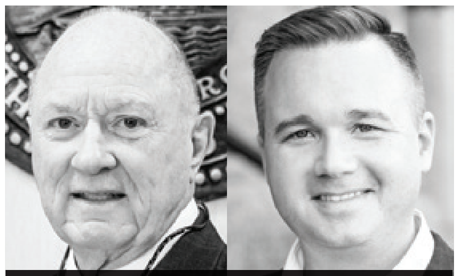


MD. COUNTY PRESERVES BLACK HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTARY. PG. 5

HOT TOPICS: COUNTIES PROVIDE RELIEF WITH ARPA FUNDING. H1-H12



MEET THE CANDIDATES FOR NACo SECOND VICE PRESIDENT. PGS. 8-9

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES VOL. 55, NO. 3 FEBRUARY 13, 2023

President Biden to address NACo Legislative Conference

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

Fresh off his State of the Union address last week, President Joe Biden will head to NACo's Legislative Conference Tuesday, Feb. 14 for a speech to county officials at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C.

BIDEN

Nearly 2,000 elected and appointed county officials from around the country are in Washington, D.C. this week focusing on federal policy issues at the conference, which kicked off Friday, Feb. 10 and continues through Tuesday, Feb. 14. Attendees are engaging in policy sessions, meeting members of the 118th Congress and interacting with federal agency officials.

County officials will meet with their counterparts and hear from the administration and others on issues important to their counties — from mental health and broadband to affordable housing and wildfire and resiliency.

Presidents have a long tradition of visiting NACo conferences — including Presidents Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

In his State of the Union address Feb. 7, Biden talked about helping "people that have been forgotten."

"My economic plan is about investing in places and people that have been forgotten," he said. "Amid the economic upheaval of the past four decades, too many people have been left behind or treated like they're invisible."

During a time of cultural divide, the president preached bipartisanship during his address. "Fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflicts, gets us nowhere," he said. "And that's always been my vision for the country: to restore the soul of the nation, to rebuild the backbone of America: the middle class, to unite the country."

Biden's political career began as a county official in New Castle County, Del., where he served as a councilman for two years. In 1970, 27-year-old Biden was first elected to public office as the New Castle County, Del. Council Member for the 4th District.

He served on the council for two years before making a bid to

See PRESIDENT page 2

Keith Carson channels Berkeley upbringing on Alameda County Board

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

Keith Carson didn't plan on running for the Alameda County, Calif. Board of Supervisors, despite some pleas from local politicians.

As a longtime staffer to Rep. Ron Dellums (D-Calif.), Carson saw himself as more of a background actor in politics, but he did his due diligence, knocking on some doors in his native Berkeley to see for himself if he had a future. Then late one night, he was confronted by an intimidating group of men as he walked back to his car.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"They started asking 'What are you doing here?' and I got kind of nervous and told them I was surveying running for office," Carson said. "They let me go on ahead and when I was leaving, they said 'Why don't you go ahead and run for office? Maybe you can get us off the street corner.'"

Carson ran, and he lost by about two dozen votes, but two years later, he prevailed and began what is now a 30-year career on the county Board and has included terms as president of the California State Association of Counties and a long tenure on NACo's Board of Directors.

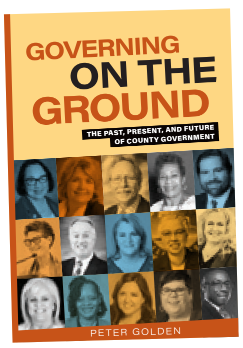
His own trajectory in government drew parallels to the men who gave him the push to run

See CARSON page 3

New NACo book shines light on county duties

by Mary Ann Barton
editor

County government is one of the most consequential, least understood levels of government in America. Specific county roles and responsibilities vary widely from state to state — and even within some states — but county governments everywhere play an important role in serving residents and communities.



What is often overlooked is that county governments are institutions comprised of people — county officials who live and work in the communities they lead. They are our neighbors, co-workers, family and friends.

Now, the National Association of Counties has published a book about county government that hopes to give readers insight into how county government works and the number and variety of its responsibilities.

The book, "Governing on the Ground: The Past, Present and Future of County Government,"

See BOOK page 2

Even a 'Colstrip' has economic options

by Maxwell Johnson

By the time the Rosebud County, Mont. community of Colstrip called on the Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC) in 2015, the economic situation was beyond urgent.

With a population of just over 2,000, Colstrip was built on coal mining and power generation, industries which employ hundreds and contribute significant tax revenue.

But downsizing in the industries impacted Colstrip in the late 20th century, and diversification wasn't "an" option, it was "the" option.

Jim Atchinson, SEMDC's executive director, stressed that despite the community's place in the broader trends of America's energy transition, Colstrip's story was still being written.

Atchinson spoke during the Jan. 26 convening of the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities (BRECC) National Network. NACo's BRECC Initiative is a community of practice supported by funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and over the next two years, the BRECC National Network will hold a virtual learning series, featuring a live webinar every other month for local leaders who are on the ground in coal country, working to increase economic resilience and position their communities for a bright future.

Responding to community concerns, SEMDC released the Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy in 2017. It contained six goals and 17 strategies, boiled down into five major projects:

- an expansion of broadband capacity
- the development of an industrial park, called the Colstrip Energy Park
- the creation of a Business Innovation Center, slated to begin construction in the coming months
- the development of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) site selector tool, and
- the launch of a regional marketing campaign, which has helped attract new residents to Colstrip, including remote workers.

There are spinoff opportunities in this approach. SEMDC is exploring the potential of "value-added energy," modeled on value-added agriculture. By capitalizing on a fuller range of Colstrip's assets, like rare earth resources and sites amenable to renewable energy, the city can evolve from a coal hub into an energy hub.

Momentum is key in economic revitalization programs. "When people found out what we were doing," Atchison told attendees, there "was a 'wow' factor." Moreover, in the past couple of years, SEMDC redoubled community engagement efforts — and efforts to engage state officials. In early 2023, for example, representatives from SEMDC attended a well-received legislative reception in Montana's state capital of Helena, which was well-received.

Colstrip, Mont.

Atchison emphasized that "successful economic development is a team sport." Economic revitalization is a long-term undertaking, and SEMDC has found that relationships begun early in the diversification process are now coming to fruition.

"You never know who you meet and, [in] those relationships you're creating today, what benefits they're going to bring you four or five years from now." CN

NACo invites all those interested to join the BRECC National Network: www.naco.org/brecc

Johnson is an intern in NACo's Counties Futures Lab.

STATISTICS	BY THE NUMBERS
U.S. Black population:	49,586,352
No. of Black-owned businesses:	140,918
No. of Black college students:	2.72 million
No. of Black veterans:	2 million
Percent of Black population voting:	62.6 percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Presidents are a tradition at NACo conferences

From PRESIDENT page 1

run for the U.S. Senate where he was elected as the sixth-youngest U.S. Senator in the country's history.

Current New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer recalled a story during the December 2020 NACo Board of Directors meeting that Biden had told him about his time as council member when a constituent insisted a dead animal immediately be removed from her street. Biden arrived in a pickup truck and removed the animal himself that night.

"We're so fortunate to have a president-elect who understands what it is like to stand in our shoes as county officials," Meyer said.

During the same meeting, Biden recalled his county experience and emphasized the difficult positions county officials are often put into and the public's lack of understanding about the role of local governments.

"I'd knock on the door as a 26-year-old kid when I started and say 'Hello, my name is Joe Biden, candidate for the county council.' They'd look at me and I know they were wondering — What the hell does a county Council do?" he said.

Biden said county officials are the "single most consequential government officials."

"You're also the basis upon which people have faith or don't have faith in government," he said. "It's all local." CN

Thirty county officials interviewed for NACo book

From BOOK page 1

written by author Peter Golden, is divided into 30 chapters that each tackle a specific responsibility of county government.

Thirty county officials from around the country were interviewed for the book, each talking about a different issue, telling the story in the book in their own voice.

The 167-page book is divided into sections on health, human services, public safety, the environment and land use, community and economics, transportation and technology. Within each section, there are a number of chapters.

County News senior writer Charlie Ban, former *County News* staff writer Rachel Looker, Northern Virginia freelance writer Stephenie Overman and former *County News* staff writer Dakota Hendricks conducted interviews for the book. Golden wrote the book from the interview transcripts. CN

Books are available for sale on Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com. A limited number will also be for sale at the NACo Legislative Conference.

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Carson's first legislative experience came from a high school model state Assembly

From CARSON page 1

for office. As a rebellious teenager, after being kicked out of his public school in Berkeley, he ran afoul of the law. As he was being arrested, a man named Harold Davis, later executive director of the Oakland Housing Authority, saw him and suggested the police remand him to the Youth in Government program.

"The police asked me what I wanted to do," Carson said. "I didn't know this guy at all, but where he was taking me sounded better than jail."

The program involved joining a student assembly in Sacramento, where teenagers debated legislation, and he found an environment that energized him like nothing he'd felt before — a chance to participate in a formal process to affect change mirroring what he saw in popular demonstrations throughout the East Bay. That said, his political instincts were a little off at that point.

"I proposed a bill that people over the age of 60 wouldn't be allowed to drive," Carson said. "I'm way over 60 now, so I'm glad that failed."

Though he didn't know a life outside of the socially conscious atmosphere in Berkeley, his parents did, having migrated from Texas, just one generation removed from slavery.

"My father could never talk to me about his experiences as a Black man in Texas, they were too painful," Carson said. "I just knew they wanted to get as far away as possible."

It was important, Carson said, that his parents showed him the options for social change available to them, even as restaurants wouldn't serve them. Neither had graduated high school, but they worked hard to afford Carson and his sisters advantages they never had, including private high school for him.

"My parents would take me to picket lines and sit-ins that were taking place, even in Berkeley and Oakland, which were supposed to be progressive. That was a part of the experience and the learning process."

Unable to enter a stadium where President Kennedy spoke, the family listened from a hillside nearby. They heard Martin Luther King Jr. preach at a local church. Politics, in one form or another, was in the air in Berkeley.

After the student legislature, Carson was placed as an intern in the office of Warren Widener, Berkeley's first Black mayor (who Carson would run against for the county Board decades later). Already a confident speaker, Carson turned his newfound studious efforts to refining his writing skills.

When Dellums ran to be the area's first Black member of Congress, Carson's parents volunteered for his campaign. Following college at the University of California, Carson started working for Dellums, from whom he gained a particular interest in public finance, which prompted his graduate studies.

"That gave me a better understanding of the totality of government," he said, pointing out that while naysayers can claim a program isn't affordable, understanding the intricacies of finance gives leaders options.

In addition to 10 years working in Dellums' district office, he spent five years in his Washington, D.C. office. The breadth of his government experience made his transition to the Alameda County Board in 1993 virtually seamless.

"In organizing for the race, my campaign had connected with a cross-section of the community," Carson said. "We had people feeling energized because they knew we were focused on their issues, even though they know several other constituencies also had priorities we were listening to."

As chair of the Board's budget committee, Carson worked to make the meetings more open and inclusive, soliciting more budget input throughout the county.

"It wasn't just a few people carving up the budget anymore," he said. "I just tried to make it a more inclusive, more transparent process and through that process hopefully having a more equitable outcome."

Through his participation in both the state and national associations, Carson has gained a lot of perspective for how other leaders manage their counties' needs. But he is very concerned about the impact of broad economic trends on his own district, which he has seen become less diverse over his tenure as the cost of living throughout the Bay Area drives many, including his son, farther inland if they want to stay in California.

