



Boone County, Ky. Judge Gary Moore greets Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell after he introduced him at the Feb. 23 Closing General Session. Photo by David Hathcox

Legislative Conference packed with insights, innovations and influence

By Beverly A. Schlotterbeck
executive editor

More than 1,600 county leaders convened in Washington, D.C. Feb. 20-24 for NACo's annual Legislative Conference. Attendees met with members of the Obama Administration and Congress on key issues such as criminal justice and mental health reform, public lands and surface transportation.

"Counties and residents feel the effects of countless decisions made in Washington," said NACo President Sallie Clark. "We are here to work with our federal partners be-

cause federal decisions profoundly impact Americans on the ground, where we live and work."

The conference served as the stage for the debut of NACo's *Counties Matter* campaign, the successor to the 2-year-old *Why Counties Matter* initiative. The new *Counties Matter* campaign, designed to communicate the essential role counties play in everyday life, includes a diverse array of online and offline tools to help educate the general public and other constituents.

Conference attendees heard from congressional and Administration leaders including

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.); Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx; Acting Secretary of Education John B. King, Jr.; Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro; Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Jerry Abramson; Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Michael Botticelli, and Director of the National Science Foundation Dr. France Córdova.

Childhood rural poverty and

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NACo first vice president testifies on improving the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

By Mike Belarmino
associate legislative director

NACo First Vice President Bryan Desloge made the case for improving the federal government's process for evaluating and reducing the harmful effects of federal mandates on counties during testimony Feb. 24 before a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

"Counties are often responsible for implementing and helping to fund policies and programs established by the states and federal government," Desloge told the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management. "Without improving the intergov-



Bryan Desloge, NACo first vice president and Leon County, Fla. commissioner

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More federal agency-local dialogue needed to reduce compliance costs of mandates

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environmental collaboration in the development and implementation of federal agency regulations, these mandates will add another layer of fiscal strain on counties already operating under considerable pressure.”

Desloge’s testimony outlined three key points Congress should consider as it works to update the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

■ Although UMRA has made progress towards reducing unfunded mandates in legislation, federal agency consultation with counties needs improvement in order to reduce negative impacts of regulatory mandates. Counties need to be involved as intergovernmental partners throughout the development of regulations.

■ Counties will continue to face mounting fiscal stress if

the consultation process does not consider the full impact of federal regulations on state and local governments.

■ The nation’s system of federalism requires a strong federal, state and local partnership to fully realize the shared goals of serving the public good.

The Leon County, Fla. commissioner assured the subcommittee that counties stand ready to work side-by-side with federal and state partners to ensure the health, well-being and safety of all citizens.

“Counties are encouraged by initiatives like UMITA,” Desloge said, referring to the Unfunded Mandates Information & Transparency Act. “Although UMRA established a framework in which intergovernmental mandates in legislation and regulation should be considered, UMITA presents us with an opportunity to im-

prove the process even more. Government works best when we all work together.”

Background

More than two decades ago, state and local governments saw an increasing number of federal mandates without sufficient funding to assist with implementation. In response, state and local government organizations joined together to call for a new approach to reduce, and potentially eliminate, unfunded federal mandates.

The effort resulted in the 1995 enactment of UMRA. While data seems to indicate that UMRA has helped bring down the number of unfunded mandates in legislation, counties continue to find that the consultation process with federal agencies is inconsistent, even though UMRA requires them to assess the impact of mandates in their regulations.

In recent years, bills have been introduced in Congress to strengthen provisions of UMRA. In 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives passed UMITA (H.R. 50), a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.). A Senate companion bill, S.189, authored by Sens. James Lankford (R-Okla.) and Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), was also introduced. UMITA includes provisions requiring enhanced levels of consultation with state and local governments, establishing principles for federal agencies to follow when assessing the effects of regulation on state and local governments, and expanding reporting requirements to include independent agency regulations. **CN**

Governors’ roundtable focuses on rural poverty

From CONFERENCE page 1

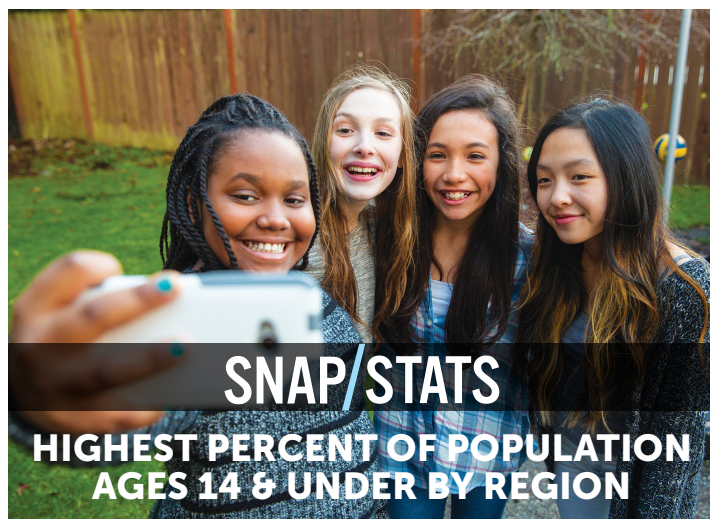
the opioid and heroin abuse raging across rural America was a distinct conference focus. Special programming included a Governors’ Roundtable to address how states and counties tackle chronic rural poverty, featuring Govs. Bill Haslam (R-Tenn.), Gary R. Herbert (R-Utah), Terry McAuliffe (D-Va.) and Tom Wolf (D-Pa.); a conversation between Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Acting Education Secretary John King on rural education, moderated by Washington Post columnist Ruth Marcus; and a NACo- and White House Rural Council-sponsored Poverty Summit featuring speakers from the federal, state, academic and private sectors.

