

Genesee County, Mich. Commissioner Bryant Nolden (center) and local volunteers distribute bottles of water in Flint, the county seat, part of which lies in his district. As of Feb. 18, residents were still receiving donated water to use in their homes for drinking and cooking. Photo by Kayla Ruble/VICE News

County's role in Flint water crisis gets results

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

Genesee County, Mich. had “no skin in the game” in the city of Flint’s decision to switch its water source from Detroit’s system to the Flint River, according to Commission Chairman Jamie Curtis.

But county officials say they played a major role in raising the alarm about the city’s lead-tainted water, and finally got the state to respond. As of Feb. 17, the county had spent more than \$1



million on the problem — the health department accounting for about half of that amount, county officials said. The sheriff’s department’s expenses were almost \$400,000.

Curtis said the county tried for months in 2015 to find out, definitively, if the water was safe but couldn’t get straight answers to its questions — not from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, nor the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nor Flint’s public works department. At the time,

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Senate pulls the plug on taxing Internet access

By Michael Belarmino
associate legislative director

States and local governments will be permanently excluded from taxing Internet access services thanks to a provision in the conference report on H.R. 644, a trade and customs enforcement bill passed by the Senate Feb. 11.

The measure included a permanent extension of the Internet Tax Freedom Act (ITFA). As a result, state and local taxes on Internet access services are permanently prohibited and the grandfathered states will have until June 2020 to phase out their existing taxes on Internet access.

The ITFA language was “air-

dropped” into the conference report, meaning it was a provision that was not part of the underlying bill that either the U.S. House of Representatives or Senate originally voted on in mid-2015.

The ITFA, enacted in 1998, preempts state and local government authority to tax Internet access services. Currently, seven states (Hawaii, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin) were grandfathered under ITFA and are still collecting more than \$500 million a year in taxes.

When first enacted, ITFA was only intended to be temporary

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Permanent moratorium on Internet access taxes may spell trouble for other local fees

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in order to allow the Internet to “grow.” For over a decade, NACo, and other state and local government groups fought off attempts to permanently extend the preemption, resulting in eight short-term extensions. The primary goal was to ensure that Congress was periodically compelled to revisit whether the preemption of state and local authority was still necessary in light of the law’s original intent of allowing the Internet to grow.

Despite the tremendous growth of the Internet over the last 17 years, proponents of the legislation still believed it needed to be protected. As more telecommunication and video services leave cable and transition to the Internet, critical revenue for local government such as franchise fees, rights-of-way fees and other fees could be substantially affected.

In recent years, Senate cham-

pions for remote sales tax legislation, like the Marketplace Fairness Act (MFA), have attempted to combine consideration of any extension of ITFA with MFA. Attempts have largely been unsuccessful, despite Senate passage of the Marketplace Fairness Act in 2013 by a strong bipartisan vote.

In the days leading up to the Senate vote on the conference report, the strategy by MFA proponents appeared to be to attempt to strip out the permanent language from the report.

However, two days before the vote a deal was struck between Senate leaders that resulted in senators dropping their opposition to the conference report in exchange for a promise from Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) that MFA would be considered “at some point” this year. The timing remains uncertain at this point.

The bill now heads to the president’s desk for his signature. **CN**

County: state holds responsibility for Flint water

From FLINT page 1

the city and its departments were being controlled by an emergency financial manager, appointed by the governor.

Flint switched to river water in April 2014, and almost immediately residents began reporting concerns about the water’s color, taste and smell. The city and county have separate water utilities. However, it was the County Board’s declaration of a public health emergency that appears to have prompted the state to step up its response.

Genesee County commissioners made their declaration on Oct. 1, 2015, advising Flint residents to not drink the water from the Flint River, unless it had been tested and been found to be lead-free.

“When that occurred, the floodgates opened,” said Commissioner Barbara Clack, who lives in Flint and whose commission district includes about half of the city’s population. “The very next morning, the governor and some of his administration were in Flint.”

Within 10 days, Curtis said, Flint was switched back on Detroit’s system.

It wasn’t until Jan. 5 that Gov. Rick Snyder (R) declared a state of emergency — one day after the county issued its own declaration, which deemed the water crisis “beyond the control of Genesee County.”

Rep. Dan. Kildee (D-Mich.) is the area’s congressman. A Flint native, he was the county’s former elected treasurer, and before that, a county commissioner. Testifying at a congressional committee hearing on the water crisis on Feb. 2, he called it an “entirely avoidable set of circumstances.” Curtis has called it

an entirely “manmade crisis.

“Better action by people in government could have protected the people of Flint, and those players failed,” Kildee told the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Since then, the situation has evolved into a circular firing squad of accusations, but from the county’s perspective, the ultimate responsibility lies with the state.

Curtis finds no fault with the city’s elected leaders, who were powerless to act under the governor’s financial manager.

“It was the state emergency manager that made the decision to switch the city of Flint to the Flint River water source,” said Curtis, whose district also includes a portion of the city, “and it was the emergency manager who had 100 percent control of all departments of city government....

“The problem that they incurred was the lack of oversight, lack of understanding and lack of knowledge in doing good due diligence on treating river water, versus getting the water from Detroit, which was already treated,” he said.

As Flint’s water crisis continued, the county was dealing with health concerns of another sort — an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease.

From June 2014 to November 2015, 87 cases of Legionnaires’ disease were confirmed in Genesee County, including nine that were fatal, according to the state health department.

While the state health department said it could not conclude that Legionnaires’ was linked to the Flint River water, it said the situation was being treated “with the same urgency and transparency as the lead response in the

city of Flint.”

Mark Valacak, the county’s public health director, did not respond to phone and email requests for an interview. However, a county health department press release stated that “Legionella bacteria are commonly found in the environment (rivers, lakes, streams). It is a waterborne disease, usually located in man-made water supplies that aerosolize water, such as showers, hot water tanks, humidifiers, cooling towers, whirlpool spas and decorative fountains.”

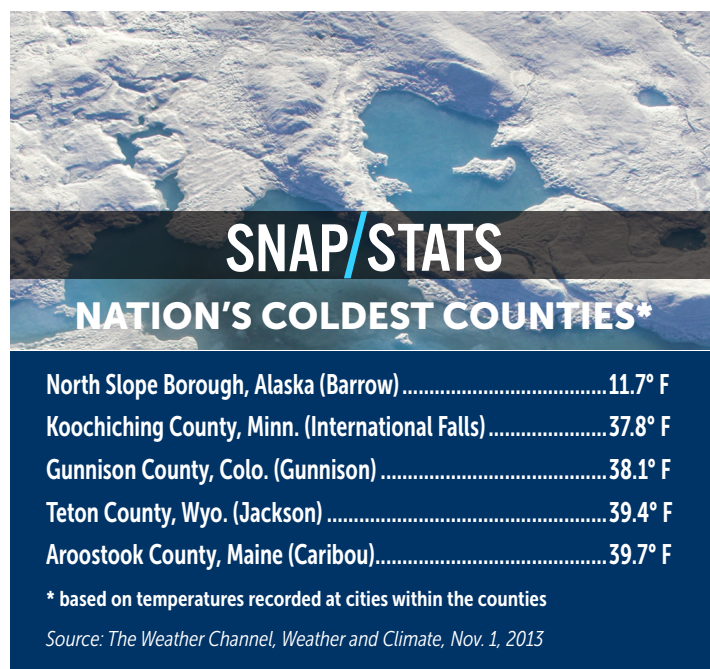
While the concern about Legionnaires’ has abated, Flint and Genesee County residents are continuing to receive donated bottled water from the state, nonprofit organizations and individuals, some as far away as Georgia.

DeKalb County, Ga. Commissioner Stan Watson organized an effort to transport cases of bottled water to Flint, said Clack, the Genesee County commissioner. It was the result of a personal connection. She and Watson met when they were both legislators in their respective states, but she doubted she’d spoken with him in nearly a decade.

“For him to think about me and what we’re doing here in Flint, I felt very fortunate,” she said.

Meanwhile, Clack worries about the future of infants who were exposed to lead in the water for two years.

“We’re going to have children in 2021 — that is the date I estimate — who are going into school who are going to be overly aggressive, who won’t have the ability to retain info, who are going to display physical and mental elements of bad behavior that should not have been.” **CN**





Michael Botticelli, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Photo by Alix Kashdan

White House fully engaged in fight against heroin abuse in rural U.S.

County News will focus its next Hot Topics special report on how counties are dealing with the plague of opioid abuse that is cascading across the country.

To set the stage, County News interviewed the White House's top drug policy official, **Michael Botticelli**, director of National Drug Control Policy.

Our report on the interview begins a series of Hot Topics articles published over several months about efforts to curtail opioid abuse.

The full video interview with Director Botticelli will be available in the online edition of this *County News*.

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

The director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) knows addiction first hand.

Michael Botticelli has successfully been in recovery from alcoholism for 26 years — of which he's made no secret.

Recently, he sat down with *County News* to discuss the heroin and prescription opioid crisis sweeping the nation and how the federal government is responding.

Heroin abuse has historically been seen as a big-city problem, but rural America has been hit hard in recent years. Botticelli cited the over-prescribing of prescription pain relievers by physicians as a major factor.

Doctors are prescribing enough prescription medications to "give every adult American a bottle of pain

pills," he said. "That is one of the reasons why we've seen ... the explosion of the opioid epidemic beyond just our urban communities."

The link between prescription opioids and heroin is well established. "We know that about four-fifths (80 percent)

"Clearly, we want to make sure that people have access to good prevention and good treatment services,"

of newer users to heroin started by misusing prescription pain medications," he said.

That's why part of ONDCP's strategy to stem the problem includes educating physicians.

Widely known as the drug czar, Botticelli dislikes the label's militaristic, "war on

drugs" connotations. He brings a public health background to the job.

"Clearly, we want to make sure that people have access to good prevention and good treatment services," he said. "One of the refreshing things that I have seen as I travel the country...local law enforcement understand that we can't arrest and incarcerate our way out of the problem and [they're] really looking at ways to divert people away from the criminal justice system."

Last summer, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced \$100 million in support for community health centers, he said. "We know that many parts of the country, particularly rural parts of the country, might not have access to a substance abuse treatment program, but have a community health center, and that's a really good opportunity to look

at how do we increase access"

The Affordable Care Act has helped in that regard, he said. "We know that many people are not able to access treatment because they haven't had insurance coverage before, and the act mandates that those marketplace plans, Medicaid expansion plan have a dedicated substance abuse treatment benefit to it."

Botticelli said some of the best ideas for combating the opioid epidemic have come from local communities. In 2010, the Quincy, Mass. police department was the first in the nation to carry naloxone, a drug that can reverse an opioid overdose, he said.

"Since then, we have just seen it explode across the country in terms of other law enforcement and other first responders taking it on, and other bystanders.

"I think it's a really good example of how something can happen at the local level and then, through our office, we can amplify it...."

One bright spot in the epidemic, if there is one, Botticelli said, is the availability of prescription drugs such as buprenorphine, which can help users break their dependence on opioids. Buprenorphine is a mild opiate that targets the same areas of the brain as heroin but without the same intense "high" or dangerous side effects.

Weighing treatment outcomes, he said that people with opioid use disorders do far better on medication along with counseling and other recovery supports than those not receiving medication-assisted treatment.

The Obama Administration's proposed budget for FY17 includes \$1 billion in new funding over two years to expand access to treatment for prescription drug abuse and heroin use.