"Now there's an exodus because people can't afford to live in our area," he said. "People on the economic margins are becoming part of our homeless or the incarcerated population and the need for the services county government provides has become so much greater and these groups struggle to survive. We spent $100 million on food programs in 2022, but just a few years ago it was $10 million before the COVID pandemic."

His district, which was 20 percent Black when he was elected in 1992, is now closer to 10 percent Black.

"We're seeing less of the diversity that made our area so distinctive and vibrant," he said.

His response is to live unapologetically through his identity as an African-American, and he feels that by gearing his attention to the needs of one marginalized group, he's much more receptive to others, citing LGBTQ and disabled communities as examples of constituencies for whom attention to their concerns have made the country stronger overall.

"We want to minimize competition among groups, but also constantly using the data that highlights the disparities and redirect resources accordingly," he said. "We're currently in the process of sitting down with each of the distinctive groups, coming out of the pandemic, trying to solicit what does life look like for the population. For some groups, family connections get tighter and we want to make sure nobody pulls away from society at large and feels forgotten by county government."

While work in the community is crucial, Carson saw John George, the county's first Black supervisor, die in office from a heart attack, due in part to overextending himself in an effort to keep up a hectic public schedule. North of 70, Carson prioritizes his physical and mental health with regular appointments with a heavy punching bag, on which he unleashes his frustrations while working up a sweat before giving the bag a cathartic embrace after a long workout and moving on with his day.

His eye has always been on the future, even as he looks to the challenges his parents faced in an effort to use county government to make life better for everyone. Though his father died before he took office, his mother lived to see most of his county government career thus far.

"I've been blessed to be placed in a position to be in the room where I can lend a voice to trying to figure out how we move forward," he said. "I feel so blessed that I have the ability to do this work." CN

Alameda County, Calif. Supervisor Keith Carson meets with a constituent. Photo courtesy of Keith Carson

Pa. program helps rural families find way out of poverty

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

(From l-r) Sandy Johnson, Bourger Women with Children coordinator; Katherine Pohlidal, Bourger Women with Children director; Cathy Franko, HANDS of Wyoming County executive director and Gretchen Hunt Greeves, director of nutrition programs for Commission on Economic Opportunity pose at the Parent Pathways launch on Oct. 20, 2022. Photo courtesy of Katherine Pohlidal

Parent Pathways of Northeastern Pennsylvania is a multi-sector, multi-generational approach to fighting poverty, involving nearly 30 community-based non-profits and higher-education institutes and spanning five counties.

Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Wayne and Susquehanna counties are all part of Parent Pathways, which launched in October 2022 and has since enrolled nearly 30 families in its services. Parent Pathways addresses the needs of both parents and their children, partnering with organizations that offer services including free job training, access to housing, food and both preschool programming and higher education.

The income limit for eligibility is 250 percent of the federal poverty guideline for the head of household and their dependent children, so for a family of two the limit is $45,775. Grandparents who are the primary caregivers for children are also eligible. The program is led by Katherine Pohlidal, director of Misericordia University's Ruth Matthews Bourger Women with Children Program.

"Our goal was to create a variety of options among partners…so obviously some families might be a little more stabilized and have some resources, so maybe what they need is more guidance into a higher ed institution, versus others who might need to start with food access, so their needs dictate the path."

The three-year pilot, which will head into its final year next month, is a result of Robin Hood's Mobility LABs, an initiative created to spur new solutions to poverty. Mobility LABs has nine local anchors across the country, including South Bronx, N.Y., Suburban Cook County, Ill. and East San Jose, Calif. Northeastern Pennsylvania is the only rural pilot location.

"The idea was to challenge communities to develop their own sort of grassroots initiatives to help sustainably lift families out of poverty," Pohlidal said. "I love the idea that Robin Hood was novel and innovative enough to say, 'Look, you know your community's best, so let's empower you to do what you can for it and come up with some solutions,' so I think that it's a great way to really learn and put a dent in some of this, because I don't think poverty is going anywhere, so how are we putting a dent in this for families who really want an opportunity? So, that's been a refreshing thing to have that type of experience.

"Our hope is that we're proliferating ourselves out in a way that's intentional, but also targeted in terms of knowing and understanding where most of these families are living and trying to survive, frankly, and we want to be there and present for them," she said.

"So for us, access is probably one of the biggest and most incredibly important things that we do in this process."

Katherin Phillips, co-founder of The Shared Humanity Project, one of the program's partners, said that what drew her to Parent Pathways was its understanding of geographic specialization in addressing poverty and its emphasis on making access to services as convenient as possible.

"When we have looked at poverty programs in the United States, be it at the government level or the nonprofit level, we tend to be very siloed in our thinking," Phillips said. "The federal government has all these different departments set up to think about low-income families, but they don't talk to each other, so, if I'm a low-income person looking to receive government benefits, in many places, I have to fill out 10 different applications that have different cycles, and I may be eligible for one, but my eligibility for one might make me ineligible for another.

"It's just extraordinarily complicated, where it would be much more efficient and humane to have a sort of 'one door of entry,' and that's what Parent Pathways does by being sort of this multi-sectoral, multi-generational approach …," she noted. "The issues in Northeast Pennsylvania might be completely different to issues that are in South Dakota or Maryland, so, while you might take this general approach, the specific implementation has to vary by location based on the needs and the resources, and so we're working to sort of connect these groups."

> 'Through our rural nature, we actually have two different kinds of poverty."
>
> *- Cathy Franko*
> *executive director*
> *HANDS of Wyoming County*

HANDS of Wyoming County, a non-profit that offers a family resource center, a Parents as Teachers home-visiting program and an on-site food and diaper pantry, is the lead partner for Parent Pathways in Wyoming County. Parent Pathways' two-generational approach lined up with HANDS' mission and made them natural partners, said Cathy Franko, HANDS of Wyoming County's executive director.

"Through our rural nature, we actually have two different kinds of poverty," Franko said. "There's a generational poverty in our area, where at least two generations have been born into poverty, and also, we have rural poverty, and that stems from limited access to education, employment and healthcare. So, when you're looking at the two-generational approach, it's strategic because of its partnership, so we try to support the entire family with integrated services and then we implement some goal plannings for both of them."

To get involved, a parent must fill out a Pathfinder form on the organization's website. Each family in Parent Pathways is assigned a Pathways advisor to help them navigate the process and access the resources they need. Shianne Wiernusz is the Pathways Advisor for Wyoming County and is also a parent educator for HANDS of Wyoming County.

"I'm the first point of contact for the moms or dads who want to go back to higher education, whether that is a certificate program, their GED or even going back to college," Wiernusz said.

"My job is to case manage and get them through the whole process of school. I'm like their support system to help them overcome barriers. In our county, we see a lot of issues with technology, so we can help them get a laptop or connect them to services for WiFi.

"My job is also to be their biggest cheerleader, so like if they get a good grade in a class for the semester, providing incentives to celebrate with family, like a gift card to go out to eat

See POVERTY page 6

BRIGHT IDEAS | CHARLES COUNTY, Md.

Maryland county residents share stories to preserve Black history in documentary

PROBLEM:
Much of the history of the county was about buildings, rather than people.

SOLUTION:
Create documetary series and involve the community.

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

The documentary series "Deep Roots and Many Branches" highlights Black history and untold stories in Charles County, Md. to bring life to the county's history.

The Charles County Media Services and Department of Planning and Growth Management partnered to create the videos, which feature interviews with county residents supplemented with photographs, drawings and research from the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library and the National Archives digital collections and modern footage of historical landmarks.

The concept of a documentary series came out of restoration work the Department of Planning and Growth Management was doing in the Pomonkey Historic District, a post-Civil War segregated Black community in Charles County that was home to one of two of the county's Black high schools up until the 1960s, according to Cathy Thompson, the county's community planning program manager.

"Relationships that we had made, especially with a couple of key members of the African American community, helped us better understand what the narratives might be, and a lot of it was where there was potential, where there was interest, where there were community members who were interested in stories and willing to share them with us," Thompson said. "We stayed really open to where that kind of process of discovery would lead us.

"A big part of the project has been an emphasis on community members telling their own story through their own words, and I think that was key — that we're not taking over the narrative, we're allowing folks to share their story and just giving a venue or a medium for that whenever we can."

In addition to the Village of Pomonkey, the project has released videos on the Port Tobacco Escape, the story of Mark Caesar and Bill Wheeler; the Port Tobacco Jailer, the story of Washington Burch; the Blue Jay Motel, the story of Arthur Farrar and the legacy of the Carroll Family Farm.

The next two documentaries in the works are on Camp Stanton, a Civil War training encampment for Black soldiers, and J.C. Parks, a superintendent of Black Charles County schools from the 1920s to the 1960s whose career spanned school segregation and integration.

"A big part of this puzzle is that it's borne out of a historic preservation program, and in many ways, it's an equity issue because historic preservation programs traditionally rely on the buildings that survive and the things that survive, but those don't always reflect all of the history," Thompson said.

"I think the African American community was not as well represented, if we're just looking at the buildings that survived from the past, so this was a great way to address that in a way that we weren't bound with just historic buildings — we could tell a story the way it should be told, we could talk about buildings that were no longer there, we can talk about places."

Three of the five videos in the series — on Pomonkey, the Blue Jay Motel and the Carroll Family Farm — are centered on physical spaces, but "Deep Roots and Many Branches" is more about the people who inhabited them than the historical markers themselves, said Lee Ann Stone, the video production specialist who creates the series.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"It's not so much about buildings as it is about the people in the community and the struggles, the victories and the things that were achieved during those times," Stone said. "So, the buildings, like Camp Stanton, give us a doorway of going in there, but it's the stories that really make up the documentaries or what happened during those times."

Stone, a Charles County native, said she was amazed that there was so much Black history in the area she wasn't aware of prior to working on the series, and that it's an honor to get to provide a platform for the stories to be heard across the county and beyond.

The documentaries, which are posted on the Charles County government YouTube channel and advertised on its social media channels, have collectively racked up thousands of views.

"It's an opportunity to highlight our county and highlight a history that might never get to be told or seen except by the people who lived that history telling it, but we're able to get it to a wider audience," Stone said. "It's been a great relationship, where we're each trying to help each other to tell a story."

One viewer commented under the Carroll Family Farm documentary: "Thank you for putting together these videos with all the wonderful history, and stories of the people, and families that were a part of the heartbeat of Charles County, MD. I've enjoyed learning these beautiful stories. As a resident of just a short while since 2015 (Dentsville) I've driven past some of these locations and would have never known the significance of these landmarks without these videos."

"Deep Roots and Many Branches" has not only been successful in educating people on the county's history, but also in strengthening the relationship between county departments and county residents, Thompson said.

"We're always doing planning work in communities, and so often, some of that is long term, so to have projects that we can go in and work with a community and produce something short-term is a really great way to build relationships, to give back and to create trust, so that, as we continue community efforts, we have stronger relationships to draw from," Thompson said.

"Whether it's when we're working on a Pomonkey Village plan or a Bryans Road sub-area plan or a comprehensive plan update, these smaller documentary projects help us work to build a sense of recognition of a shared past, and it's just a wonderful tool to just continue to build relationships." CN

Charles County's video efforts won a 2022 NACo Achievement Award in the Arts, Culture, and Historic Preservation category.

Tyrone Farrar reflects on his grandather's life in the fourth installment of the docuseries, "Blue Jay Hotel— The Story of Arthur Farrar." Photo courtesy of Lee Ann Stone

WORD SEARCH

LLANO COUNTY, TEXAS

Created by: Alyxa Hawkins

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W	F	I	R	N	L	L	I	T	O	R	W	K	R	I	E	W	I	T	Z

ANTLERS: The Antlers Hotel opened in 1901 in the county and closed in 1923. It reopened in 1996 and remains in operation today. It is a Victorian-style building and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

BARBEQUE: Craving some barbeque? Check out Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que in Llano County.

COURTHOUSE: The county courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1893 with an exterior of sandstone, marble and granite.

DEER: Llano County is known as the Deer Capital of Texas, having the highest density in the nation of white-tailed deer in the Llano Basin.

EDWARDS: Llano County is located on the Edwards Plateau, a geographical region at the crossroads of Central, South and West Texas.

GEOLOGY: Llanite, rare porphyritic rhyolite with a distinct blue quartz, is unique to Llano County.

HILL: Llano County is located in Texas Hill Country.

KRIEWITZ: Emil Kriewitz, 1822-1902, was a German immigrant and veteran of the Mexican-American War. He served as a guide to the Fiser-Miller Land Grant settlers of Texas and later served as Llano County Justice of the Peace, Judge of Election and Postmaster.

LAKE: Within Llano County, Sunrise Beach Village sits on the southern shore of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson.

LLANO: The county seat is located in Llano, Texas and is named for the Llano River.

MUSEUM: When visiting the county, make sure to stop in the Llano County Museum, located in the county seat of Llano. The museum features exhibits on local history.

POPULATION: Per the 2020 census, the population of Llano County is 21,243.

SOUTHERN: Another building on the National Register of Historic Places, The Southern Hotel located in Llano was built in 1881 by two stonemasons in the Second Empire style. Originally built as a stagecoach stop, it later served as a hotel and boarding house.

TEXAS: Llano County is located in Texas.

TONKAWA: The first inhabitants in what would become Llano County were Native Americans of the Tonkawa tribe.

BEHIND THE SEAL

LA PAZ COUNTY, ARIZ.

La Paz County, Ariz. was established in 1983 after residents voted to divide Yuma County in two. Its current seal is a mash-up of the original seal from 1983 and a new design from 2000.

The left side of the seal, adapted from the original seal, features paddle wheel boats used by miners along the Colorado River.

Pottery on the shore acknowledges the county's Native American history and the Colorado River Indian tribes.

Along the edges of the seal are a pick and shovel that represent the county's history of gold and copper mining.

A Saguaro cactus represents the county's desert landscape

wheat and cotton represent its agricultural heritage.

The county's motto, "Future Unlimited," is included below the Arizona state flag.

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

Program helps rural families

From POVERTY page 4

with the family so they don't have to pay, or going to the movie theater, stuff like that."

Robin Hood started connecting with organizations in northeastern Pennsylvania for the pilot in 2019 but programming was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pohlidal said she thinks the longer process actually benefited Parent Pathways.

"On some level, it was sort of a blessing in disguise because I think it afforded us the opportunity to really drill down and look at some of our system's issues, looking at micro, macro levels of concerns and barriers that families were facing," she said.

"We even did a survey and really saw how the pandemic was impacting families in real time that were particularly vulnerable and living in poverty or falling into poverty, so it helped us to take a very proactive approach, and I think it gave us some time to really build some of those relationships among systems."

Although Parent Pathways is unsure whether it will continue to receive funding from Robin Hood following the completion of the pilot, Pohlidal said she's confident programming will be able to continue based on the model its created with so many community partners.

"Robin Hood challenged every location to come up with their own funding streams or sustainable ways of funding this initiative," she said.

Wayne County Community Foundation, which manages over 130 different funds totaling around $11.5 million, is a local organization that has said it would be a "willing funding partner" of Parent Pathways following the completion of the pilot.

The foundation has supported Parent Pathways by connecting the program with the referral service United, as well as other service providers, like Wayne County Family Center, which offers early childhood programs and Wayne Pike

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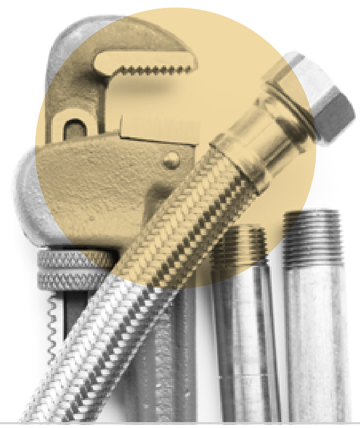
Engaging residents on ARPA spending **pg. H5** How counties are investing funds. **pg. H9**

HOT topics

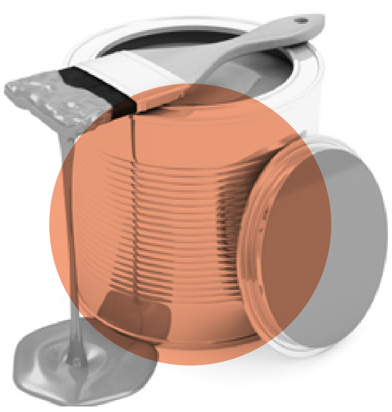
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

FEBRUARY 13, 2023



The American Rescue Plan:

How counties are investing ARPA funds to provide relief from COVID...



and improve the lives of residents in their communities.

Changing lives: ARPA funds Cook County guaranteed income pilot program

Cook County, Ill. Board President Toni Preckwinkle speaks at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference. Photo by Denny Henry

by Charlie Ban
senior writer

A little boost, just $500 a month, could help a transit-dependent resident in suburban Cook County, Ill. finally buy a car and expand her horizons for a new job, a better job, away from the bus or train lines.

An extra $500 in mid-December could mean new winter coats and shoes that actually fit growing children. Or a cushion for the budget in a volatile environment when food and gas prices fluctuate. Or just fewer hard choices for people who don't have many options.

Those are some of the outcomes the Cook County Promise hopes for more than 3,200 families over the next two years, all of whom will receive $500 a month. When the county opened a lottery for the program for roughly two weeks last fall, more than 233,000 people applied.

"There's clearly a great need," said County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "I'm confident that we're going to have some interesting findings at the end of our two years and we'll continue on with this initiative."

All told, the county is putting $42 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding into the two-year pilot project and is committing to continue with county funding after that.

Guaranteed income is an old concept, going back to antiquity and gaining steam in the United States since Martin Luther King Jr.'s career. While Preckwinkle's brother has beaten the drum to her since she took office, two staff members took up the cause and demonstrated the concept's viability after the county received $1 billion from ARPA, convincing Preckwinkle to give it a shot.

"We've tried a lot of different approaches to poverty other than just simply giving people money," she said.

There's a certain parallel with ARPA itself — 3,069 counties receiving money to do with as they please (except lobbying) and 3,250 Cook County families receiving the same.

"The data does show that people are very prudent with this money, that it is spent on necessities and eventually if there were a long enough program, people could maybe start building something, trying to get a down payment or get a new car or something like that to build toward more long-term goals," said Pete Subkoviak, the program's director.

Applicants had to be 18 years or older, have a household income at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level and not be participating in another guaranteed income program. Nearly 36 percent of Cook County residents were eligible.

It's not Cook County's first foray into direct payments, though. Using Coronavirus Relief Fund money, the county allocated $2 million, which soon expanded to $9 million, in one-time allocations of $600 to $1,400.

"I think that showed a lot of people inside Cook County government just how valuable this kind of a program could be," Subkoviak said, noting that program served every person who applied. With the Cook County Promise, the 3,250 families were a compromise between offering families a significant amount and casting a wide net — and a large sample size.

"We wanted to help as many people as we could, but at the same time we wanted to have really impacted each of those households' lives," Subkoviak said about the amounts. "This kind of assistance can make a difference in people's lives beyond just being able to purchase things. This could give someone the cushion to be able to take time off work, or not have to take an extra shift and be able to see their kid's soccer game. So many people are just working and sleeping and this can give them a chance to take a breath."

FOCUSING ON SUBURBAN POVERTY

With a similar program at play in Chicago, Cook County's focus is on its suburban areas — with 85 percent of the funding going outside of the city limits.

The University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty found that between 2000-2015, the overall number of people in poverty in the United States grew by 11.5 million, with suburbs accounting for roughly 5.7 million or 48 percent of that growth and that in 2015, there were roughly 3 million more poor people in suburbs than in cities.

The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has invariably changed those figures, as has migration in and out of cities, which saw increasing home values in the urban core after years of White flight.

"I think that in Cook County, like a lot of other parts of the country, it becomes less feasible for people of lesser means to stick around and so often they moved to the suburbs where housing prices are

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From COOK COUNTY pg H2

a little bit more reasonable for them," Subkoviak said. "The suburbs were originally built for more affluent people, with fewer social services, less public transport, less public services and so people who are lower income and living in the suburbs are much more isolated from assistance than people living in the cities."

The Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot will give 5,000 city residents $500 per month, for one year.

DETAILS OF THE PROGRAM

The county's contractor, Give Directly, provided outreach services, performed eligibility checks with the University of Chicago's Inclusive Economies Lab and designed an application designed for a smartphone, though 15 percent of applicants took advantage of in-person assistance. Subkoviak described the administrative burden as being minimal and the startup period as faster than comparable programs.

The payments qualify as a gift, so they will not interrupt families' eligibility for other public support programs, and participants were offered optional financial coaching support. The study also includes a 3,250-person control group that will not be receiving monthly payments.

"We're hoping we can actually try and see 'What does it mean, beyond just the households that are committing the money? What about the local economy? What about the local community? What are the frequent effects of this kind of a program?"" Subkoviak said.

"We know a couple of the things that we're looking at, as part of our evaluation, are our main cost drivers for the county, our jail, our health and hospital system and housing and housing instability and homelessness services. If we're able to identify that, we're having a positive impact and saving the county money that just helps the whole financial situation of this primary program."

Arlington County, Va. knows a little bit what a guaranteed income program can do. In September 2021, the Arlington Community Foundation launched an 18-month pilot program with the Arlington County Department of Human Services. Privately funded, the program provided monthly $500 payments to 200 low-income working families. In addition to increased financial well-being, the program aims to achieve a heightened sense of personal agency, and community belonging among participants.

An interim evaluation looking at the program's first six months found that recipients most commonly used payments for food, utilities and household expenses for children and they emphasized the stress-reducing effects of the cash. Some noted using it to pay down debt or start new endeavors.

Santa Clara County, Calif. funded a guaranteed income program that offered 72 former foster youths $1,000 a month. The Board of Supervisors voted in 2021 to allocate an additional $500,000 to continue support for those 72 young adults.

"When I got into the program, it really was like a superhero coming in to save the day," said Veronica Vieyra, a 25-year-old program participant who had just graduated from San José State University. "I was just exiting the foster system and needed to move out of the college dorms because of the pandemic. The program allowed me to find a room, stay in the area, and get my degree. Now I'm in the process of finding work, and the additional income allows me to do so while keeping a roof over my head."

A NATIONAL MODEL

Other counties have funded guaranteed income programs, but as the second largest county in the country, Cook County presents a large test case that Preckwinkle sees as a national model.

"It's our hope that this program and others around the country will kind of prove the point that these kind of investments in our residents are worthwhile," she said, noting that despite years-long lags, Medicaid was adopted nationwide and Medicaid expansion is following the same slow but steady pattern.

"A lot of federal initiatives are the result of things that have percolated up from the local level," she said. "If we can show that the folks who were participants in the program made significant progress in terms of stabilizing their lives and providing more opportunities for themselves and their children, I think the federal government ought to be doing this for everybody who's eligible."