Included in that funding would be \$500 million for U.S. Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, a portion of which would fund

See **BOTTICELLI** page 5

Do GASB changes impact your county? County financial reporting at a glance in new NACo report

By Cecilia Mills
research associate

At NACo's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., panelists from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and Arlington County, Va. discussed accounting changes issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and the challenges faced by counties in the wake of these ongoing modifications. Most state and local governments follow so-called "generally accepted accounting principles" or GAAP — standards of accounting and financial reporting developed

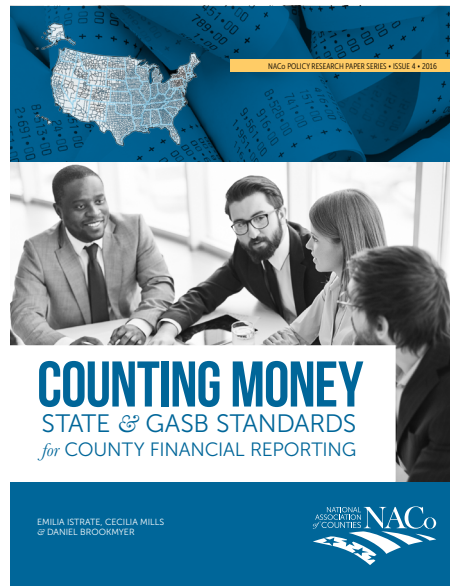
by the GASB.

To identify the impact of GASB standards across counties, NACo recently released *Counting Money: State and GASB Standards for County Financial Reporting*. This study examines state requirements for county financial reporting and the types of financial statements and accounting methods county governments employ.

The report is the first in a series of research products examining trends in county financial health. Understanding the diversity of county financial reporting and data is the first step. Its analysis of 3,053 county financial reports re-

veals that although most states require county governments to observe GASB standards, nearly 30 percent of counties do not observe GASB standards either in terms of reporting format, accounting method or both.

Understanding county financial reporting helps comprehend how counties function and deliver services to their constituents while also evaluating the parameters of fiscal transparency placed on counties. Counties constantly balance serving residents while meeting the demands of state and federal mandates. The variation in financial reporting among counties na-



but they do not use accrual accounting. Most of these county governments are on the smaller side; 94 percent of them have fewer than 50,000 residents. However, 10 large counties — those with more than 500,000 residents — implement these alternative types of financial reporting due to strict state requirements. All large counties in New Jersey fit this de-

scription. nationwide shows the diversity of state regulatory requirements, county needs, and the staffing and administrative capacity of county governments.

County governments apply GASB standards either because it's a state requirement or to receive a favorable opinion from auditors. Thirty-two states require counties to follow GAAP, and as a result 71 percent of county governments file annual financial reports according to GASB standards. Nine states — Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Vermont and Washington — regulate the measurement, recognition, presentation and disclosure requirements of the county financial reports.

About 8 percent of counties in these states elect to follow GASB standards (both the format of the financial report and method of accounting), to increase their chances of receiving a favorable audit opinion. The variation of state requirements adds to the diversity of county financial reporting across the country and within states.

Instead of GASB reporting principles, 19 percent of counties use a financial reporting format decided by their state and other comprehensive basis of accounting (OCBOA). Another 10 percent of county governments use basic financial statements approved by GAAP,

description.

Almost a quarter of counties following GASB standards produce Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR). CAFRs are financial reports that follow the GASB standards and have more information, intended to provide a more robust financial and historical context of the county government.

A CAFR's additional discussions and analyses of county trends and statistical data add to the picture of a county's financial standing. CAFRs are not required, but encouraged by GASB and GFOA as a best practice.

The 567 counties that issue CAFRs are found across 38 different states. Counties in the South and West are most likely to use a CAFR for financial reporting. Hawaii is the only state in which all the counties release a CAFR for their annual financial report.

Eighty percent of the 126 largest counties — with more than 500,000 people — report using a CAFR. CAFRs are not exclusive to large county governments, but to counties more likely to issue municipal bonds on a regular basis. **CN**

The full analysis is available at www.naco.org/Counting-Money and the companion interactive maps on NACo's County Explorer interactive map www.naco.org/county-explorer.

NEW IN FEBRUARY FROM NACO'S

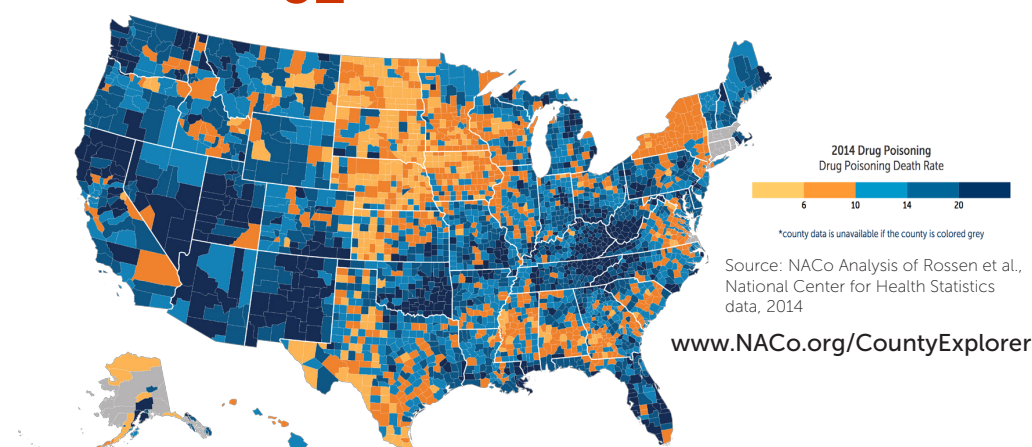
COUNTY EXPLORER

41% of counties have **at least 14** poison deaths per 100,000 individuals **due to all drugs**.

90% of local workforce development boards involve counties.

67% of children living in poverty reside in 10 percent of counties.

32 states require counties to file annual financial reports according to GASB standards.



Botticelli encouraged by two-party support in Congress for reform

From BOTTICELLI page 3

targeted enforcement activities — specifically in rural areas — and to improve access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone.

The vast majority of that money, \$920 million, would go to states to expand access to medication-assisted treatment for “opioid use disorders.”

“Part of what we’ve been trying to promote here is a balanced strategy with both public health and law enforcement,” he explained. “I’m happy to say, for the first time in the history of our office, (in) the president’s FY17 budget, we actually have a balanced budget in terms of demand-reduction strategies, those public health approaches, as well as our sup-

ply-reduction strategies.”

Botticelli said he’s encouraged by the breadth of support in Congress for addressing the opioid addiction problem. “From an overall perspective this has been a bipartisan issue,” he said, “and there’s been a tremendous amount of interest and leadership across the aisle...”

For any of these efforts to

succeed, the conversation about addictive disorders needs to change. Words like addict, junkie and substance abuser can be stigmatizing, he said.

“We have great partners in the broader community who are working with us to change the language of addiction to reflect a nonjudgmental, therapeutic response to people with

addictive disorders.

“Part of our work is how do we make sure that we’re working with state and local and county governments, and our stakeholders to make sure that we are implementing good responses? And that we are bringing everybody together to really come to common agreement in terms of the strategies.” **CN**

Proposed FAA bill is good news for counties

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster’s (R-Pa.) proposal for FAA reauthorization — The Aviation Innovation, Reform and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act — provides continued and significant funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

AIP funding can support a wide range of airports, including small general aviation airports and many large commercial airports projects, without the financial burden of debt financing, although airports are required to provide a local match (between 5 percent and 25 percent).

AIRR also continues the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, removes restrictions on the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) and includes some significant reforms, particularly with regard to the Air Traffic Control system.

AIRR, released Feb. 3, authorizes aviation programs through FY22.

Essential Air Service

The AIRR Act continues and funds EAS for the life of the bill, increasing the funding authorization from its current level of \$275 million for FY16 to \$315 million by FY22. The EAS program was created to guarantee that small communities being served by certified airlines maintained commercial service following the deregulation of the airline industry.

When Congress passed the Airline Deregulation Act of



Airports like this one owned by Washington County, Md. would benefit from several programs in the FAA reauthorization proposal from House Transportation and Infrastructure Chair Bill Shuster.

1978, airlines were given almost complete freedom to determine areas of service and what airfares to charge, putting less profitable markets at a disadvantage. Since its establishment, the EAS program has ensured continued commercial service to eligible communities by providing subsidies to carriers providing service between EAS communities and major hub airports.

Passenger Facility Charges

In another important provision, the AIRR Act would allow the continued collection of Passenger Facility Charges and removes restrictions on the PFC so airports could more effectively finance projects that improve their infrastructure and benefit the traveling public. Under current law, the PFC

is a state, local or port authority fee, not a federally imposed tax.

The money raised from PFCs is required to be spent on eligible airport-related projects, such as projects to enhance safety, security or capacity at airports; and projects that reduce noise or increase air carrier competition. Unlike AIP funds, PFC funds may be used to service debt incurred to carry out projects.

Small Community Air Service Development Program

Of special interest to counties with small airports, the AIRR Act would continue the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) through the life of the bill, authorizing \$5 million for program grants on an annual ba-

sis (consistent with the FY16 funding level but \$1 million less than was authorized in the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012).

The SCASDP is a grant program designed to help small communities address air service and airfare issues. Compared to the EAS program, SCASDP provides communities the opportunity to self-identify their air service needs and propose solutions. Under current law, participation in the program is limited to those communities where the airport is not larger than a primary small hub, the service is insufficient and the air fares to the community are unreasonably high.

A number of consumer-friendly provisions have also been proposed. Among them: The bill would extend a consumer protection panel

SPEEDREAD

Airport Improvement Program continued; funding boosted

Restrictions removed from Passenger Facility Charge program

Would prohibit mobile phone voice calls

that advises the Department of Transportation, would require every large and medium hub airport terminal to provide private rooms for nursing mothers, and would ensure that families booking flights are notified — before they buy — in the event that their tickets will not be next to each other. The AIRR Act would also prevent cellphone use for voice calls during flights.

This legislation has been released in advance of the March 31 expiration of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012. The Senate Commerce Committee has yet to take action on FAA reauthorization but has identified the legislation as a top priority for 2016. **CN**

**For further details on the AIRR Act, see this story online to access the House Transportation Steering Committee’s summary of the bill and full text of the bill.*

(Jessica Monahan, associate legislative director, and Beverly Schlotterbeck, executive editor, contributed to this report.)

Spartanburg County, S.C. lands RWJF Culture of Health Prize

By Andrew Whitacre
health associate

Spartanburg County, S.C. is the recipient of a 2015 Culture of Health award presented by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) as part of the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program. The prize recognizes communities that have made significant progress towards building a Culture of Health with a \$25,000 cash award and promotion of their story with communities around the country.

Spartanburg County, located in Upstate South Carolina, is a community long plagued by mill closings that have affected the health and wealth of its residents. Yet through its cross-sector approach, the county has made great strides by investing in all aspects of the community to create better health for its residents.

"The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize was not only further confirmation that our collective efforts are making a difference,



Teens in Spartanburg County participate in a peer group discussion on teen pregnancy. Teen pregnancy prevention initiatives have helped the county reduce its teen pregnancy rate by 53 percent over the past seven years. Photo courtesy of Spartanburg County, S.C.

"We understand the link between improving health outcomes and rising economic outcomes" — Jeff Horton

it was an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to improving health outcomes in Spartanburg County," said Spartanburg County Council Chairman Jeff Horton. "We understand the link between improving health outcomes and rising economic outcomes, and we have the right team in place to achieve what are some very ambitious goals."

Nearly eight years ago, a group of organizations gathered to strategize on how to address the community's health

gaps. The meeting resulted in a 40-member coalition, called the Road to Better Health Coalition, which pledged to align its missions and collaborate together.