COUNTY-FUNDED GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAMS

- Cook County, Ill. 3,250 families receive $500 for 24 months
- Humboldt County, Calif. 150 people receive $1,000 for 18 months
- Los Angeles County, Calif. 1,000 youths receive $1,000 for 36 months
- Montgomery County, Md. 300 people receive $800 for 24 months
- Santa Clara County. Calif. 72 former foster youths receive $1,000 for 12 months
- Sonoma County, Calif. 305 people receive $500 for 24 months

Cook County Promise … helps resident keep a family promise

Clarence Shaffer had to read the text message twice.

He had taken a hiatus from his job five months earlier so he could spend time with his 87-year-old mother, who still works as a pastor. One of her parishioners had sent him some information about the Cook County Promise, and while he waited a day to read it, he was glad he did. He had one more day before the deadline to register for a lottery that would pay him $500 a month for two years.

"That kind of money makes a difference," he said. "I figured I should apply it toward a static bill that I know I'll always be paying and then I won't have to worry about it, so I use it to pay my life insurance premium," to ensure financial stability for his children and grandson.

Shaffer wouldn't mind working while he cares for his mother, but the nature of his job as a bodyguard would make that impossible.

"I travel all over, so it's rare that my job, whenever I have to go work, doesn't involve an airplane," he said. "I could be gone anywhere from a week to five or six months."

The program allows him to do what he couldn't otherwise — spend time with and help his mother. Because she no longer drives, he helps her continue her ministerial work, which provides an impact to her congregation.

"I want to be there," he said. "I want to be able to know and feel and at my core that I did what my dad expected me to do before he passed away, and what I was supposed to do, as a son, to return the love and kindness that I got being raised by parents."

The program's potential was clear to him once he saw it was funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, soothing his philosophical concerns. He called the application process the easiest thing he had ever signed up for.

"It wasn't state taxpayer money, wasn't something that some people might consider a handout, it's really a hand up," he said. "Most people are only one or two paychecks away from being homeless… so I can't see this program not being beneficial to anyone who is lucky enough to be accepted into the program."

By helping his mother continue her work, Shaffer feels he's maintaining her quality of life. His job will be there when he comes back to it, but he wants to make the most of his time with his mom.

"She's a very active person, she attends a lot of meetings, she's part of a lot of religious organizations, but when people stop doing what they're used to that's when they really get sick," he said.

"As long as she can stay active, that's what matters to me. She loves going out to eat, and I get to pick her brain about our family history and talk about things like that. I still feel like I'm the spoiled son."

Clarence Shaffer with his mother, Pastor W.E. Shaffer. Photo courtesy of C. Shaffer

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S.C. county invests ARPA dollars in home repairs for the elderly

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Charleston County, S.C. is using $3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds on a home-repair program for its older, low-to-moderate income residents to reduce energy costs and increase safety measures.


Cordell

The program is underway, with 34 homes having received repairs so far. To be eligible, applicants had to be at least 62 years old and not exceed 80 percent of the county's median income.

"They're on a fixed income with very limited resources, many live alone," said Gail Carson, program manager of Charleston County's Community Development Department.

"Aging does make it difficult for them to supplement their income and as their homes get older, they're typically not always safe to live in when it comes to accessibility," she said. "So, that population, with the economy the way it is right now with rising prices, they sometimes have to choose between medication and home repairs, or food and home repairs, and typically home repairs is an area that they can't afford."

Community Development is partnering with Operation Home, Home Works and Home Dreams for the repairs and The Sustainability Institute for home efficiency improvements, including energy audits and weatherization upgrades.

"There are so many circumstances of families that you really can't weatherize their house appropriately or take it as far as it needs to go without some other critical repair happening first, so there's just an awful lot of families who drop out of the pipeline and can't be served, because those critical repairs are sort of preventing the weatherization from happening, so the pairing of that is a little bit unusual, and I think really smart," said Bryan Cordell, the executive director of The Sustainability Institute. "[The county's] approach has been different than anything that I've seen with making sure every home gets audited and weatherized, both in terms of helping these families with their repairs, but also producing economic savings to them.

"It's a win-win, and then when you think about things like county-wide carbon emissions, all of these projects have a positive effect on that."

Another element that sets Charleston County's apart from many other home repair programs is that mobile homes and heirs' properties are eligible, with the qualification that the home is occupied by the resident and it's their primary residence.

"On the critical home repairs side, that allows us to address the needs of homeowners who also experience a lot of financial hardship at this time due to the pandemic, so it just seems like a very natural progression to make sure we are addressing the needs of all of our citizens and their needs to be safe and in adequate housing," Carson said.

Community Development is also working with the grassroots organization Liberty Hill Redevelopment Group, which was formed to restore the once thriving Black area and North Charleston's oldest community.

"They've watched their community really come down on some hard times with homeowners who are trying to maintain their homes, and so they were a good group to partner with because they knew the community, the community trusted them, and so it allowed them to go into an area that typically wasn't focused on, so it's a very concentrated pilot project addressing the needs in a very specific area," Carson said.

Through its home efficiency improvements, The Sustainability Institute aims to cut down on 20 to 30 percent of the homeowners' energy bills through the program, according to Cordell.

"Their utility bills typically represent one of the highest expenditures that they have, and we have seen everything from a few hundred dollars to yesterday, we had a client who her last energy bill was almost $1,000," he said. "So, what the situation is, is that the people that can afford high utility bills, the least are paying the most for it, which we call energy burden. So, these families have really high energy burden, and for most of them, they're really economically struggling with that.

"From our perspective, it's not good enough just to go do a repair, we really have to think about 'How do we help these families sustain themselves in their houses over the next generation?' And the way to do that is by addressing whatever the critical, immediate urgent problem is, but also providing some kind of base weatherization improvements to try to lower those utility bills as much as much as we possibly can for as long as we can."

In addition to cutting costs and carbon emissions, the efficiency improvements increase safety for the county's most vulnerable population. The Sustainability Institute conducts blower door and duct blaster tests to measure leakiness and tests for carbon monoxide.

"We are going in and testing all of the appliances and things in the house that produce combustion gas, and whether it's an oven or a heater or whatever it is, we come across leaks, especially if that equipment is super old, and addressing those is one of the most important things that you can do, because carbon monoxide when it's leaking in the house has a direct effect on people's health, and you can't weatherize and tighten up a house with a carbon monoxide leak happening," Cordell said.

The county is devoting up to $30,000 on "critical repairs" per home; however, homes that have been assessed as needing "substantial repairs" aren't eligible. Carson said it's because some homes are dilapidated and require a full renovation, which would exceed the county's funding for the program.

"What we saw was that in addition to the roofs and the ramps and the bathroom handicap modifications, there were a lot of homes that really weren't habitable," Carson said. "And we knew that our funds could not address whole home rehabilitation … Taking up a floor and not knowing the extent of the foundation work, it does exceed what our project focus has been, and we were concerned that it would require the relocation of homeowners, which is not something that our project can support."

Seventy-year-old Charleston County resident Ruth Miller's deck was repaired through the program.

"My deck was dilapidated to the point where I couldn't go out there because of fear that I might fall through the floor," she said. "It positively impacted my life by the fact that I'm able to walk out there and sit without that fear. I would call them angels … it really did help."

The home repair program received more than 1,100 applications and is no longer accepting them due to limited funding, according to Carson. The amount of interest highlights how the program is just making a dent in the county's housing issue, she said.

"I think we all knew there was a need for home repairs, but the volume of applicants calling, and the qualification was 62 and over, so there are people out there who still need housing assistance who are even younger," Carson said. "I think it's only the beginning as we begin to tackle the challenge of addressing the needs of homeowners who are financially burdened."

Community engagement critical when planning to invest ARPA funds

Pottawattamie County, Iowa residents gather at a local library to discuss ARPA fund allocations throughout the county. Photo by Joe Shearer, The Daily Nonpareil

by Maxx Silvan

Although board meetings and community events have always allowed residents to connect with local leaders, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided new opportunities for community engagement.

The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund enacted under ARPA provides recipients with a wide range of eligible uses. This flexibility includes efforts to respond to the public health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, provide premium pay to essential workers or investment in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. As a result, county officials have looked to their residents for guidance on which investments would have the greatest impact on the community.

However, the variety in size, capacity and needs of counties has led to the use of countless different engagement methods.

In many cases, counties created ARPA-specific committees composed of elected officials tasked with crafting ARPA investment frameworks. In doing so, these committees would elicit advice and feedback from residents through public forums at meetings.

Some counties, however, took this concept a bit further. Greene County, Mo. enhanced community engagement by establishing an ARPA Citizen Advisory Committee. This nine-member committee was created to work toward the county's mission of allocating these funds equitably. Members of this committee include former educators, small business owners and an attorney. By assembling this advisory group with unique experiences, Greene County has incorporated direct resident feedback throughout every step of its ARPA investment process.

Using a slightly different approach, some counties have hosted town hall-style events to engage with community members. Sonoma County, Calif., for example, held district-specific virtual town hall meetings where residents were invited to express the community needs they felt would be best met by investing these funds. The county also hosted several ARPA "meet and greet" networking events to bring together businesses and nonprofit and community organizations that may be sub-allocated ARPA funds. These convenings were intended to encourage collaboration between community partners so that these funds would be most efficiently and equitably invested.

Surveys have proven to be another effective way for county governments to engage with residents during this process. Unlike committee or town hall meetings, surveys provide flexibility to residents who may have scheduling conflicts with meeting times or may not be comfortable providing feedback in a public setting. By providing a more accessible and anonymous format for engagement, some counties have opted to use this method.

Examples of counties that conducted surveys include Talbot County, Md., which published a 10-question survey asking how the county should invest its ARPA funds throughout the community. To ensure the survey was accessible, it was distributed in English and Spanish and was made available for paper and digital submission at the county's library and other public buildings. With over 600 responses, Talbot County's survey and similar efforts conducted across the country have helped local officials recognize important areas for investment from a larger sample of its residents.

Regardless of the method, opportunities for community engagement have allowed counties to invest in the most efficient, equitable and meaningful manner. By creating its advisory committee, Greene County was able to obtain valuable insight from community members on how best to navigate small business and nonprofit grant applications.

Likewise, Sonoma County applied feedback from town hall events, specifically concerns regarding negative economic impacts on households and individuals, the need to expand and fortify broadband access and disparities in public health outcomes. directly to its ARPA framework. In doing so, the county invested in additional economic assistance programs for low-income residents, creating a broadband governance organization for broadband development and developing a community engagement strategy to guide county efforts with traditionally underserved and unserved residents.

Through its survey, Talbot County was able to identify the three most important areas of investment to a sample of its community. The County Council was then presented with these findings and provided corresponding suggestions on actions they could take with the remaining ARPA dollars to address these areas of need. This resulted in community-driven ARPA investments in additional funding toward the county's broadband expansion initiative and equipment for county emergency services providers.

Although most counties have already obligated a substantial portion of their ARPA funds, community engagement is far from finished. County recipients who applied for ARPA allocations months after initially available, recently received its second tranche, are likely now deciding how to invest these funds.

Over the past year, there has also been an expansion in eligible uses for these funds due to changes in the U.S. Treasury Department's Final Rule and the passage of the State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Fiscal Recovery, Infrastructure and Disaster Relief Flexibility Act. This flexibility allows counties to use funds toward a wider range of county services, disaster relief efforts and infrastructure projects. As a result, counties will continue to rely on resident engagement as they invest the remainder of funds through the next two years.

Counties invest ARPA dollars to prevent domestic violence

by Meredith Moran
staff writer

Faced with heightened rates of domestic violence over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, counties are investing American Rescue Plan Act dollars into support services, shelters and specialized courts.