The coalition sets priorities based on existing health data, which indicated that teen pregnancy was a major issue.

Since that initial analysis, Spartanburg County has seen teen birth rates decrease 53 percent. Its success was driven by a community-wide commitment that brought together a diverse set of partners such as churches, barber shops and community center staff, who used evidence-based methods and along the way restored a teen health center run by the

county called The Point. It is now considered one of the state's premier teen health centers.

"Empirical data can be a great motivator," said Renee Romberger, vice president of Community Health Policy & Strategy for the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System.

"So a few years ago, we committed to a deep, broad study of our health outcomes. And the data that came out of that study was even more sobering than we expected.

The good news is that it was a great motivator for our entire community, and dozens of organizations and hundreds of people have since coalesced around the idea that community health investments are absolutely imperative, and that we had to do it yesterday."

The county's Northside neighborhood reflects the changes that the entire county has seen. The neighborhood is

part of the Purpose Built Communities national network, which takes a holistic approach to community change — housing, education, jobs, wellness and infrastructure — to improve outcomes. Northside has improved outcomes by expanding access to services and opportunities located in walking distance for its residents.

These new efforts have resulted in new affordable housing to replace vacant homes, a plan to build an early childhood learning center, access to farmers' markets and grocery stores with healthy food options, a new campus for an osteopathic medical school and the creation of a nonprofit, Community Works, which helps residents improve their finances.

With the understanding that health is more than health care, AccessHealth provides low-income, uninsured residents in the county with access to a network of physicians who offer

donated care and connect them with other community resources to help with their non-medical needs. The services help residents overcome barriers they face in their everyday lives such as applying for jobs and accessing healthy foods. This approach has had an impact on clinical outcomes among its participants with hospital use down 31 percent and medical costs down 42 percent.

The County Health Rankings for 2016, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, will be released March 16. NACo will host a webinar on March 10 to highlight how the rankings can be used by counties to spur action on health improvement. Register by visiting www.naco.org/webinars. For more information on the RWJF Culture of Health Prize visit www.county-healthrankings.org/prize. **CN**

NACo, White House Rural Council spotlight childhood poverty in ‘Rural Impact County Challenge’ initiative

By Austin Igleheart
legislative assistant

Recognizing the pivotal role counties play to positively impact the lives of the American people, the White House Rural Council has launched a new initiative, the Rural Impact County Challenge, in coordination with NACo and its 2016 Legislative Conference.

The initiative is designed to identify and highlight innovative and successful efforts to combat rural childhood poverty. At least 85 percent of America’s persistent poverty counties are located in rural

areas. This new initiative will help advance counties’ efforts to alleviate rural poverty, particularly among families and children, by promoting local-state-federal partnerships and addressing the wide range of challenges facing rural communities.

The Rural Impact County Challenge consists of two major components: a call to action for counties and a national convening of County Challenge participants and administration leaders, and other partners.

The call to action asks counties to develop an actionable

plan to achieve local and state-level results. As part of the call to action, each participating county should pass a resolution expressing its commitment to work with local, state and federal entities to develop a plan with measurable outcomes to improve several areas of service — including early childhood education, nutrition, workforce development, and health and human services.

These partners will also work together to implement evidence-based strategies to advance the plan, create a process to track progress and use

the resulting data to report on successes.

The national conference of County Challenge participants, hosted by NACo and the White House Rural Council, will take place this summer to highlight progress and innovation in advancing county-led plans. This will give participants an opportunity to measure their progress, and identify and share best practices from counties across the country.

County Challenge participants, in addition to being recognized as leaders in the fight against rural poverty, will re-

ceive a weekly newsletter containing rural-focused research and information about state and federal funding opportunities. Participants will also be invited to participate in monthly webinars with senior Administration officials and other county participants, and will benefit from the opportunity to learn from peers about challenges and best practices. **CN**

For more information on the initiative or how your county can get involved, please contact Arthur Scott, associate legislative director, at ascott@naco.org or 202.942.4230.

RURAL MATTERS AT THE LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE: GOVERNORS ROUNDTABLE

On Monday, Feb. 22, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will moderate a roundtable discussion with a bipartisan panel of governors to highlight key innovative approaches to rural child-poverty intervention and opportunities for state and local government collaboration on combating chronic rural poverty.

Governors include Bill Haslam (R-Tenn.); Tom Wolfe (D-Pa.); Gary R. Herbert (R-Utah); and Terry McAuliffe, (D-Va.).

RURAL POVERTY SUMMIT

On Tuesday, Feb. 23, from 12:15 to 3:30 p.m., NACo will host a rural poverty summit, Opportunity for All: Building a Brighter Future for Rural Children. This session will highlight the current state of poverty in America and examine the factors contributing to chronic poverty including early-childhood development, drug and substance abuse, access to health care and workforce training. Additionally, this session will provide a look at innovative and successful initiatives designed to combat rural poverty through multi-generational service-delivery models.

SPECIAL GUESTS INCLUDE:



Secretary **Tom Vilsack**, U.S. Department of Agriculture



David Wilkinson, White House Domestic Policy Council

- Michael Lu, M.D.**, associate administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Anne Mosle**, vice president and executive director, Aspen-Ascend
- Sharon McGroder**, program director for human services, National Governors Association
- Beth Mattingly**, director of research on vulnerable families, University of New Hampshire
- Amy New**, assistant commissioner for rural economic development, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development
- Donald Warne, M.D.**, director, Graduate School of Public Health, North Dakota State Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

WORD SEARCH

SOMERSET COUNTY, MD.
LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'WHAT'S IN A SEAL?'
Created By: Charles Taylor

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

ACCOMAC COUNTY (Virginia county to the south)
BEAVER SKINS (Items traded between settlers and Native Americans in the Colonial era)
CAPT JOHN SMITH (English explorer of the area in the early 1600s)
CRISFIELD (City in Somerset County)
DELMARVA PENINSULA (Land mass named for the three states it encompasses)
EASTERN SHORE (Peninsular area between Chesapeake and Delaware bays)
HARD CRAB DERBY (Annual Labor Day weekend festival event in the county)
MAKEPEACE (Among the oldest residences in the United States)

MARY SOMERSET (Lord Baltimore's sister-in-law for whom county was named)
OYSTERS (Shellfish harvested from local waters)
QUAKERS (Fled religious persecution in Virginia to settle here)
SAMUEL CHASE (Signer of Declaration of Independence born in county)
TANGIER SOUND (Body of water between Crisfield and Smith Island)
WICOMICO (East adjacent county)
WORCESTER (Neighboring county to the north)

CIO Summit speakers stress cybersecurity policy, workforce issues

By **Charlie Ban**
senior staff writer

County officials can no longer claim ignorance when it comes to cybersecurity.

That's Robin Harlow's position. As innovation and research manager for the Iowa State Association of Counties, he keeps track of a state that counts roughly three-quarters of its counties as rural, on par with counties across the United States. He feels there is enough familiarity in even those small counties to make any elected official functionally literate with keeping public data safe.

"I think we've had IT around long enough, and it's all a part of our lives, at some point, the excuse that we don't know anything about it, that it's too com-

plicated, it's time to move past that," he said.

That's the kind of message he and other participants plan to bring to the Chief Information Officer Forum at the NACo Legislative Conference. *County News* spoke to Harlow and other panelists ahead of the forum to see what issues they thought were crucial in fortifying IT knowledge among county officials.

Harlow stressed a need to change strategy regarding awareness of cybersecurity issues.

"We have to stop trying to scare people into being cyber-vigilant and it's not sustainable," he said. "Our target is non-technical officers who don't have IT as a responsibility."

The strategy there, he said, is to focus on general policy and

relate the narrative to something laymen do understand so they can make informed policy decisions. He feels IT personnel have plenty of information to offer, but need to find the right point of entry, for instance, comparing cybersecurity measures to insurance policies.

"You wouldn't drive your car around without insurance, or maybe you'd just have liability insurance, but you would have protections in place," he said. "You'd assess the value of your car, of your house, so you don't over-insure them. You do the same thing with your data — don't spend \$100,000 protecting \$15,000 in records, but don't leave them vulnerable, either."

He also insisted that proper information security is as much

about policy as it is about technology, and as much an ingredient of success.

"Technology is not going to solve it because we've thrown a lot of technology at it and the problem hasn't gone away," he said.

On the way to aiding the effort with public policy, Mike Echols, director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cyber

Joint Program Management Office, will demystify the consequences of a recent presidential executive order promoting private sector cybersecurity information sharing.

"State and local government leaders see a great opportunity for information sharing and analysis with the private sector,"

See CIO page 13

PROFILES IN SERVICE

SCOTT BANGLE
NACo Board Member
Parks Director
Riverside, Calif.



Number of years active in NACo: 6

Years in public service: 28

Occupation: executive management, Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Education: B.S., management; B.S., workforce development; M.S., recreation, sports and tourism

The hardest thing I've ever done: Watch cancer take my best friend's life

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Peter F. Drucker, John Muir, Dave Grohl

A dream I have is to: break 80 on the golf course.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: am called Tony (middle name, Anthony) by my friends.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: swimming with sharks.

I'm most proud of: alongside my wife, raising our two wonderful, caring and productive children.

Every morning I read: weather forecast, emails, local and national news (online).

My favorite meal is: pizza with pepperoni and cashews.

My pet peeve is: messiness. (Ed. Note: It should be the cashews on your pizza)

My motto is: work hard in silence; Let success make the noise.

The last book I read was: *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Robert D. Putnam.

My favorite movie is: *Tombstone*.

My favorite music is: Rock and Roll, Jazz, and Blues.

My favorite president is: Ronald Reagan.

My county is a NACo member because: of the value it provides.

75% OF U.S. COUNTIES NOW NACo MEMBERS

*thank you and welcome**

Haralson County, Ga.

Oglethorpe County, Ga.

Henry County, Ill.

Kane County, Ill.

Cloud County, Kan.

Morris County, Kan.

Phillips County, Kan.

Rice County, Kan.

Sheridan County, Kan.

Leelanau County, Mich.

Van Buren County, Mich.

Simpson County, Miss.

Dixon County, Neb.

Furnas County, Neb.

Montgomery County, N.Y.

Yates County, N.Y.

Highland County, Ohio

Perry County, Ohio

Comanche County, Okla.

Gaines County, Texas

75%

*new members Dec. 1, 2015–Feb. 18, 2016

My favorite way to relax is: playing guitar.



2016 NACO SECOND VICE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

★ ★ ★ MEET THE CANDIDATES

Liz Archuleta Supervisor Coconino County, Ariz.

Why are you interested in serving as a NACO officer?

Throughout my career on the Coconino County Board of Supervisors, I have demonstrated my commitment to NACO and passion for county government. Since my first day on the Board 20 years ago, I recognized the value of effective advocacy for counties, particularly some of our most rural counties. I view NACO as the one organization who can effectively bridge the gap and represent the more than 3,000 counties in the United States through a common message.

I would be honored to be the first Latina to be elected second vice president of NACO. With our nation's changing demographics, it's important that NACO continues to stay relevant and constantly be ready to change our advocacy approach. I believe I am the right person to lead this organization and have proven time and again that I am inclusive and can represent all of NACO.

I am a true believer in county government. All of us make a difference, each day, in the lives of many. County government is the people's government and provides an incredible opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many.

Many of you have met me throughout the years. I hope you recognize that I have a lot of energy and would like to direct my energy to support NACO and the initiatives and success of this great organization. I believe in NACO as an organization and what NACO has to offer and yet to offer.