Domestic violence hotlines receive more than 20,000 phone calls per day on average in the United States and, while domestic violence is a problem across the country, studies show that it's more prevalent in rural counties, which have less funding and infrastructure for support services than their urban counterparts.

The American Rescue Plan Act

Jackson County, N.C. hasn't had a domestic violence shelter since 2011, with residents having to drive an hour away to neighboring Macon County to receive emergency housing. However, because of ARPA, that's changing. The county dedicated $2.2 million in ARPA funding, which was matched by Dogwood Health Trust, to the creation of a shelter, which is projected to be completed in July 2024.

The 20-bed facility will be run by the non-profit organization Center for Domestic Peace, which currently provides domestic violence referrals and services to Jackson County residents, including transportation, civil legal advocacy and health information.

"Getting their kids to school every morning, going to school or to work every day -- those are real barriers that will keep folks from leaving an abusive situation when we don't have a shelter to offer," said Wes Myers, executive director for Center for Domestic Peace.

"Once we have that shelter, we'll be able to kind of intensify some of our services for those clients -- providing more in-house therapy, more in-house job trainings and really just working with them at a deeper level that you can when they're living in your facility -- really just provide them with 24/7 wraparound services, which is what we obviously always hoped to be able to provide."

It's rare for a North Carolina county government in a rural area like Jackson County to directly fund a shelter, both Myers and Jackson County Manager Don Adams

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said.

"In smaller counties, you generally see these shelters –– it could be domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, all different types of housing –– really ran by nonprofits where the counties partner, but they're not the primary funder," Adams said.

"Here, it is a little bit rarer to see a county government step up and actually be the funder for the construction of the shelter."

Adams said the shelter is currently in the programming stage and he and representatives from Center for Domestic Peace have spent the last few months visiting shelters in nearby areas, including Macon County, the city of Hendersonville and Swain County, to determine best practices.

Urban counties Kent County, Mich. and Maricopa County, Ariz., dedicated $4 million and $15 million, respectively, in ARPA funding toward domestic violence resources.

Kent County, Michigan's funding is going toward the creation of a domestic violence court program. Kent County Prosecutor Chris Becker and the Kent County Domestic Violence Community Coordinated Response Team have advocated for the county creating a domestic violence court for years, and through ARPA funding, it will finally be possible.

"Domestic violence is something we see every day, any prosecutor's office, whatever county they're in, sees every day," Becker said. "Anytime we could do more to intervene and maybe prevent it from happening down the road is beneficial, and so to try and take a look at getting interventions to probably people who have done it multiple times is going to help cut costs later on by hopefully not involving the criminal justice system down the road and be ultimately stopped.

"We've had a number of domestic violence homicides, so hopefully, it'll cut down the number of those as well in terms of getting intervention to the defendants, getting them treatment and also providing support services for those victims, to remove them from dangerous situations," Becker noted. "To have an intensive court that does kind of two things is pretty unique, and I think it just benefits the community as a whole."

Becker

Panas

Myers

While domestic violence increased more than 8 percent across the country over the COVID-19 lockdown, a small portion of counties devoted ARPA funding toward domestic violence resources. Becker said he thinks a big reason for that is the commitment of funding something like a domestic violence court long-term.

"I think there's a concern that you set up a court –– the court is a county, city, it's a government entity –– well, once you set it up, how are you going to pay for it in three years when ARPA funding goes?" Becker said. "The courts are strained right now as it is and the counties don't get enough funding right now to run core operation, so I think that's probably the biggest pushback, not that I'm an expert, but that was what we were hearing too –– is this sustainable?"

Becker said one of the primary benefits of domestic violence courts is how much more specialized they are to the victim's needs.

"There isn't, in traditional court, a whole lot of support services, that they would go reach out to the victim and say, 'Hey, what do you need? How can we help you get through this stretch? Is it childcare? Is it support services? Is it counseling?'" he said.

"Generally, when police are called for domestic violence situations, it's not the first time it happened," he noted. "Are we dealing with someone that needs counseling services? Maybe they need a shelter, here's a way we can get them set up for shelter quicker and more efficiently. So, it really is reaching out to the victim, which really doesn't happen with as much intensity when you're going through the 'traditional' court process."

Maricopa County, Ariz. is also devoting funding toward survivor support, in addition to shifting to community-based services and sustaining critical services, like emergency housing, that had experienced cuts in funding. The county is partnering with the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence to best distribute the funds.

"I think Maricopa County was particularly unique in that they didn't rely on internal expertise and instead turned to the community to ask what was most needed," said Jenna Panas, CEO of the coalition. "So, this wasn't a bunch of government administrators thinking that they were the experts, they literally went to the people that were providing services in the field and said, 'What do we need?'"

In 2020 alone, 102 people in Arizona died as a result of domestic violence, 64 percent of whom were in Maricopa County. The county knew to be successful it had to meet people where they were, Panas said.

"We saw during COVID that place-based [services], where folks come and receive counseling in location or receive specific services in a specific location, just wasn't accessible," Panas said.

"And we learned a lot of really great lessons which was the value of community-based services, where services are available where the survivors are ––services that are available virtually or mobile –– and so that funding allowed for expansion of services and shifts to better meet the ongoing needs of survivors in the county." H

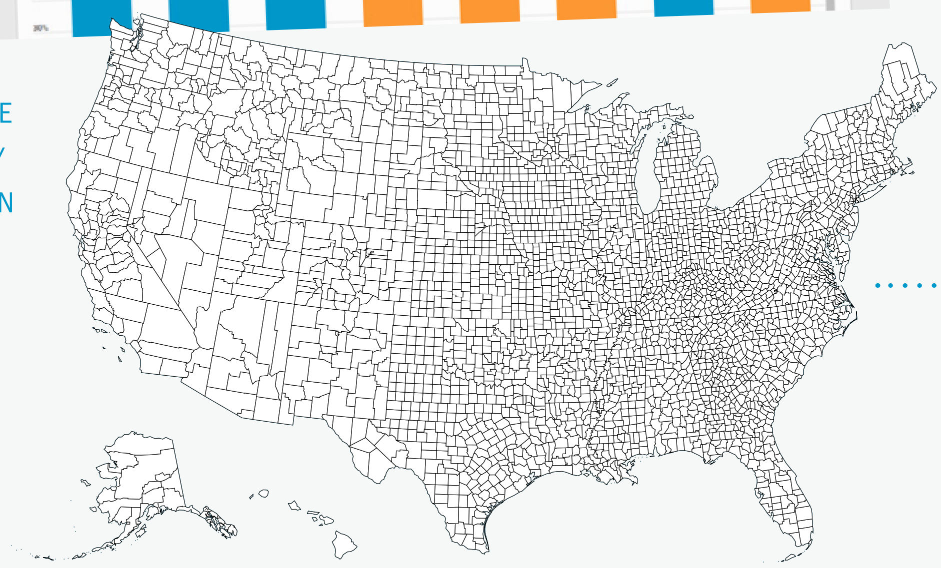
American Rescue Plan Resources at NACo

In March of 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 authorized the $350 billion State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund (Recovery Fund), which provided $65.1 billion in direct, flexible aid to every county in America. The U.S. Department of Treasury (Treasury) is tasked with the implementation and roll-out of the program, and NACo has created this Resource Hub to compile the latest updates and resources surrounding the program. Use this QR code to access the hub:

COUNTY GOVERNANCE PROJECT

NATIONAL DATABASE | www.NACo.org/CountyGovData

County governments play an integral role in the everyday lives of residents, from managing roads and bridges to delivering public health services and much more. Yet, wide variations occur across state lines in the services counties provide, how county governments are structured or financed and our overall responsibility to residents, resulting in a complex system of local governance. **NACo's County Governance Project** sorts through this complexity to provide a comprehensive guide to county government structure, authority, services and finances. Dig into the **national database** and **individualized state profiles** to learn about the intricacies of county governance in your state and others, share your data with state and federal policymakers and educate the public on the importance of counties to the wellbeing of our nation.



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- ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT
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Questions? Contact us at **Research@NACo.org.**

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From recovery to resiliency: How counties invest ARPA dollars

by Sarah Edwards

Confronted by an unprecedented economic downturn, in March 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) into law. This act delivered a historic $65.1 billion directly to counties, parishes and boroughs across the country, creating a lifeline for local communities and an opportunity for transformational investments. As the second anniversary of ARPA approaches, the data reveals the sizable impact the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) has had to date on our communities.

As of October 2022, large counties had allocated nearly 60 percent of total funding. Over the course of the last year, NACo tracked more than 6,700 unique projects submitted by large counties and consolidated city-counties, representing over $25 billion dollars in SLFRF funding. Of those budgeted dollars, over $9 billion has already been expended to support local recovery efforts. In fact, large county expenditures have increased by over 24 percent between July 2022 and October 2022, representing a steady increase in the dollars that are going out the door.

Over one-third of budgeted dollars — about $7.7 billion — are devoted to government operations, which include vital priorities to maintain service levels and the county's capacity to respond to community needs. For example, Ada County, Idaho, is hiring additional counseling staff and clinicians to support its rehabilitative drug court services program, while Boulder County, Colo., is bringing on additional employment advisors to meet one on one with residents for retraining services and employment support. In Rutherford County, Tenn., leaders are investing in six emergency operation centers throughout the community to assist with public health and safety needs alongside the county's rapidly growing rural population.

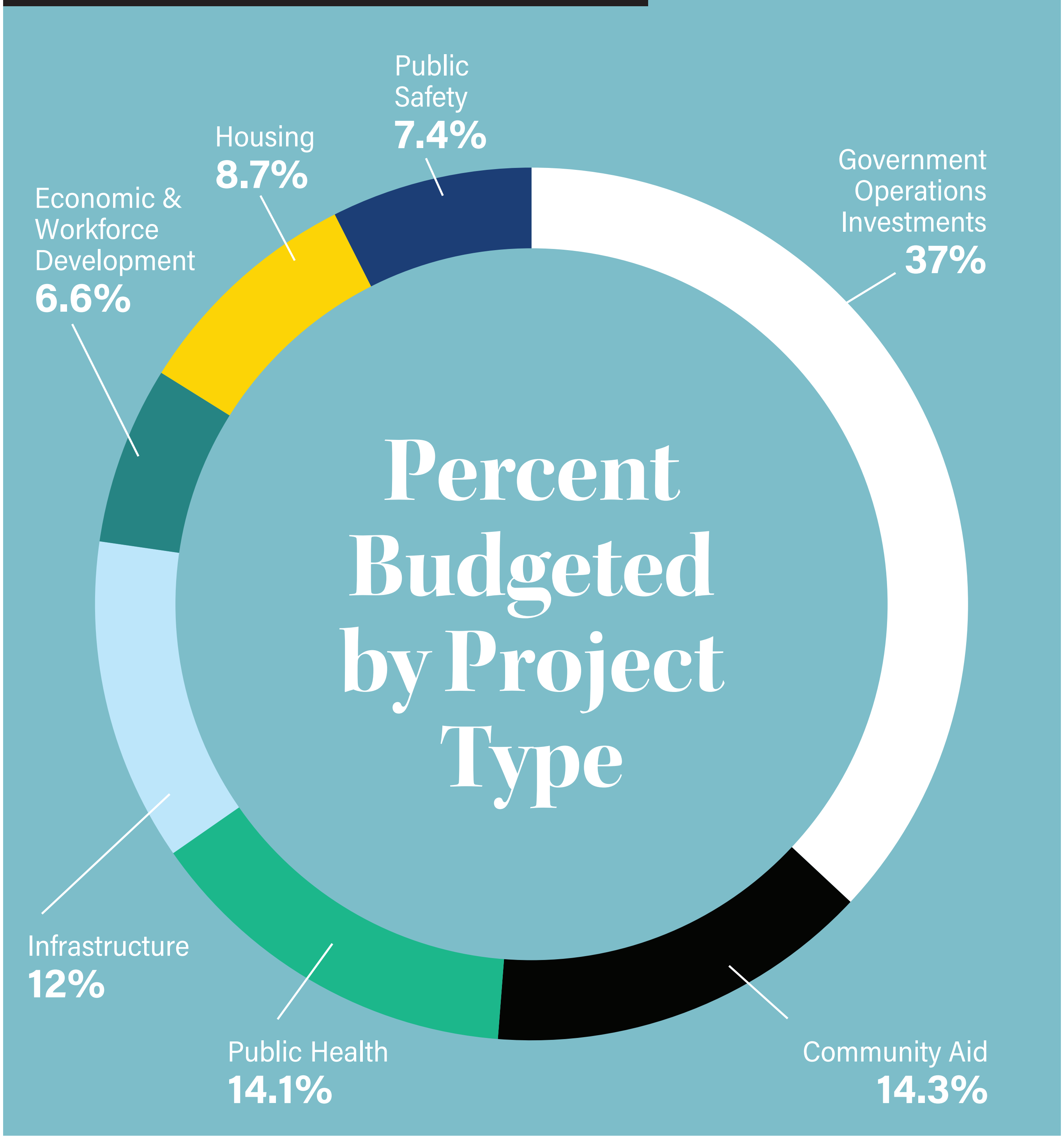
Beyond government operations, counties are also investing funds in public health ($3 billion); community aid ($3 billion); infrastructure ($2.5 billion); economic and workforce development ($1.3 billion); housing ($1.8 billion); and public safety ($1.5 billion). From food assistance programs for seniors, to rebuilding roads in low-income communities and investing in affordable housing, counties are laying the foundations to rebuild communities stronger.