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?

My proudest moments during my tenure with NACO involve broadening NACO's outreach and increasing NACO's presence on advocacy. I successfully participated in the effort to ensure Arizona is a 100 percent state in NACO and ensure counties participate in NACO.

During my work as the chairwoman of the Public Lands Steering Committee (2007-2009), I led the successful reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) and full funding of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for all counties. During this time as chairwoman, I successfully brought opposing parties towards a common message. While not all members on the committee agreed, we were able to advocate one message. The result was a successful outcome for all counties.

During my time as president of the County Supervisors Association, the state was facing a budget crisis that could impact county government. With the help of my fellow supervisors and county elected officials, we were able to navigate a challenging budget and produce an outcome that allowed counties to continue providing needed services to our residents. The common theme during my presidency was bringing elected officials from all parties together to reach a common goal. During my presidency, we very effectively held press conferences and utilized the media to assist counties in mobilizing against very costly unfunded mandates from the state.

Also, I was the first president of our state association to host a reception with state legislators to develop relationships. This is now an annual tradition in our association and has continued to be a successful event. I am proud of this work



and the life-long relationships I developed during this time.

On the local level, one of the most challenging periods of my career on the Board of Supervisors has been the past few years dealing with the greatest disaster in the history of Coconino County — the Schultz Fire and Floods. The disaster had the potential for a major loss of life and an impact to public health and safety. I was successful in securing over \$30 million in funding to mitigate the flooding and the work done is recognized nationally as a model.

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?

The three most important challenges facing NACO all include ensuring the organization remains responsive and relevant, while continuing to adapt to changing dynamics in advocacy and communication.

As resources continue to diminish at the state and federal level, counties will be looking to NACO for ideas, technical assistance and best practices to develop county resources. Benchmarking and evaluation of county programs to demonstrate effectiveness and financial accountability will be increasingly critical to counties. It's critical for NACO to contin-

ue developing talent within the organization to respond to the needs of counties.

Another challenge is keeping NACO relevant and responsive in a world where information is exchanged over multiple platforms in minutes. While the recent development of platforms and applications has assisted counties with critical needs, technology continues to change and NACO must remain nimble and have the resources to adapt.

Finally, we are an organization grounded in advocacy. We must continue to strengthen our advocacy efforts to ensure NACO is the "go to" organization for Members of Congress, staff, State Legislators and all levels of administration. We have made great strides in the last few years and I'm optimistic we can strengthen our reputation further.

Officers should focus on building solid relationships with key partners such as the League of Cities and Towns, business/industry and non-governmental organizations.

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 membership in NACO?

The first step in increasing and retaining NACO members is to listen. I would begin by hosting telephone listening sessions to ensure any NACO member can call and listen to current information on specific topic of interest or topic of the month. While we all have many conference calls a week, this would ensure any NACO member could call in and hear about an issue NACO is dealing with and ask questions. This would bridge the divide between large and

small counties as well as urban and rural. Regardless of the size or geographic location of the county, there are many issues we share and much that we can learn from one another.

As NACO officers visit counties throughout the nation encouraging membership, I would take that effort a step further and work with the county to identify how, if while visiting that county, NACO could help with a local community effort or host a workshop on a topic of interest to the county, provide technical assistance or an educational opportunity for county staff. Making NACO relevant to the needs of that county and engaging the county will result in increased membership.

Another opportunity is to increase the availability of webinars and educational opportunities outside of the NACO conferences. This could be done by further engaging our affiliate organizations and partners.

Lastly and most importantly, I will listen. We need to hear the voice of all our counties. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and work hard to increase our membership and participation. But that work will not produce results unless we listen to what counties and county employees need from their professional organization. How can NACO be most helpful to you? What would motivate you to get involved or increase your involvement with NACO? Listening carefully and following through with action will result in keeping our organization relevant and grow its membership.

During my campaign last year, I heard time and time again that you want to be involved and contribute to our great organization. I believe the most effective way to build and sustain a membership organization is to create meaningful engagement. I want every person who wants to have a role and contribute to NACO to do so. Together we can create opportunities and we can build a strong NACO.



MEET THE CANDIDATES



Greg Cox Supervisor San Diego County, Calif.

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

I have been in local government service for 40 years, since I was first elected to a city council. For the past four decades, I have served residents at the local level in a variety of offices and been part of numerous great teams much like the one at NACo. I truly love local government; it is the level of government that can roll up its sleeves and get to work, where you have to work collaboratively to solve problems and make a difference. It's also the level of government at which the focus is on policy and projects and how they affect our residents, not politics. I believe that counties are the level of government that truly makes a difference in the lives of our citizens.

I have also had the privilege of serving as president and leading two of the largest local government associations in the country: the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities. In each of these capacities, I collaborated with local officials from small, medium and large jurisdictions to solve problems. No city or county was too small or too large to be part of the solution, and I have learned that whether an elected official represents a small community of 500 or a county serving millions, the drive to serve our communities and make them better is the same.

I thrive on working with small, medium, and large jurisdictions to solve problems. I've done it in my community in San Diego County through our innovative 2-1-1 phone referral system and the county-wide "Live Well San Diego" public health effort. I've done it in my role as president and an officer of CSAC through a statewide ballot proposition to constitutionally guarantee revenues to local government and through trial court reform to ensure county authority aligns with our responsibilities and funding. I've done it in my role



as president of the League of California Cities and as chair of the Institute for Local Government: a collaboration of cities, counties and special districts focusing on local governance issues.

It is with this experience of successfully creating powerful coalitions and open communication that I offer my candidacy as NACo second vice president. I'm prepared to share my passion and experience for bringing people together to create lasting solutions for all counties throughout the country. As NACo second vice president, I will strive to strengthen NACo's existing partnerships and create new ones to further our leverage on key issues for counties. I also offer my breadth of experience in coalition building and finding solutions that work at the local level to create a strong voice for all counties.

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?

While serving as a NACo board member, I was appointed in 2008 to co-chair a committee commissioned to examine the structure of NACo and recommend a potential reorganization. At that time, NACo had five officers and more than 160 board members — an onerous organizational structure that left many members feeling unrepresented.

Through the NACo Gov-

ernance and Structure Task Force, we developed a new organizational structure that allowed for significantly more representation and opening up new opportunities for members to get involved in the association. Through the four regional representatives, we can now ensure that all our counties have a greater voice. The new structure has also provided better lines of communication among members — crucial to an association as diverse as NACo in region, size and interests.

When I became president of our state association, it was a time of political turmoil in our state. A governor had been recently recalled and Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected to office. Our top priority was to protect local funding that was continually being diverted by the state for other purposes.

Working with the governor and other local government partners, we put together a strong coalition that developed a ballot initiative — Proposition 1A — to protect county and city local finances. Through the strong partnership with the governor and legislators, our state association led the way in seeing this measure approved overwhelmingly by more than two-thirds of California voters. To this day, Proposition 1A ensures that billions of local government funds stay at the local level.

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?

A key issue facing our leadership during the 2016-17 year will be working with the new president in Washington, D.C. We need to ensure our incoming president, his or her Administration and new members of Congress hear and understand NACo priorities and the critical role counties play every day. There's an old political saying that "if you aren't at the table, you are on the menu." As the voice of our nation's counties, we need to ensure we are at the table.

Another challenge facing

NACo as the voice of our nation's counties will be to examine ways for counties to leverage and take advantage of services already in place. We cannot solely focus on seeking new fiscal resources out of Washington, D.C.; we must look for new ways to provide our citizens with access to existing resources. As counties, we need to enhance our collaboration with community groups and the private sector. For example, I have been a strong advocate of the 2-1-1 system that plays an invaluable role in connecting citizens with local services. We need to examine opportunities such as this locally driven program to see how they can be expanded to serve all citizens.

The health of our residents is another issue we cannot overlook. Many counties have already implemented programs for children that focus on nutrition and healthy living. In my county, our "Live Well San Diego" program has become a national model on how to create healthy, safe communities. Led by the county, this initiative includes a broad coalition of partners including cities, schools, businesses and non-profit community providers. By developing preventive public health programs such as this, we can ultimately reduce the need for county services down the road. And more importantly, we will be helping to create a healthier population — a scenario that can benefit all of us.

NACo has an opportunity to be a leader and a resource on these challenges. We can lead the way in Washington D.C., in our states and in our communities, to provide our members with best practices that work in counties of all sizes and all regions of the country. It is our role as a national association to ensure that counties have the opportunity to learn from each other.

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 membership in NACo?

I have always believed that an association is only as strong as its membership. As president of both the California State Association of Counties and League of California Cities, I put strong emphasis on the retention and, as needed, recruitment of members. I was very proud of the fact that we had 100 percent participation from all jurisdictions. It is crucial for members to hear from — and meet with — their leadership and association staff. Our members need an opportunity to express their viewpoints and discuss issues of importance to them. That is often difficult to do in a large setting such as an annual conference; it is most effectively done in their home state or county where the association comes to them. Local outreach is critical for both the county members and the leadership of an association.

It is also vital that NACo members understand the value of their membership. As NACo continues to add to its value through innovative programs, advocacy and services, it is important for these accomplishments and opportunities to be communicated back to all members. All members of our national association must believe we have their interests at heart and that we are working hard for them. Only when we are able to show true value will we find our members become more active in the association — and only then will we have the tools to build our membership.

This is not a new idea, but it's a process that must be continued year after year. As a NACo officer, I would make it a goal to visit all state associations and to meet with as many of our members as possible in their home states. NACo is an incredibly effective organization advocating on behalf of our counties across the country and in sharing resources. But we can always do more; we must always strive to reach that next level. I want to bring my experience to the table and play a leadership role in communicating the successes of today and tomorrow to our membership.

MEET THE ★ ★ ★ CANDIDATES

Robert B. Steele Commissioner Cook County Commissioner

Why are you interested in serving as a NACo officer?

I have a strong 20 years history with NACo. I began attending conferences as a volunteer and then as an elected official. NACo has proven to be a great opportunity for legislative input, community opportunity and positive change in governmental policy.

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?

My most important contribution to NACo is I served as chairman of NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Plan and assisting in creating and developing the Minority Inclusion Plan.

My most important contribution to the Illinois Counties Association is to help grow membership and making all members aware of NACo and how it can assist in expanding their municipality and its partnerships.

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?

Economic policy because we are trying to restructure government and create more employment opportunities throughout our nation.

Urban communities are battling the condition of violence and its negative impact on our environment and the partner-



ship with local law enforcement.

Conversion of energy consumption should be addressed and to encourage government to lower the footprints of environmental impediments.

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 membership in NACo?

I would ensure NACo's voice is utilized to create strong policies and deliverables that impact the majority of municipalities of its current members.

I will be on the front line to create awareness and educate other municipalities of what NACo has accomplished in past to guarantee NACo is visible in the eyes of all levels of government; federal, state local and also the business community.

LET US KNOW!

Are U.S. presidential election politics impacting local politics in your county.

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Politics

Counties look at drones ahead of FAA regulations

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

As hundreds of thousands of individuals and businesses purchase unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), counties are moving fast to determine where exactly the sky will become the limit.

Commercially available drones, in the parlance of the times, are distinctly different in both size and function from the unmanned military aircraft used in the Middle East, but regulations and policies are forming so hundreds of thousands of new, inexperienced users don't create just as much of a hazard.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is expected to release regulations on UAS by the summer that are expected to preempt local ordinances, but in the meantime, counties have taken the lead in building rules around their use.