In Pierce County, Wash., the county's Business Accelerator Program already provided aid for over 105 small business owners in underserved communities to build their capacity and strengthen their businesses. As a result, the current program graduates have collectively raised over $1.7 million in capital which will help the economic vitality of their businesses and create additional opportunities for growth in the surrounding communities. And in Mecklenburg County, N.C., the county is nearly doubling current home visiting services to expectant and parenting families to serve 1,400 residents. This investment will promote infant and child health, foster educational development and transform the county's capacity to provide health and human services.

The American Rescue Plan Act invests in our local communities by investing in counties. The flexible aid provided to counties through the SLFRF has helped counties provide essential services to residents and will continue to serve as a roadmap for future recovery efforts and resiliency. With the allocation and expenditure deadlines on these funds looming, local leaders will continue to develop opportunities that advance an equitable and comprehensive recovery.

Sarah Edwards is a research associate in NACo's Counties Futures Lab.

COUNTIES ARE ALLOCATING SLFRF FUNDS TO CRUCIAL LOCAL SERVICES



Source: NACo Research Analysis of U.S. Department of Treasury State & Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, Project & Expenditure Data, October 2022.
Note: Data limited to Tier 1 counties – those with populations 250,000 and above.

CONTINUING THE CASE FOR RECOVERY FUNDS:
Opportunities to tell the county story in the 118th Congress

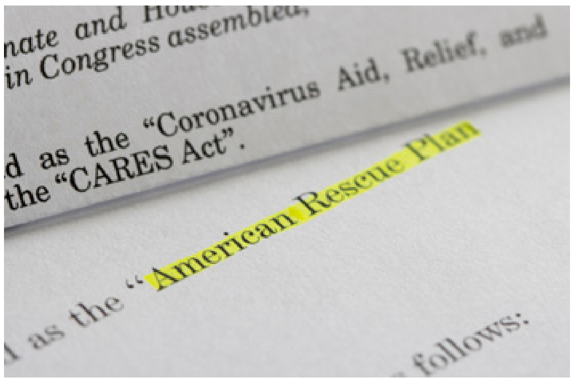
by Paige Mellerio

One of the most powerful tools in NACo's advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., is telling the county story. Counties are a key part of the intergovernmental partnership. We provide a broad range of services to our residents and are often responsible for implementing federal programs on the ground. Because of the nature of our system of federalism, with counties typically being one degree removed from the federal government, and the complexities of county governance, there is sometimes a disconnect between the federal government and counties.

NACo works to bridge the gap between federal and county governance, but that requires counties to tell their story.

By telling the county story, county elected officials can humanize the utility of federal funds that are often thought about through the lens of budgetary impacts.

The relief provided to counties through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, in which $65.1 billion was directly allocated to every county, parish and borough in America, was a result of



telling the county story. Telling the county story was crucial in helping lawmakers understand that counties of all sizes were on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and direct, flexible funding that could be invested in a broad range of county programs, services and projects was needed for long-term recovery.

These efforts were also critical in our work with Congress to secure passage of the State, Local, Fiscal, Tribal and Territorial Fiscal Recovery, Infrastructure and Disaster Relief Flexibility Act as part of the Fiscal Year 2023 omnibus spending bill (the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023).

This law will allow counties even further flexibility to invest ARPA Recovery Funds in transportation infrastructure, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-eligible and disaster recovery projects.

Even though counties have received their Recovery Fund and have the flexibility to invest funds to meet our communities' unique and critical needs, the work is not done. Counties should expect oversight of ARPA programs and pandemic-related spending in the 118th Congress that could include increased attention and scrutiny of Recovery Fund investments.

Counties should use this as an opportunity to continue telling the county story and communicate to lawmakers the difference Recovery Funds have made as we come back from the pandemic.

The 118th Congress also presents a unique opportunity for county storytelling. Seventy-nine members of Congress are former county officials — 13 in the U.S. Senate and 66 in the U.S. House, including 11 first-time Representatives. Counties can leverage existing relationships and institutional knowledge to bring county storytelling into legislation.

On Feb. 14, during NACo's 2023 Legislative Conference, county officials will have the opportunity to participate in County Capitol Hill Day of Advocacy and meet with their lawmakers.

This will be a great opportunity to tell the county story and communicate that counties are driving recovery efforts and building prosperous communities for the next generation.

Counties have until Dec. 31, 2024 to obligate Recovery Funds and until Dec. 31, 2026 to expend Recovery Funds.

Until then, counties should continue to communicate that using these funds within the bounds of the law to respond to the most critical needs in our communities, whether it be bolstering public health capacity, expanding access to affordable housing or providing reliable broadband to all our residents.

Not only did telling the county story help us secure the ARPA Recovery Fund, but it will also help make a case for future direct investments in our communities by demonstrating that we are making sound investments with federal dollars. Ht

Paige Mellerio is associate legislative director, Finance, Pensions and Intergovernmental Affairs in NACo's Government Affairs department.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable supply lines for food became apparent as certain items disappeared from store shelves for intermittent periods, which prompted Montgomery County, Md. to consider offering more support to local farmers to beef up, or leaf up, the local agricultural sector.

An American Rescue Plan Act allocation to One Acre Farm, in the county's agricultural reserve, has expanded owner Michael Protas' growing season dramatically. He built two high-tunnel greenhouses, allowing the farming growing season to nearly double to 43 weeks. The farm was also able to build an office, which helped its business operations, gives workers a respite from the summer heat and allowed the farm to play host to other small farmers from the county.

That output has enabled the farm which previously served mainly Community Supported Agriculture programs, to participate in the Montgomery County Food Council's Farm to Food Bank program.

ARAPAHOE COUNTY, COLO.

Pamela Gutierrez was able to secure housing for herself and three daughters when she moved to Arapahoe County, Colo., fleeing an abusive household. Along with that housing, she had access to a home health nurse for her infant daughter, a GED, job training and placement and counseling, all through the GOALS program — Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-term Success — administered by the Family Tree, a local Arapahoe County, Colo. nonprofit.

Arapahoe County funded the GOALS program through its American Rescue Plan Act funding as a tool in its two-generation approach to combating poverty, an approach Cheryl Ternes, Arapahoe County's human services director, helped develop and refine.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Counties can put their ARPA money to work before they spend the first dime

by William Cherry

Last year, Judge Gary Moore of Boone County, Ky., and a NACo past-president, said this: *"Every dollar earned in interest is one less dollar of taxpayer money needed to pay for county services."*

And Albert Einstein had this to say about interest earnings: *"Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world."*

County governments have an unprecedented opportunity right now to use interest earnings to offset property taxes by maximizing the income generated by the billions of dollars of ARPA funds that are presently sitting unspent in local government coffers.

As a quick refresher, the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act included $130 billion in aid to municipalities through the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF). This represented a massive transfer of federal funds directly to local governments.

Today, some 19 months after the first allocation of ARPA money was deposited into municipal bank accounts, the vast majority of the funds still remain unspent, according to data recently published by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).*

Local governments in Maine, Hawaii, and Idaho have spent less than 10 percent of their ARPA allocations, and ARPA spending by municipalities across the country so far only average about 25 percent. That means that approximately 75 percent of the original $130 billion allocated to local governments, or about $100 billion, remains sitting on deposit in municipal bank accounts.

NACo was very influential in helping to shape the U.S. Treasury rules and guidelines that govern how the ARPA cash could be managed. Thanks to NACo, Treasury made a historic and unprecedented decision to allow local governments to earn as much interest as possible on their ARPA money, and to then keep every cent of that interest.**

ARPA regulations state that the SLFRF funds must be obligated to projects by December 31, 2024 and must be fully expended no later than Dec. 31, 2026. That means counties still have anywhere from 23 to 47 more months to earn as much interest as possible on those funds.

With today's market rates for 100 percent safe, guaranteed time-deposit investments earning an average of 4.75 percent, that $100 billion of unspent ARPA money could be generating an astonishing $395 million in interest earnings every month!

To put it into perspective, a county that received $100 million in ARPA funds, and still has $75 million remaining on deposit could be earning $3.6 million annually in interest. Even as those ARPA funds are gradually dispersed over the next few years, that county could still reap anywhere from $12 million to $14 million in non-tax revenues by using liquidity data and future cash-flow forecasting tools to help manage the funds.

Counties now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to use federal ARPA funds to generate unlimited interest earnings that they can keep or spend in any way they like. three+one® is proud to be a valued partner with NACo, working together to help counties all across the country generate the highest possible interest income through our cashVest® liquidity-management platform which also includes highly accurate cash-flow forecasting tools. To learn more, contact Kyle Cline at kcline@naco.org.

Sources:

* Economic Policy Institute (epi.org) data on ARPA spending - published January 11, 2023

** U.S. Treasury's 'Compliance and Reporting Guidance' under 'Cash Management' says this: "SLFRF recipients can place funds in interest-bearing accounts, do not need to remit interest to Treasury, and are not limited to using that interest for eligible uses under the SLFRF award." SLFRF-Compliance-and-Reporting-Guidance.pdf (treasury.gov).

William Cherry was a member of NACo while serving for 24 years as a county treasurer responsible for managing and investing public funds and now serves as the director of public partnerships for three+one.

Saving on health costs feels better.

NACo's **Live Healthy Discount program** delivers health savings to county residents at NO COST to the county.

Live Healthy has saved residents more than $720 million on their prescriptions.

Enroll now at NACo.org/Health

*The Live Healthy program is not insurance. Prescription savings may vary by drug and pharmacy; discounts are only available at participating pharmacies. Health and dental discounts are subject to coverage and are available in every state except Washington. MinuteClinic discounts are available in 33 states and the District of Columbia

Prescriptions

Up to 80% savings on generics and up to 40% on name brand medications at more than 65,000 pharmacies across the nation

Health Costs

Save on vision care, hearing, prepaid lab work, imaging and a 24/7 telemedicine service with a low monthly fee

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MinuteClinic® Savings

Save 15% at the medical walk-in clinic located in select CVS Pharmacies® using the Live Healthy Prescription Discount Card

PROFILES IN SERVICE

VANCE STUEHRENBERG

NACo Board Member
County Commissioner, Chair
Blue Earth County, Minn.

STUEHRENBERG

Number of years active in NACo: 12 years

Years in public service: 46

Occupation: Retired Law Enforcement (28 years)

Education: Associate Degree in Law Enforcement

The hardest thing I've ever done: Standing next to my wife in ICU, when she went into cardiac arrest. (Nine years ago, and she's doing great.)

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: My grandfather, President Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg

A dream I have is to: Visit all 50 states (more than just drive through).

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have raised over $100,000 for the Multiple Sclerosis Society, by riding a bicycle across the state of Minnesota in the M.S.T.R.A.M. (The Ride Across Minnesota).

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Zip-line on a mountain in Mexico.

My favorite way to relax is: Reading books.

I'm most proud of: My wife, four children and four grandchildren.

Every morning I read: My local newspaper and I drink at least three (maybe four) cups of coffee.

My favorite meal is: Breakfast.

My pet peeve is: People swearing in public.

My motto is: Always bring a smile and treat everyone like you would like to be treated.

The last book I read was: "Gone Tomorrow" (Jack Reacher) by Lee Child

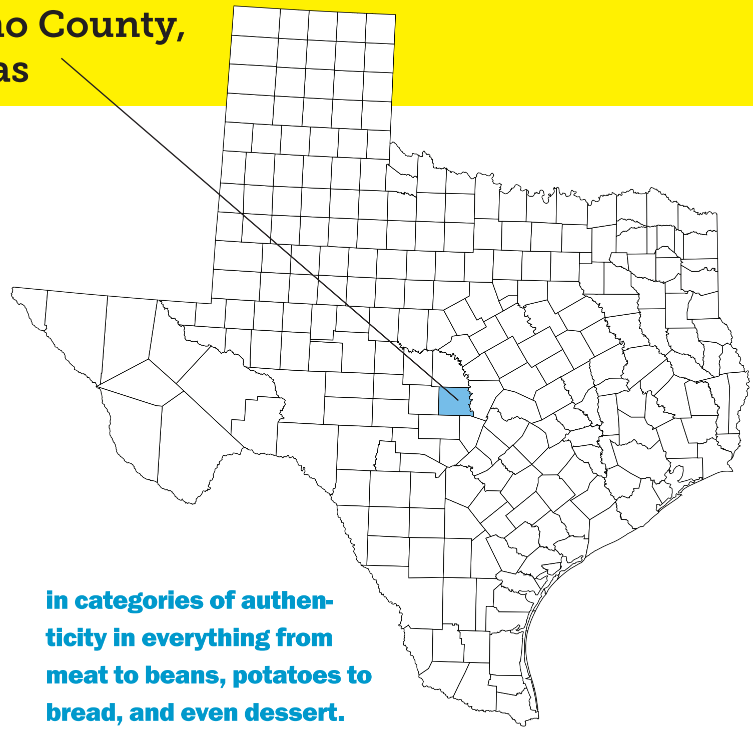
My favorite movie is: For years my favorite was "Remember the Titans," but I just saw "A Man Called Otto," and it may take first place.

My favorite U.S. president is: President Eisenhower - put a transportation package together to form The Interstate Highway System. Eisenhower also created the Department of Health, Education and Welfare into a cabinet-level position.

My county is a NACo member because: Relationships across the country are invaluable. NACo assists counties with having a voice on policy decisions at the federal level.

My favorite music is:
My favorite artist of all time is Garth Brooks.

GET TO KNOW… Llano County, Texas



Welcome, Llano County, Texas

Established in 1856 by the state legislature, Llano County, situated in central Texas, gets its name from Spanish explorers in the 18th century, who gave the name to the river traversing the region. Legend has it that it is a variation of the French name given to the Lipan Indians. Known as the "deer capital" of Texas, the county also has its share of bald eagles. They can be spotted in the county as they migrate south during the winter, some making their winter homes nearby.

The Llano Country Opry is hosted once a month at the historic Lan-Tax Theater, featuring a night of country and western music with performers from throughout the state of Texas as well as from across the country. Sponsored by the Heart of Texas Country Music Association, the show can boast many a country legend having made an appearance in Llano.

Started in 2005 by a group of chuck wagon enthusiasts, the Llano River Chuck Wagon Cook-Off takes place each year in October — it's an event that passionately supports the town's roots. Participants share traditional cooking methods, wear traditional garb of the day and vie for prizes in categories of authenticity in everything from meat to beans, potatoes to bread, and even dessert.

Another can't-miss event? The Llano Earth Art Fest, which features the rock-stacking world championship, drawing thousands to the Llano River to create earth art, stack rocks, play in the water or just enjoy arts, crafts and music.

If you plan to visit anytime soon, you might want to stay overnight at the Dabbs Railroad Hotel, established in 1907, which was once a favorite haunt of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow.

The Old Llano County Jail or "Red Top," as its known because of its red roof, was built in 1895 and still has its original hanging gallows inside. When it was first built and used as a jail, it had eight jail cells. Each cell could hold up to four prisoners, and they slept in hammocks. The first floor of the structure housed the jailer's family, and the hanging gallows were located in the tower. It was used as the county jail until 1982.

Because people were executed in the structure, it's not surprising to hear reports of paranormal activity at the site. Various "ghost hunters" have set up equipment in the Red Top and recorded extrasensory activity including electronic voice projections and photographs of orbs and ghostly figures. The nonprofit organization, Friends of the Red Top Jail, hosted a haunted house for about 600 kids in 2008, and they believe this event resulted in recent paranormal sightings.

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties. Would you like to see your county featured? Contact staff writer Meredith Moran at mmoran@naco.org.)

The Llano River Chuck Wagon Cook-Off takes place every October in the county. Photo courtesy of Llano River Chuck Wagon Cook-Off

2023 NACo Second Vice Presidential Election

MEET THE CANDIDATES

BERRY

Ron Berry

Commissioner
Roane County, Tenn.

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

I have been a Commissioner for 15 years in a small rural county in East TN. I attended my first NACo conference in 2018, and was elected to the Board of Directors. I was so impressed with the networking opportunities, speakers and workshops given by NACo, I have not missed a board meeting since or stopped selling NACo. I was a member of the first NACo High Performance Leadership Academy and currently serve as the President of the Tennessee County Services Association (County Commissioners). The educational opportunities I have received from NACo have enabled me to make my county stronger, and I have observed how NACo executes and evaluates its mission and the initiatives that have helped NACo position itself as the leader across America helping counties with programs and services that make counties stronger and better educated.

What do you consider having been your most important contributions to the National Association of Counties to date? What do you consider having been your most important contributions to your state association of counties?

I had the honor to serve as Chairman of the Rural Action Caucus (RAC). There I had the opportunity to meet and discuss the needs of rural counties all across America. I collaborated with the Large Urban County Caucus Chairwoman, Commissioner Sally Heyman, to work on common concerns for rural and urban commissioners. As South Region Director, Member of Executive Committee, and a member of the Board of Directors, I have been able to support NACo staff for current programs and implementation of new programs. Among these programs, health care, affordable housing, broadband access, agriculture and many other programs continue to receive top priority as we work and build our strategic plan moving forward. Collaboration between committees and officers is imperative to maintain NACo's position as the premier organization on these topics in the country. After being appointed by my peers to represent Tennessee on the NACo Board, I was surprised to learn only approximately 19% of 95 counties in TN were members of NACo. I am proud to have raised that number approximately 50% during my time serving. I am currently working to get more involvement on committees and learning more about the 40 plus services NACo has to offer. As President of the TCSA, my goal is to increase our membership to 75% by year end.

What do you consider to be the two or three most important challenges facing NACo in the near future on which the Officers/Executive Committee/Board of Directors should focus? Why?

Member retention is vital to the future of NACo. We are currently riding an all time high in membership and must continue to provide value and programs to maintain counties membership. As funds continue to decrease from Washington, counties will be faced with funding decisions and we must ensure NACo membership is a priority. We must ensure broadband programs continue to be a priority. We have made great strides in connecting a large number of counties, but still must focus on achieving our long term goal of broadband access for all counties. We must work with successful counties to share their stories so new counties may benefit from their model. The opioid epidemic, mental health and substance abuse issues are national problems that will continue to consumer a major portion of resources because of the carry over with other programs. NACo has done a great job of providing leadership in these areas and must continue to provide expertise to lower the financial burden on counties during this crisis. NACo currently enjoys a strong financial position and is blessed to have a staff or professionals overseeing both short and long term investments. Leadership must continue to monitor and support these staff members.

What measures would you recommend to increase and retain NACo membership and to encourage broad participation in NACo by elected officials and employees of NACo members counties? What specific role would you be willing to assume to help build and sustain NACo membership?

Membership to NACo is an all time high, along with a retention rate of 99%. Our membership team is doing a great job and member counties are renewing their memberships in record numbers. We must continue this work to create value and maintain this retention rate, while also adding new members across the country. There is not a county that can justify not being a member of NACo. We must educate them about all the services provided and the value added by membership to their local county. NACo provides over 40 services to counties and provides more information to counties than any other organization in the Country. We must make sure every county is aware. Getting more county officials involved on committees will also help maintain the stellar retention rate. As 2nd Vice President, I will continue to work with the membership committee, as well as other board and state associations to add member counties and retain members as well. As an ambassador, I will work with the membership committee to welcome and involve new members. It would be an honor to serve NACo as your 2nd Vice President.

2023 NACo Second Vice Presidential Election

MEET THE CANDIDATES

CLARK

J.D. Clark

Judge
Wise County, Texas

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

I have been honored to be appointed by NACo presidents to serve our organization in a variety of leadership roles. Since joining NACo in 2014, I have been appointed as Rural Action Caucus Chair and Vice Chair; Broadband Task Force Co-Chair; Telecommunications & Technology Steering Committee Chair and Vice Chair; Veterans & Military Services Committee Chair; and Finance, Pension, & Intergovernmental Affairs Committee Vice Chair. I also serve on the NACo Board of Directors as a representative for the Texas Association of Counties.

Those experiences and partnerships with other county officials have broadened my knowledge of issues facing counties across America and strengthened my voice to advocate for our county priorities. I am running for 2nd VP so that I can continue to be an experienced and energetic partner in this organization as we advocate for county priorities, promote county solutions, and protect local control.

What do you consider to have been your most important contribution to the National Association of Counties to date? What do you consider to have been your most important contribution to your state association of counties?

I am exceptionally proud of my broadband work through my leadership roles on the Broadband Task Force, the Telecommunications & Technology Steering Committee, and the Rural Action Caucus. Our efforts and collaboration between urban, suburban, and rural counties have resulted in major progress for county broadband policy and projects.

Our Broadband Task Force report, combined with grassroots data collection efforts through the NACo TestIT app, have resulted in legislation, regulatory changes, and projects that are making significant headway in closing the digital divide in counties across America. There are broadband projects, including a public-private partnership in my own county, currently underway in counties across that nation that developed from and/or benefitted from the work of NACo, and I am proud to have a role in that. The major strides we have made in broadband policy, funding, and service expansion are ongoing testaments to the impact that counties can make when we unite our voices and get to work.