By the end of March, the Boulder County, Colo. Parks and Open Space Department hopes to present rules to its Board of Commissioners regulating commercial use of drones on county-owned land. County administration pointed to drone proliferation as an issue to watch and support last year and the county's focus accelerated following inquiries from the agricultural community, interested in using drones for precision farming. Commercial drone use requires FAA approval.

"There are cameras that can determine the health of plants in a way you can't see with the naked eye, and from a higher viewpoint," said Jeff Moline, the parks and open space department's resource planning manager. "That visual surveillance and the GPS coordinates that go along with it can identify exactly where there's some kind of deficiency, so it can be treated there and not over the

entire field," decreasing the environmental impact from farming and cutting costs for farmers.

The county's public hearing process has been crucial, Moline said, in addressing misgivings from residents about the new addition to their skies.

"(UASs) can really engender some strong feelings on either side," he said. "People in the West have an expectation of solitude, many like it because of the big, open spaces, and they can feel like a UAS is an infringement, not so much of their privacy, but an erosion of that solitude. That's why openness has been so important to the process."

The related privacy concern drove the Suffolk County, N.Y. Legislature to bar drone flights over county beaches during the spring and summer, though County Executive Steve Bellone later vetoed the bill, responding that there is no right to privacy in public. The Legislature compromised by charging the parks, recreation and conservation department with establishing a permitting system for all drones.

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S A UAS

The sound of a helicopter is music to the ears of someone lost in the wilderness, but in Clay County, Minn., among others, that noise will be a little softer.

When a regional EMS association acquired three drones and asked Clay County to house one, the search and rescue opportunities jumped out at Emergency Management Director Bryan Green.

"We can get helicopters for search and rescue, but we have to get them from a hospital or the Coast Guard," he said. "It could take hours to get them and it's very expensive. We can use these a lot faster and cheaper."

The FAA treats public-use drones the same as aircraft, so drone operators must have a pilot's license, but no current Clay County deputies have one, so two members of the volunteer search and rescue team will fill that role.

Drones can also deliver medicine and medical supplies, first test of that use coming in Wise County, Va. in July 2015, in the Appalachian Mountains.

But drones aren't a fix-all. In fact, they can present practical problems.

A close call nearly took down



Recreational drones can be up to 55 pounds, but even a small model could be hazardous to aircraft.

a Fresno County Sheriff's Office helicopter in early February.

"We had an experienced pilot, but this was his first time coming in close contact with a drone," said sheriff's PIO Tony Botti. "It was a case of being too close for comfort."

Recreational drones can be up to 55 pounds, but even a small model could be hazardous to aircraft.

Beyond the physical concerns, how counties that use drones manage the data will be a source of discussion for their information technology departments.

What is done with public drone data is up to the states, and Doug Robinson, executive director of the National Association of State Chief Infor-

Charles County, Md. testing drone-flying area in county park

From DRONES page 11

mation Officers, said the data challenge they pose for governments will be on par with police body-worn cameras.

"I call them servers in the sky," he said. "They generate tremendous amounts of unstructured data, and how that data will be stored and managed is going to be one of the biggest challenges governments face when they use (drones)."

The speed with which drones have caught on has compounded responsibilities for governments looking at using them

"It's fun to talk about the technology, but the reality is governance and the data man-

agement and the security and privacy, those are all other considerations.

"A year ago, they weren't talking about them, now they're everywhere."

A DRONE OF YOUR OWN

The number of drones sold is hard to pin down, but the FAA recently closed the registration window for models sold before Dec. 21. More than 325,000 drones were registered by mid-February. They were judged to be one of the hottest new Christmas gifts of 2015.

With that popularity in mind, Charles County, Md. is trying to position itself to serve the amateur pilots who want a place to take off. Though most

of the county is covered by the 30-mile no-fly-zone surrounding Washington, D.C., some parts of the country are outside of that radius, such as the county's Southern Park, and the county parks department is working on a plan to make one of its parks drone-friendly.

"They're one of the hottest gifts," said Tom Roland, chief of parks and grounds. "Our general rule in our parks is to not allow model airplanes, but we have a small area in a low-visitation site that could be an option for people to try them out. What we're trying to do is provide a safe and legal fly area for our residents."

And other residents.

"We haven't heard that any-

body else is doing this, so it may be an opportunity for tourism, make this the place people come out to fly their drones," he said. "That no-fly zone covers most of the Washington, D.C. suburban area, so a lot of people could be looking for a place to use their drones."

Roland is finalizing a test program for roughly six months, restricting users to four drones at any time and keeping a parks staff member on hand during flying times in an educational, but not enforcement, capacity.

"One of our biggest concerns is limiting wildlife interaction," he said. "The photography possibilities are amazing, but there's a real concern."

If Southern Park proves to be popular, the county may develop a partnership with a private land owner who can provide more space for flight. Though Southern Park stretches 38 acres, other uses and amenities limit what drones can fly over.

"You can't fly them over people and you need to have them in your line of sight," Roland said. "That keeps them pretty restrictive, but we're comfortable with it at this point."

In New York, Niagara County Community College is offering a 18-hour non-credit course on UAS training, which includes a small quad-copter with a camera and a computer flight simulator. The price tag falls just under \$1,500. **CN**

NOBCO, NACo launch HIV outreach effort

The National Organization of Black County Officials (NOBCO) and NACo are partnering to promote HIV education and outreach. NOBCO was awarded funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to engage in the CDC initiative, Partnering and Communicating Together, or PACT.

With this funding, the CDC seeks to increase HIV awareness among the general public, and more specifically those most vulnerable, to reduce new HIV infections among disproportionately impacted populations.

"Improving health outcomes for people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States and its territories is a reachable goal," said Helen Holton, NOBCO executive director. "This is a five-year opportunity that began in October 2015. Partnering with the CDC and NACo is a win-win for counties across America. In the first year, we have focused our attention in some of the hardest hit areas including Washington, D.C.;

Alameda County, Calif; Cook County, Ill.; and Baltimore City, Md."

According to Holton, the program launched by NOBCO will dedicate time and effort to ensure that the goals of the CDC's PACT funding opportunity are met. "Our program is

Project SPACE (Strategic Partnerships And Community Engagement), an integrated collaborative community-driven communication and mobilization effort to

support the dissemination of information through education, HIV campaign materials, social media messaging and other resources," Holton added.

"Over the next few years we look forward to strengthening the health of our counties through this partnership while sharing life-saving and life-transforming news and information." **CN**

To learn more about Project SPACE and the work NOBCO is engaged visit NOBCO's website: <http://nobco.org>.

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PHARMA

IT recruitment, retention tough for state, local government

From CIO page 8

he said. "They just don't understand yet how these policies are being developed."

The executive order lays a framework for information clearinghouses where the private and public sector can pool information about cyber attacks, vulnerabilities and fixes. Existing organizations, such as the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center, cater to just government or private businesses.

Doug Robinson, executive director of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers, will focus on the issues his members identified as most important in his organization's annual survey.

"Cybersecurity is number one, obviously," he said.

He also plans to touch on the trend that sees governments moving away from the owner-operated IT systems toward a cloud-based service.

"Our services will be delivered differently than in the past,"

he said. "That's changing a little slower on the local level, but it's hard to find some organization that doesn't use some kind of third-party, off-premises service for its work. It's a changing business model."

As the amount of data about individuals becomes increasingly available, Robinson sees data analytics by governments as a huge growth market.

"We're seeing a greater understanding and need for data at all levels to be used for decision making and also to effectively

improve those types of services governments deliver," he said. "Things like predictive analytics to see what people will be looking for and better ways to display that data."

Robinson also stressed preparing for the looming retirement of many government IT workers and illustrated the challenges governments would face in the process.

"Some states have 40 percent of their IT workforce ready to retire today, 50 percent by 2020," he said. "And recruiting is hard,

because we can't pay as much as the private sector. State governments, similar to city and county governments, are not viewed as attractive places to work if you're an IT professional."

"If you have a degree from a good program and you're looking to start, you're probably looking for a job at a Silicon Valley firm, some company that's traded on the stock exchange and you can tell mom and dad you're working for."

See CIO page 14

BRIGHT IDEAS | ANOKA COUNTY, MINN.

Service Redesign Makes Senior Services More Efficient

PROBLEM: Call volume for senior services was both overwhelming and underutilizing staff members.

SOLUTION: Reallocating resources and redirecting the public inquiries and reports managed the information flow and freed up staff members to work to their capacities.

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

There was no such thing as a bad question, but for Anoka County, Minn. Human Services, there was a better place to ask it.

By 2012, the number of phone calls was overwhelming the department's senior services staff, who were trained to spring into action to provide protective and investigative services for elderly residents. But instead, they found themselves answering phones and distributing basic information.

Callers wanted to open abuse reports and acquire information about referrals, and with the senior population projected to increase in the future, the situation was becoming

untenable and tying up the staff.

"We were just getting overwhelmed with information calls, many clients weren't getting the attention they needed," said Jerry Pederson, director of community social services and behavioral health. "It was a valued service, one we were glad to provide, but everyone who was answering these calls was taking time away from other duties."

A fundamental redesign of how the county as a whole, with its partners, built a more functional way to process inquiries and abuse reports and help the department adjust to the inevitably-growing call volume.

The first step was getting one of its community providers, Anoka County Community Action Program (ACCAP), to staff the senior information line, which could handle request for referral information.

The county also established a central phone number for information and assistance, which streamlined the staff's interactions with the public. That was coupled with a redesigned informational website and a new general email address.

"We're getting to the point

where our seniors, or their caretakers, are more Internet savvy, so there are a lot of things that could be addressed right on there and they don't need to call," Pederson said. But even if they do still call, and call the old numbers, "we answer the questions, but we try to help them and shepherd them back to ACCAP."

At the same time, the county attorney's office could be recruited as another partner to help with the investigation of financial exploitation cases.

"Most of our reports of abuse are financial exploitation, and it's much quicker to hand those directly to the county attorney's office because they have the expertise to handle them," Pederson said. "Our people aren't holding on to them, slowing the investigations down and bogging us down."

Pederson's department also redeployed staff members based on geographical distribution of calls for service. He moved a senior outreach worker to the southwest region of the county, where an outsized proportion of calls was originating.

"Just having information where it's needed has freed up our staff," he said. "The infor-

mation flow is a lot more manageable and people who were hired and trained to investigate abuse can go out and do that, rather than give information referrals over the phone."

By 2014, the department was able to handle more than a one-third increase in investigations. And the call screen-

ing worked to decrease the number of unnecessary investigations: less than 36 percent of cases investigated in 2014, compared with 64 percent in 2012. **CN**

Bright Ideas features noteworthy and award-winning programs.

ON THE MOVE

NACO OFFICERS, COUNTY OFFICIALS

President **Sallie Clark** represented NACo at the West Virginia Association of Counties Conference in Kanawha County (Charleston), Feb. 7-9.

gram director, Community and Economic Development, helped to lead a workshop on asset-based economic development, at the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Multnomah County (Portland), Ore. Feb. 11-13. She also moderated a rural smart growth networking session at the conference.

NACO STAFF

Daria Daniel, associate legislative director, was a presenter on the "Building Your Local Workforce: WIOA and You" panel at the National Association of Regional Councils national conference, in Washington, D.C., Feb. 9.

Kathy Nothstine, pro-



Nothstine



Koroknay Palicz

COMING UP

Alex Koroknay-Palicz, membership coordinator, will attend the Michigan Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Ingham County, Mich. Feb. 29-March 3.

From CIO page 13

Retaining talent is hard because of lack of opportunities and states are having trouble filling these jobs, particular in security and applications development.