As it relates to my state association, I work to increase NACo engagement with Texas counties by presenting at conferences and sharing information with my colleagues about the NACo resources and advocacy efforts available to help make our counties stronger. I am proud to be recognized as a "NACo champion" in Texas as we work to see more Texas counties engaged and involved with NACo, because that direct county official-to-county official dialogue is most impactful when getting non-member or un-engaged counties to participate in this incredible organization.

What do you consider to be the two or three most important challenges facing NACo in the near future on which the Officers/ Executive Committee/ Board of Directors should focus? Why?

We must be constantly working to foster productive, effective partnerships and relationships with federal partners from across the partisan spectrum. The federal landscape is often polarized, and NACo must be able to find successes and be a county voice regardless of partisan politics. We can't let important, real world issues that impact our constituents every day get bogged down or ignored by partisan federal gridlock. We do that by using our county voices that come from from all types of communities and political backgrounds to connect to our federal partners and tell our county stories.

NACo must continue to Recruit and retain highly skilled personnel in an exceptionally competitive job market. The success of NACo relies not only on great member counties but also on the talents and skills of our professional staff. As an organization, we must work to be a premier employer in the public policy arena so that NACo remains a home for top-tier policy minds.

We must also focus on promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of county-level solutions. The government closest to the people is the form of government that functions best, and we must stand united to advocate for county-level solutions to tackle issues and strengthen our communities across the nation. Sharing our best practices and significant achievements in diverse policy areas will highlight the positive impact county government has for our taxpayers and residents. Telling the story of our county successes, financial stewardship, and efficiency is increasingly important as we work to protect county-level flexibility with American Rescue Plan funds and as we see huge amounts of infrastructure funding being deployed across the nation. We must continue to show that county partners are achieving meaningful, significant county-level solutions with the federal, state, and local resources that are entrusted to us.

What measures would you recommend to increase and retain NACo membership and to encourage broad participation in NACo by elected officials and employees of NACo member counties? What specific role would you be willing to assume to help build and sustain NACo membership?

Increasing and retaining NACo membership hinges on being able to show the value of NACo to counties that are not currently engaged or are under-utilizing NACo. This is accomplished by making NACo accessible and meeting counties where they are to show real world examples of how NACo resources and policy efforts are impacting counties similar to their own. In my experience, county officials who are armed with data and "best practice" examples can yield great results by proactively reaching out to fellow county officials to share the significant work and value of NACo. Our strongest advocates and ambassadors are our own engaged members, and I will continue to be a hands-on member who is always willing to share the NACo story with fellow county officials across the nation.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

ALABAMA

JEFFERSON COUNTY is devoting an additional $25 million in **Emergency Rental Assistance** to its residents through funding from the U.S. Treasury. Through the program, the county will pay up to 18 months-worth of utility and rental assistance aid.

"It is a very, very robust program and we're looking forward again to just seeing if we can help people really get back on their feet," said William Barnes, CEO of the Birmingham Urban League, which is managing the program. "With rental rates continuing to rise, this program is certainly helping people to … adjust to those raising rates."

IDAHO

BLAINE COUNTY and the city of Ketchum recently launched the Housing Mediation Project which will provide **an alternative to landlords and tenants taking each other to court** over housing-related issues. The NeuroMediation Group, which has been able to resolve all of the cases it's worked on so far, was given $50,000 to provide its mediation expertise to residents for free. The project aims to cut down on rising eviction rates — roughly 63 percent of evictions are granted in Blaine County.

INDIANA

HANCOCK COUNTY will now **recycle glass** which, once processed, will be used for fiberglass insulation. Recycle Hancock County received a $15,000 grant through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's Community Recycling Grant Program to purchase large containers to collect the glass. The grant was part of over $500,000 the department awarded to counties, municipalities, non-profit organizations, solid waste management districts and schools across Indiana.

MICHIGAN

WASHTENAW COUNTY youth have the opportunity to get connected to **paid internships with local businesses** and University of Michigan departments through its SummerWorks program. People ages 16 to 24 who live or attend school in the county are eligible for the 10-week initiative, which has more than 100 opportunities. "SummerWorks is a great opportunity for employers and young adults to connect in ways that they may not have otherwise," Cheranissa Roach, economic opportunity manager at Washtenaw County's Office for Community and Economic Development, said in a statement to *Michigan Live*. "The young adults are talented and eager to learn, and the employers understand that to stay competitive, they need to utilize innovative strategies and help. The program allows both parties to help each other reach their goals."

FLORIDA

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY Mayor Daniella Levine Cava recently announced the creation of the Miami-Dade Innovation Authority program, which will provide $9 million in grants to local companies working on **technologies and solutions related to pollution, healthcare, housing and transit**, among other issues.

"We're flipping the way government does business by inviting businesses to test and pilot with us," Levina Cava said during her State of the County address. "We'll make it faster and easier to innovate in the county and further position Miami-Dade as a world-class destination for high-growth companies."

NEW YORK

- In its first year, **BROOME COUNTY**'s camera program caught more than 3,000 motorists passing school buses with their stop arms extended. The county Legislature funded a program **equipping buses with cameras** to catch violators, which are fined $250 for their first offense.

ILLINOIS

MCHENRY COUNTY Conservation District received a $223,500 grant from The Clean Energy Community Foundation to **protect 49 acres for its natural resources**, including a headwater stream, mature oaks and sedge meadows. The foundation also awarded the conservation district $10,000 that will go toward restoration, including seeding with native grasses and the removal of invasive brush, over the next year.

NEVADA

The **WASHOE COUNTY** Library is offering free passes to get into **Nevada State Parks.** They must be checked out in person and cannot be placed on hold. The passes do not cover camping or boating fees.

NEW YORK

- **STEUBEN COUNTY**'s Board of Supervisors are proposing an amendment to a 1987 law to include properties that are rented for 30 days or less online or through a realtor, in **occupancy tax collection**, allowing hotels and motels to compete fairly with short-term rental properties, *Genesee Sun* reported.

- **ULSTER COUNTY** Executive Jen Metzger signed an executive order that would take several actions in trying to **slow down the effects of climate change**, including reducing county greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent by 2050. The order makes Ulster the first to comply with the state's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act passed in 2019.

- Shortly after the state allowed localities to offer **property tax exemptions** to first responders, **PUTNAM COUNTY**'s Legislature approved a 10-percent exemption for volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers **and DUTCHESS COUNTY** Legislature Chairman Gregg Pulver proposed a similar measure, *Mid Hudson News* reported.

NORTH CAROLINA

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• Dog ears will refer to more than bent pages at **WAKE COUNTY** Public Libraries during the system's **partnership with the county's animal center**. They are offering a series of free pet care programs. Sessions are a mix of in-person and virtual events, led by a certified dog trainer.

OHIO

WOOD COUNTY is providing a network of support and resources for grandparents and kinship caregivers who find themselves **unexpectedly raising children**. The Wood County Educational Service Center's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group will meet once a month, organized through the county's school districts.

OREGON

• **CLACKAMAS COUNTY** is offering basic mediation training and housing mediation services to help community members resolve conflicts and **prevent evictions**.

The mediation program offers free mediation, resources and support services to housing providers and tenants, aiming to decrease evictions that lead to homelessness by offering housing providers and tenants the opportunity to work together on possible solutions before an eviction case is filed in court.

• **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** residents will vote in May on an initiative creating a capital gains tax to fund a **residential tenant resource program**. If passed, the adjustable .75 percent capital gains tax would create a residential tenant resources program providing free lawyers in county residential evictions proceedings and related housing claims and appeals as well as financial assistance.

PENNSYLVANIA

ERIE COUNTY will launch the Distinguished Service Awards to **recognize first responders**, second responders and private citizens who have gone beyond or performed a significant act of public service.

The awards will be broken down into the following seven categories:

Law enforcement, firefighter, emergency medical services, second responders (including utility services, hazardous material response, hazardous waste cleanup, road clearing, crowd control and emergency services), civilian 18 and over, civilian 18 and under and in memoriam.

WASHINGTON

The **KING COUNTY prosecuting attorney's office will create four new divisions**. The Gun Violence Prevention Division will identify and prosecute individuals who are causing harm to the community, connecting individuals who are close to gun violence to meaningful community-based resources before they become victims or perpetrators of violence. The Economic Crimes and Wage Theft Division will focus on retail theft, economic crimes, identity theft, fraud, elder abuse, and wage theft. The Felony Traffic Unit will focus on vehicular homicide and assault cases. An unnamed division will focus on gender-based violence and prevention, involving cases of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, bringing a trauma-informed, victim-centered response.

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

NORTH CAROLINA

• All of those takeout containers? They don't have to go into the garbage anymore. **MECKLENBURG COUNTY** is **expanding its recycling program** to accept white rigid foam, shredded paper, hardcover and paperback books and textiles. Donation bins for clothes, shoes and accessories are located at each of the county's four full-service recycling centers. The textile recycling items will be sorted and repurposed.

WEST VIRGINIA

After complying with new state regulations, **OHIO COUNTY** has resumed its **needle exchange**, in hopes of preventing the spread of HIV and other diseases. Exchanges are done anonymously; people are given a special ID card to show, that contains letters and numbers and not their name, *The Intelligencer* reported.

'We're sharing information'

From POVERTY page 6

Workforce Alliance, which connects people looking for work with employers looking to hire.

"I think historically, often philanthropic gifts have been… Band-Aids on really large-scale problems, and while that might help someone right in the moment of crisis, it might not help them six months, a year down the road," said Ryanne Jennings, CEO of Wayne County Community Foundation.

As for getting the word out about the program, Pohlidal said, in addition to posting information on social media, Parent Pathways has been intentional about syncing with other programs serving parents in poverty, like Head Start.

"We're sharing information beyond the scope of our partnerships," Pohlidal said. "And then frankly, I've done some things that are grassroots efforts, like I've taken the Parent Pathways flyer and literally stapled it to the walls of laundromats in the area — places where families who might be struggling might come across this and say, 'Well, what is this?' And sometimes when it's found in your own backyard, you're more inclined to take a closer look."

Franko said it's important to just make sure people know that the program exists, and then people will seek support when they're ready.

"Now that we've been doing this a little while," Franko said, "we've had families that have now circled back and said, 'You know, I ran across your card. I thought about it, now I'm ready.'" CN

ON THE MOVE

NACo STAFF

• **Tim Brown** has joined NACo as managing director of the Public Promise Agency. He previously served as vice president of public sector practice with Gallagher Insurance Agency and he held a variety of leadership positions with Aetna Insurance. He earned a bachelor's degree in managerial economics from the University of Texas.

Brown

• **Elise Simonson** has joined NACo as an associate program director for behavioral health and justice. She previously served as a senior policy analyst at the National Governors Association and earned a PhD in Criminology from the University of Florida.

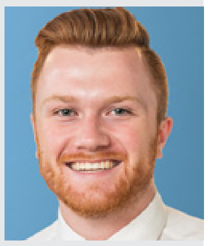
Simonson

• **Annie Qing** has joined NACo as a health and human services program manager. She was previously a research project leader at Behavioral Surveillance Research Study and earned a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University.

Qing

• Executive Director **Matt Chase** attended the Tennessee County Services Association Board Meeting in Shelby County and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Board Meeting in Wake County.

• Chase and Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** spoke on a panels during the National Association of Regional Councils' National Conference of Regions in Washington, D.C.



Mattson