"Recruiting reforms are necessary," he said. "We've seen some states eliminate the civil service system so they can hire, and offer more money, something closer to a market salary for these jobs, but there's a lot of pushback legislatively."

The forum wasn't planned

to be all talk from the podium. Harlow planned to break participants into groups that included one IT manager for group exercises.

"We'll give them a scenario — perhaps their payroll records were stolen—and ask them what they'll do now," he said. "It will get the IT people in a conversation with non-technical people and they can get comfortable working with each other. Hopefully that familiarity will be something they can take home and put to work in their counties." **CN**



SOMERSET COUNTY, MD.

Seal Created in: 1666

Somerset County, Md., named after Lord Baltimore's sister-in-law Mary Somerset, had used its Great Seal from its founding in 1666 until 1707, then shelved it for 251 years. The Old Princess Anne Days Committee and the Board of County Commissioners dusted off a black and white version in 1957, then researched the original colors and put it back in use.

Within the oval is a shield bearing a very slightly modified version of the Stuart royal arms. Several of the early county seals, including the present one, are based on the Stuart royal arms. The alterations in the Somerset County Seal are a reversal of the position of the fleur-de-lys

(the royal arms has two above and one below), an absence of the flower design in the inside of the border around the rampant lion, and a simpler drawing of the harp. Also, the Garter encircling the royal arms has been reduced to a simple band.

(If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Charlie Ban, senior staff writer: 202.942.4249 or cban@naco.org.)

"Covnty Somerset," (spelled the Old English way.)

"Semper Eadem," means, "always the same."

The Oval Band:

The Garter has encircled the royal shield since the reign of King Edward III.

A colored illustration of the Order of the Garter and of the Royal Arms show the Garter to be blue, bordered with gold. It seemed logical, then, for the oval band on the Somerset County Seal to be colored in this way.



If missing a justice, will justice be missed?

What happens next at the Supreme Court?

By Lisa Soronen
executive director
State & Local Legal Center

So the million dollar question (other than who will fill Justice Antonin Scalia's seat) is what will happen to undecided Supreme Court cases heard or to be heard this term.

The short answer is: it depends and in all instances isn't entirely clear. If a case isn't 4-4, it will be decided as usual with only eight Justices.

If a case is going to be decided 4-4, the court has two choices: wait for the ninth justice to join the court and rehear the case or issue a non-precedential 4-4 decision that affirms the lower court decision. SCOTUS blog publisher Tom Goldstein predicts that the court will rehear 4-4 cases.

It is of course impossible to know which cases would have been 5-4 had Justice Scalia lived. But a good rule of thumb is that particularly important, controversial cases are often decided 5-4. Six cases this term meet just about any definition of important and controversial.

Let's take a look at the five such cases affecting state and local government. Unsurprisingly, Justice Anthony Kennedy's vote probably will be key in all of them.

Public Sector Unions

In *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the court will decide whether to overrule *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* (1977), requiring public sector employees who don't join the union to pay their "fair share" of collective bargaining costs.



SORONEN

Justices Scalia and Kennedy joined two previous Justice Samuel Alito opinions criticizing *Abood*. Unless Justice Kennedy has a change of heart or one of the other conservative justices has second thoughts about overturning precedent regardless of how much he dislikes it, this case is likely to be reheard.

Immigration

In *United States v. Texas* the court will decide whether the president's deferred action immigration program violates federal law or is unconstitutional.

The stakes are the highest if the court is 4-4 in this case. The federal government and the Supreme Court worked hard to make sure this case got on the docket this term because a new president could scrap the program.

If this case is reargued, unless the new justice joined the court next fall, it seems unlikely the court could render an opinion before January 2017.

One-Person-One-Vote

The issue in *Evenwel v. Abbott* is whether voting-eligible, as opposed to *total* population must be the metric used to en-

sure that state and local legislative districts comply with "one-person one-vote."

Evenwel is considered the most important voting rights case in decades.

Using voting population as the metric tends to favor more rural, Republican areas. This case seems ripe for rehearing unless Kennedy sides with the liberals.

Abortion

The issue in *Whole Women's Health v. Cole* is whether Texas' admitting privileges and ambulatory surgical center requirements create an undue burden on women seeking abortions.

Conventional wisdom on abortion cases is that only Kennedy's vote is at play. If he is willing to strike down Texas' laws this case will not be reheard.

The fact that Kennedy voted to prevent these laws from going into place before the court decided to review the case indicates he may be skeptical of the laws, making a 4-4 vote less likely.

Affirmative Action

In *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, the court has agreed to decide whether UT-Austin's race-conscious admissions policy is unconstitutional.

More conservative justices are probably as likely to win this case with or without Scalia. Justice Elena Kagan is recused and Kennedy is no fan of affirmative action.

But the court heard this case once before rendering a narrow 7-1 opinion against UT-Austin. You never know with cases involving race. **CN**

MONEYMATTERS

Oil Rout Just a Symptom of the Problem

By Joel Griffith
general program manager

Over the past few months, volatility highlighted by numerous strong rebounds and sharp pullbacks has defined both the oil and equities markets.

Many have taken note of the strong correlation between fluctuations in price for oil and daily broader stock market fluctuations.

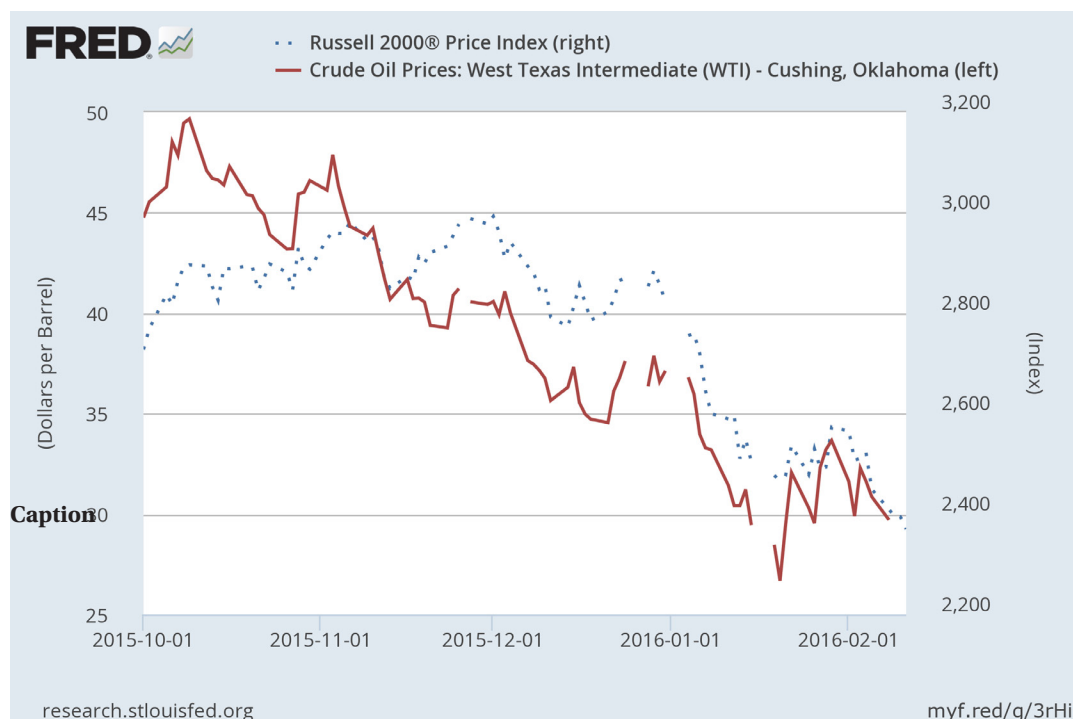
However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the equities market turmoil has been caused by the steep decline in oil prices. Both the plunge in oil and in equities are but symptoms of other economic factors.

Since early November 2015, oil has plunged from near \$48 barrel to just over \$26, a drop of 45 percent and the lowest point in nearly 13 years. Longer term, oil has declined a stunning 76 percent from \$107 per barrel in July 2014 and a whopping 82 percent drop since the July 2008 peak.

During this latest three-month decline in oil, equities markets have also steeply sold off. The index of 2,000 small cap stocks (IWM) cratered 20 percent to levels last seen almost three years ago. The Dow Jones Industrial Average of the 30 largest publicly-traded companies declined 12 percent, the S&P 500 Index comprising the 500 largest publicly traded companies dropped 12 percent, and the tech-heavy NASDAQ fell 17 percent over this period. Equities markets are clearly in correction mode (declines of at least 10 percent); many sectors have crossed the line into bear market territory (declines of at least 20 percent).

So what gives?

As with any other good or service, price is primarily a function of both supply and de-



Since early November 2015, oil has plunged from near \$48 barrel to just over \$26, a drop of 45 percent and the lowest point in nearly 13 years.

mand. All things being equal, either an increase in supply or a decrease in demand of a product provides impetus for lower prices. Likewise, diminished supply or increased demand for the same products places increased pressure on prices. Often, these two forces counteract each other in a form of economics tug of war—with the stronger force prevailing.

In regards to oil, OPEC estimates global oil demand inched up just 1.68 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, global supply, according to the International Energy Administration (IEA), leapt 2.73 percent. In other words, for every barrel of additional demand, another 1.6 barrels was produced.

This longer-term expansion in global supply is thanks to the shale oil boom across the United States. From 2007 through the latest data available in October 2015, global production increased by 10.4 million bar-

rels per day, or about 12 percent. Of this global increase, 6.6 million barrels per day of additional supply came from a growth in U.S. production. This represented an increase in U.S. production of 77 percent, or put another way nearly two out of every three additional barrels of oil (63 percent) being produced each day globally is from the U.S.

OPEC, leery of U.S. producers eroding OPEC market share and pricing control, has been ramping up production in the hopes of driving their new U.S. shale oil competitors out of business. Specifically, Saudi Arabia increased production by 10 percent from May 2011 through October 2015. But as it turns out, U.S. oil production has barely budged despite the efforts of the cartel. U.S. production as of October 2015 had declined just 1.3 percent from the record reached in April 2015. In fact, U.S. daily

production remains 70 percent higher than at the time oil traded at \$145 per barrel back in July 2008. The attempted OPEC shakeout only succeeded in helping to drive prices lower. And now, even more supply is likely to come on board as sanctions on Iran are lifted and Iraq continues to recover its lost capacity. All these factors have increased current supply and expected future supply, and thereby depressed the price.

On the demand side of the equation, substantial overlap between market performance and oil prices does exist. Stock market performance is largely affected by economic health. Expectations of future corporate profits influence the price which investors are willing to pay for shares of companies. In addition, economic growth drives demand increases for oil by both consumers and industry.

Annual growth in U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) has hovered around 2 percent during the seven-year recovery from the Great Recession; this is the weakest ever post-World War II economic recovery. This lackluster performance is not

unique to the U.S. For instance, China's economic growth — the second largest economy in the world — has dropped off to under 7 percent, the slowest growth since 2009. China's market decline has plummeted by nearly half since June of last year as a result of this and other factors. In 2015, data firm Statista estimates global GDP dropped by nearly 5 percent, taking the world backwards to below the 2011 level.

Not surprisingly, the weak economic conditions in Europe's "Big 4" (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom) resulted in negative demand growth of 0.7 percent. Japan saw a 6.7 percent decline in demand. This was counterweighted by China's 3.51 percent demand increase. But even in China, the slowdown is being felt, with December 2015 demand actually 0.5 percent less than a year earlier. Compared to 2007, daily oil consumption was 5 percent less through October of 2015 in the 34 industrialized Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations. Globally, the IEA predicts that global demand will fall for the second consecutive quarter.

In short, the supply of oil has been increasing due to production increases — most of which is from the U.S. In addition, global economic turmoil has softened current demand and near-term expectations. Declines in stock markets across the globe are reflecting this economic slowdown, which has also slackened oil demand.

Although an eventual return to robust economic conditions should repair equities prices, oil may not follow an identical path. Additional supply from the U.S. shale producers, OPEC and Iran will serve as a counterweight to renewed demand. **CN**



Modest Suggestions Major Impacts

It is time again to talk about some approaches to dealing with the deadly mixture of uncontrolled gun violence and the plague of violent extremism. These are part of the scary specter of terrorism concerns around the world. America has had a very long history of trying to figure out how to manage the hundreds of millions of deadly weapons in the hands of scores of millions of Americans.

Every time there is a school shooting, an armed robbery, the death of a police officer in line of duty, the accidental killing of a child who finds a gun “lying around” or whose playmate finds a gun, there are tears, funerals, blame passed around and political statements about the sad situation.

There are also fervent defenses raised again and again about the glory of the Second Amendment.

The chorus of such defenses sings right along side the chorus of questioning about whether or not a 19th century amendment can continue to exist unchanged in 21st century environment. Adding to, or perhaps exacerbating the debate is the media that bemoans the violence while seeming to glorifying the rather constant discharge of weapons in movies, TV shows and video games. In short, there is a loud cry and a great need, regardless of political viewpoint, for ways to emerge to deal with these issues effectively in a society “conflicted” about conflict.

Solutions are raised, but none of them seem to focus on “effective.” Should America ban weapons, ammunition or components like high-capacity magazines for assault rifles? Should there be armed teach-

ers at schools? What about armed students on college campuses? Even if these and other similar ideas were practical to solve the horrors of uncontrolled gun harm — which, right or wrong, they are not, the problems of a violent society will not disappear.

The National Rifle Association is quick to point out that control of deadly violence and weapons deaths do not follow just because there are strict laws.

It doesn’t mean that evil people or irresponsible people will not violate those laws. The NRA is correct, whether the subject involves guns or the abuses of alcohol and drunken driving, the abuse of a spouse or child, or an overdose of testosterone provoking sexual violence or bullying.

This view is also certainly true of the hate and violence carried out by those proclaiming that they speak for God and that their religion mandates their violence.

The situation seems to lack solutions that are at the same time effective, available and politically palatable enough to have an impact in our society. The HR Doctor respectfully offers a few suggestions that meet these criteria.

Problems to Stay

First to lay some groundwork: The very foundation of the discussion is the recognition that the terrorism of horrific groups like “Islamic State,” lone gunmen in a theater, school, or clinic or a vicious criminal is not a problem that will go away by itself or lessen

by inaction. If we can agree that inaction only makes things worse, some common sense “treatments” could emerge to reduce dangers.

The first treatment begins in early childhood. Namely, teach self-esteem, responsibility and respectful behavior as a core curriculum subject in schools. Create curricula designed around helping children appreciate that solving problems is best done through nonviolent means.

Notwithstanding their dedication and skills,

teachers would not be the sole designers of the curriculum. It must be designed locally with help after community discussion and input from groups as varied as parents, law enforcement, those convicted of crimes, senior citizens and children themselves.

Such curricula should be mandatory in elementary, middle and high schools throughout the country as a condition of receiving any other form of educational assistance from the federal or state governments.

It should be required in every grade every year and will only work if the curriculum is compelling, interesting and relevant to the daily lives of children.

Need Role Models

The second suggestion recognizes that curricula alone, no matter how well designed and implemented, cannot work without positive role models as examples, especially for children.

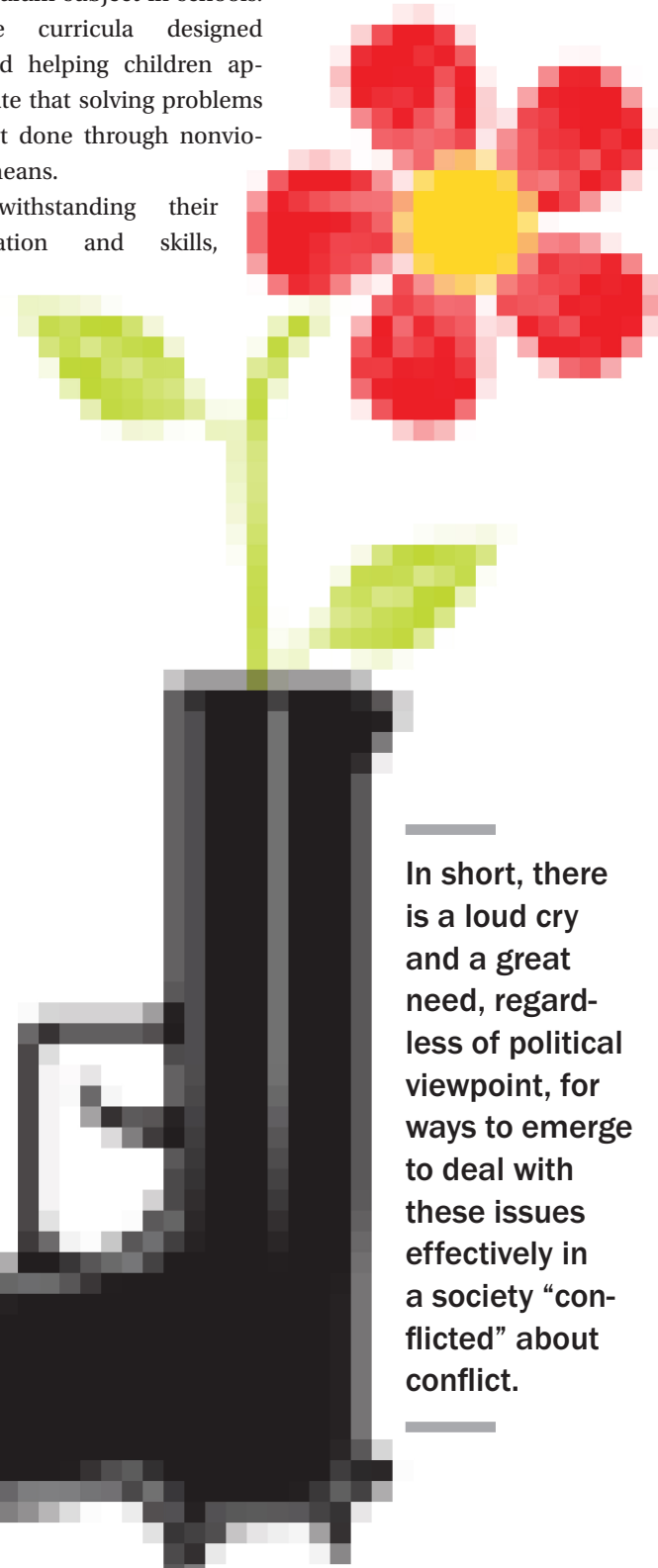
Too many of today’s “role models” are manufactured. They glorify behaviors that are not consistent with the ideas of responsibility and peacefully resolving disputes.

To make the point, I invite you, as I have invited graduate students in my seminars for many years, to read the sports section of their local newspapers every day.

What you are likely to find is less and less about sports and more and more about poor examples of human behavior. The coach gets fired. Some star athlete commits an assault or is caught in a doping scandal.

There are cheating scandals and recruiting violations. Some incredibly immense salary is paid to an athlete — enough to fund a hospital for years. These headlines are mixed with the scores of football, baseball or basketball games somewhere else in the sports section.

At universities, among the very highest paid faculty members — probably the highest paid — will be the football



In short, there is a loud cry and a great need, regardless of political viewpoint, for ways to emerge to deal with these issues effectively in a society “conflicted” about conflict.

From IMPACT page 16

coaches. Inspirational leaders in other fields, including prize-winning scholars, artists and community servants will be much farther down the pay scales. They will seldom be offered the opportunity to show off their potential to influence the thinking and actions of children or adults.

There must be a deliberate search in each community for role models to deliver and reinforce messages about facing our differences with high intelligence, respect and recognition of the effects of our behavior on others.

The role models should not be the ones on TV with handguns being fired every few minutes on prime time. They should not be the newscasters and producers focusing on “breaking news” about the latest violence in a neighborhood. There are

easily tens of thousands of public employees, including elected officials themselves, who would make outstanding mentors and role models. There are hundreds of thousands of private sector people well able to do the same work.

Focus on the Postive

Third, how about a national and local commitment by the media to focus more on the best and not the worst of our actions? This seems so simple but it also seems to run in sharp contrast to what we spend time focusing on as parents and kids. “Breaking news” about some act of violence every hour of every day, in time, “breaks” our sense of civility. Perhaps some assignment of a “rating” to the news programs — not about the content of their stories, not about some threat to their First Amendment privileges, but about the degree of

violence versus honor stories they choose to run.

Fourth, science, music and communications in schools needs to have at least as much, and in this author’s opinion, considerably more sustained emphasis than it now does — at least as much as we give to sports.

The small number of people who can excel in middle or high school sports is a tiny fraction of the larger number of kids who may have dreams or abilities that are not addressed only on the athletic field.

Emphasizing science and music is not something which should occur only occasionally during an annual science fair or for the marching band as a distant subplot in the football season. There are many artists and scientists in our communities who, if only given the chance, would gladly share the passions that have led them to

their chosen careers.

Teach Gun Safety

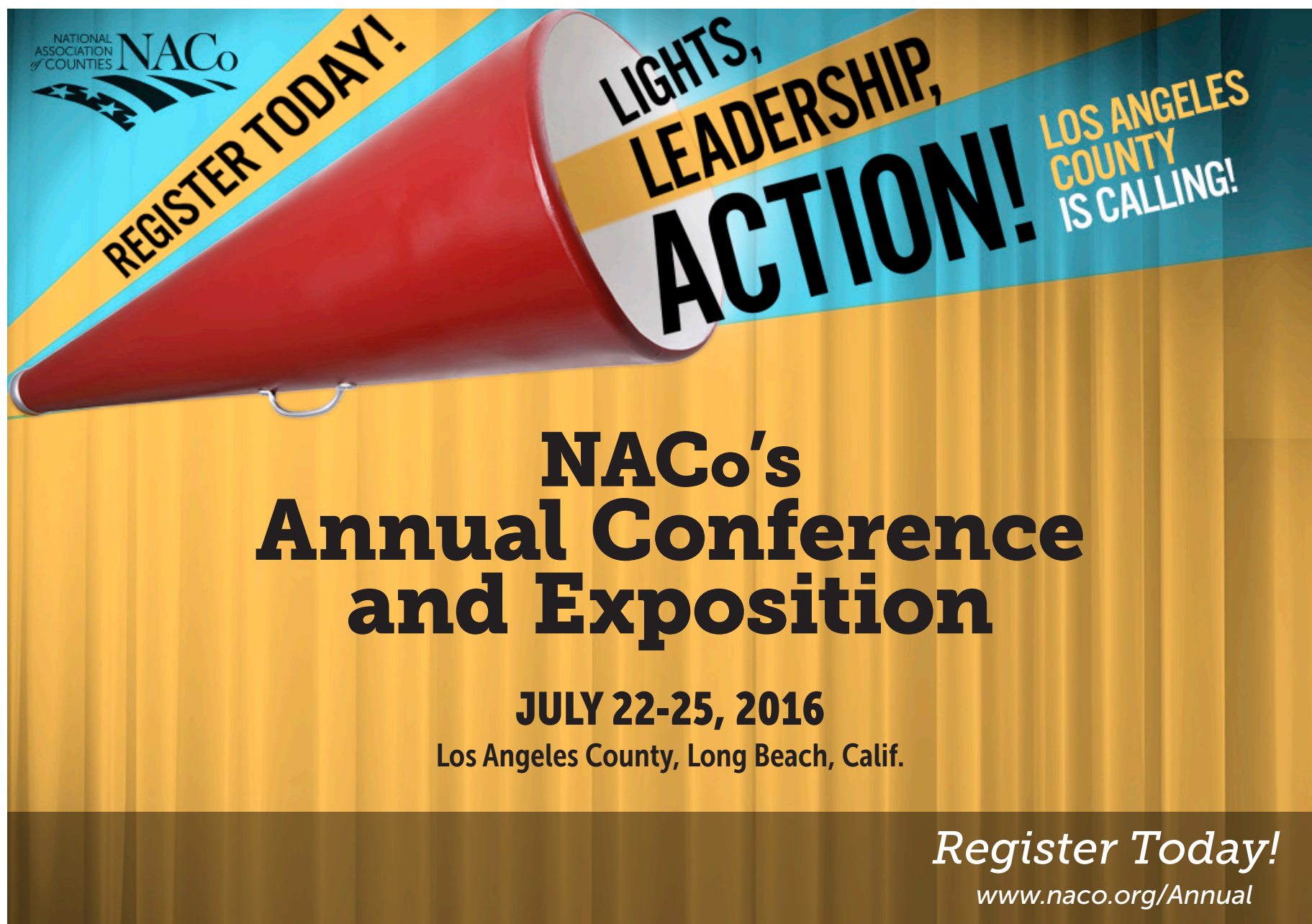
Finally, and definitely not without controversy, there should be a program in every middle school and high school about safety in the presence of guns and vehicles. No matter what your position may be on the prevalence of guns in our society, the reality is that hardly a day goes by when we don’t read about some child who is the “accidental” victim or perpetrator in a shooting.

At a minimum, every child should have a compelling exposure to the tremendous dangers of firearms or a car operated irresponsibly. They should understand what to do if they find a weapon lying around. They should know the importance of calling a relative or an adult friend to render the weapon safe. They should understand the im-

portance of not being afraid to speak up if a person driving a vehicle is impaired.

None of the suggestions above will cost a lot of money, not compared to the damage that inattention will absolutely inflict upon us in the future. None are impractical and all will save lives and help create a more responsible community.

Of course, none of them will convince terrorists to disarm their suicide belts or car bombs. None, as the NRA likes to point out, will take guns out of the hands of criminals or persons with evil intent. However, we have done a poor job of coming up with answers. Is it now time to focus in a civil way on the fundamental issue — the disrespect of others and a primitive propensity to solve problems between individuals or nations for that matter, with violence? **CN**



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CN ACROSS THE NATION



OREGON
MULTNOMAH
COUNTY Commission Chair Deborah Kafoury (pictured center, hands clasped) recently met with **Somali-American residents** for dinner and conversation at the African Youth and Community Organization. It was the first in a series of meetings with immigrant and refugee communities as the county prepares its 2017 budget.

"My job is make sure we're providing services that are culturally specific," she said. "I want to learn from you how we can best serve you."

CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES COUNTY and the city of Los Angeles have launched a combined, far-reaching **effort to reduce homelessness**.

Two coordinated strategic plans have been developed to target some 45,000 homeless persons through initiatives such as subsidizing housing, job creation, and coordinating programs to help homeless persons with prison records, substance abuse or mental health problems.

The county plan calls for spending \$150 million over the next two years. It already spends about \$965 million annually on homelessness-reduction programs and services, according to the *Los Angeles*

Times. County leaders say the challenge now is where to find the funding.

The city and county saw a 12 percent increase in homelessness from 2013 to 2015.

FLORIDA

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY commissioners **don't want a Cuban consulate** in Miami, the *Miami Herald* reported. The board passed a resolution 9-3 urging the Obama Administration to "refrain from establishing" a consular office in the county.

Opponents are worried that having a consulate in Miami "could inflame passions" among Miami-Dade's large Cuban-American community, many of whom fled Castro's

Cuba decades ago.

The resolution is largely symbolic and would not stop the federal government from locating a consulate in the county. County officials also suggested that Tampa or New Orleans are more viable options.

■ "No fracking here" is the word from **SEMINOLE COUNTY** commissioners. They recently approved a **ban on hydraulic fracturing** for oil or gas. Seminole is one of 33 Florida counties — there are 67 in all — to officially oppose fracking, but Seminole County passed an outright prohibition.

The ban comes at a time when the Florida Legislature is considering a bill that would require the state's Department of Environmental Protection to

HAWAII

HAWAII COUNTY Mayor Billy Kenoi has declared a 60-day state of emergency on the big island over concerns about the **spread of dengue fever**.

Kenoi's declaration says there were there are 250 confirmed cases dengue fever as of Feb. 1. At the end of October 2015, there were two confirmed illnesses for last year. He said the emergency declaration is needed to prevent

the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

One immediate consequence of the designation is suspension of a local ban on accepting tires at county landfills. The state of emergency could be extended if necessary.



study fracking's potential impact on the state.

IOWA

POLK COUNTY put the kibosh on using the federal **EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program** to borrow up to \$29 million towards the construction of a \$101 million convention hotel. The controversial program, which allows wealthy foreigners to gain U.S. residency by investing at least \$500,000 in a U.S. business, has been under scrutiny for cases

of fraud, The *Des Moines Register* reported.

The Board of Supervisors voted to float a loan to the partnership that's building the hotel. County Administrator Mark Wandro said the county will back the loan by refinancing the Iowa Events Center, which the county owns. The new hotel would be attached to the center.

GEORGIA

The Atlanta area's newest **Certified Green Community** is **ROCKDALE COUNTY**. The Atlanta Regional Commission recognizes localities that implement policies and practices that reduce their overall impact on the environment.

The county's green practices include using captured rainwater for irrigation, installing LED lights at a recreation center that reduced energy consumption by 83 percent and producing green power from solar panels on a fire station roof, the *Rockdale Citizen* reported.



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KENTUCKY

A federal judge has dealt a blow to **HARDIN COUNTY** by invalidating its **local right-to-work law**. U.S. District Court Judge David Hale said that only state governments can enact such laws.

In recent years, counties have been emboldened by the state Legislature's delegation of more powers to local governments — allowing them to act on the state's behalf. Eleven counties have enacted right-to-work laws. The ruling in this case applies only to Hardin, according to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

MINNESOTA

State Auditor Rebecca Otto is challenging the constitutionality of a law that allows counties to **hire private auditors**. She filed suit against the state, and **BECKER, RAMSEY** and **WRIGHT counties**.

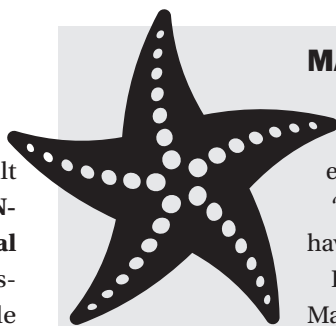
"Counties have now challenged the constitutional authority of this office," Otto said in a statement, "and I have been forced to defend the Minnesota Constitution and the taxpayers through legal action."

Jack Ingstad, Becker county administrator, told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* that outsourcing audits is "considerably less expensive for our taxpayers" and provides good audits. He questioned why Otto would buck the Legislature and single out just three counties, "when I think 47 counties are in agreement with us that they would like to go with a private auditor."

NEW MEXICO

OTERO COUNTY employees can now **openly carry firearms** in their workplaces.

County Commission Chairman Susan Flores told the *Alamogordo Daily News* the personnel policy change would put the county in compliance with the U.S. and the New Mexico constitutions.



MARYLAND

At the urging of County Executive Barry Glassman, **HARFORD COUNTY** school officials lifted their **ban on field trips to Baltimore**. Several counties imposed travel bans last year over safety concerns. Rioting erupted in Baltimore last April after the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody.

"It's a trade-off in this region," said Glassman, who chairs the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. "We all have to work together and support each other if we're going to be successful," the *Baltimore Sun* reported.

He said county residents benefit from Baltimore's cultural amenities such as the National Aquarium and Maryland Zoo.

NEW YORK

■ With its foreign-born population at 6 percent and growing, **ERIE COUNTY**

Executive Mark C. Poloncarz inaugurated the **New Americans Committee**, aimed at introducing the county's immigrant community to the county government bureaucracy.

"We want people to understand it's their government," Poloncarz told the *Buffalo News*.

Part of the group's role will be to offer the county feedback on what barriers exist that prevent immigrants from getting the help they need and to establish trust.

"Too often, people come into this country, particularly from areas that are war-torn, and they don't trust the government," Poloncarz said. "They don't even want to talk to someone associated with the government, and we want people to really understand we're here to offer services, especially when it comes to health and human services."

■ The proliferation of metal donation bins has prompted the **ULSTER COUNTY** Legislature to consider requiring companies to get a permit from the county before placing donation boxes.

Recent reports by the Attorney General's office and the Ulster County comptroller found at least two of the most popular bins found in the county aren't connected to federally recognized charitable organizations.

The law would also require boxes to state whether donations were fully tax-deductible or were being sold by a business and would not be used entirely to benefit a charity, the *Daily Freeman* reported.

OHIO

The **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** Council introduced a package of laws and executive orders to award more work to **minority- and women-owned businesses**.

Between 2009 and 2012, minority-owned businesses received 1.4 percent of county contracts, but minorities represent 42.9 percent of all small business contractors and 4.8 percent of prime contractors in the county.

The proposed changes would reserve some work specifically for small businesses, give flexibility for minority- and women-owned businesses to match low bids, and involve the county's signing on to the Cleveland Community Benefits Agreement, which supports training and employment of local workers, the *Plain Dealer* reported.

PENNSYLVANIA

POTTER COUNTY's Women's Residential Rehabilitation

Center has contracted with **CAMERON COUNTY** to accept inmates on a per diem fee basis.

The center provides drug and alcohol addiction treatment, mental health services, employability and life skills counseling and other services designed to reduce recidivism and ease reentry. Representatives of the state's attorney general and drug and alcohol programs department are studying the center as a potential model.

VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY officials pledged not to "snow wall" about **road clearing efforts** during and after January's blizzard. They'll hold a forum to solicit feedback from residents on snow removal efforts and conduct an online survey.

WASHINGTON

Following his November declaration of a state of emergency regarding **homelessness**

and the dearth of affordable housing, **KING COUNTY** Executive Dow Constantine has announced a plan of action.

It includes increasing shelter capacity; programs to support 237 units of affordable housing; providing rental assistance to those who used to be homeless, military veterans, immigrants and refugees, and families fleeing domestic violence. The plan also includes \$10 million to connect people to services that help them succeed once they find a home.

Most of the funding for services will come from revenue generated by document reporting fees, the Veterans and Human Services levy, and the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency fund. **CN**

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.)



KENTUCKY

■ Children in **CRITTENDEN COUNTY** received **170 pairs of new shoes** thanks to the **KENTUCKY MAGISTRATES AND COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION's (KMCA)** first shoe drive. The shoes were donated by elected magistrates and commissioners from across the state.

"I am humbled by the amount of new shoes collected from our membership, and I am very proud to deliver these shoes to western Kentucky," said Elbert Bennett Caldwell County magistrate and KMCA president.

The drive is scheduled to resume at the association's annual conference next month in Louisville.

FEDERAL POLICIES MATTER TO COUNTIES, AND COUNTIES MATTER TO AMERICA.

COUNTIES MATTER



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