NACo hosted a congressio-

nal briefing on Capitol Hill with Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.), which highlighted counties’ pivotal role in lowering incarceration rates and facilitating successful reentry.

There were more than two-dozen educational workshops and educational sessions for steering committee members featuring county officials and other leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. They focused on topics such as workforce and economic development; transportation and infrastructure; public health and safety; mental health and jails; and cybersecurity and technology.

NACo’s Board of Directors adopted more than 30 interim policy positions, recommended by NACo’s steering committees. **CN**



Region	County	Percent
Midwest.....	Buffalo County, S.D.	35.0%
West.....	Thurston County, Neb.....	30.6%
South.....	Gaines County, Texas.....	29.8%
Northeast.....	Rockland County, N.Y.....	23.0%

Source: NACo County Explorer

National County Government Month (NCGM)

NCGM is an excellent opportunity to show residents that counties matter. This year’s theme is **Safe and Secure Counties**. NACo encourages counties, parishes and boroughs to leverage this opportunity to highlight programs and services that strengthen public safety, protect public health and foster economic prosperity. For a sample proclamation, customizable poster, complete NCGM toolkit and other resources, visit www.naco.org/NCGM.



President
Sallie Clark
Publisher
Matthew Chase
Public Affairs Director
Brian Namey

Executive Editor
Beverly Anne Schlotterbeck
Senior Staff Writer
Charles Taylor
Senior Staff Writer
Charlie Ban
Design Director
Leon Lawrence III

ADVERTISING STAFF
Job Market/Classifieds representative
National Accounts representative
Beverly Schlotterbeck
(202) 393-6226
FAX (202) 393-2630

Published biweekly except August by:
National Association of Counties
Research Foundation, Inc.
25 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
STE. 500, Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 393-6226 | FAX (202) 393-2630
E-mail cnews@naco.org
Online address www.countynews.org

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Mail subscriptions are \$100 per year for non-members. \$60 per year for non-members purchasing multiple copies. Educational institution rate, \$50 per year. Member county supplemental subscriptions are \$20 each. Send payment with order and address changes to NACo, 25 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to County News, 25 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Ste. 500, Washington, D.C. 20001

(USPS 704-620) n (ISSN: 0744-9798)
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Research Foundation, Inc.



NACo, NLC announce joint task force on opioid abuse epidemic

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National League of Cities (NLC) have created a joint national task force to address the nation's opioid and heroin abuse crisis. The City-County Task Force Addressing Heroin and Opioid Abuse, composed of city and county leaders from across the country, aims to enhance awareness, facilitate peer exchanges and identify sound policy and partnership solutions.

The task force builds on the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's four-pillared plan to reduce prescription drug abuse: education, monitoring, proper medication disposal and enforcement.

NACo and NLC elected leaders will explore proven practices for community prevention and overdose response, effective treatment options and public safety enforcement and supply reduction. NACo and NLC will share opportunities, challenges and issues local jurisdictions face when addressing opioid and heroin abuse in our communities.

"We see the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse and heroin use because counties are at the intersection of the local health, justice and public safety systems," said NACo President Sallie Clark. "Addressing this issue is a top priority for local leaders. This new initiative will build on our efforts to mitigate this crisis and strengthen the safety and security of our neighborhoods."

Counties and cities have recognized that the opioid and heroin abuse crisis has reached epidemic proportions. Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with more than 47,000 lethal drug overdoses in 2014. This epidemic is driv-

en largely by overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers (18,893) and deaths related to heroin (10,574). There were 259 million opioid prescriptions written in 2012, which is more than enough to give a pill bottle to every American adult.

"The rapidly increasing number of deaths from heroin overdoses and other opioids has reached epidemic proportions"

—Melodee Colbert-Kean

"The rapidly increasing number of deaths from heroin overdoses and other opioids has reached epidemic propor-

tions," said National League of Cities President Melodee Colbert-Kean, councilmember, Joplin, Mo. "The National League of Cities is pleased to partner with county leaders at NACo to provide coordinated, inter-governmental solutions to this tragic problem."

The task force will take the following actions:

- conduct at least two national dialogues where city and county elected leaders will explore the crisis' growing trends and proven responses

- develop educational opportunities for counties and cities through special forums, educational workshops, webinars and other opportunities, and

- publish a national summary report of city-county collaboration, focusing on community prevention and overdose response, effective treatment options, public safety enforcement and supply reduction. **CN**

CITY-COUNTY OPIOIDS TASK FORCE MEMBERS

NACo has appointed the following county officials to the City-County Task Force Addressing Heroin and Opioid Abuse. Its first meeting is scheduled for April 7 in Washington, D.C.

Judge **Gary Moore**, Boone County, Ky. – Task Force Co-Chair

Commissioner **Matt Bell**, Weber County, Utah

Commissioner **Doug Corcoran**, Ross County, Ohio

County Executive **Kathy Dahlkemper**, Erie County, Pa.

Dr. **Vidya Kora**, LaPorte County, Ind.

Commissioner **Waymon Mumford**, Florence County, S.C.

Supervisor **Leticia Perez**, Kern County, Calif.

County Executive **Mark Poloncarz**, Erie County, N.Y.

Commissioner **Greg Puckett**, Mercer County, W.Va.

County Executive **Steve Schuh**, Anne Arundel County, Md.

Commissioner **Judy Shiprack**, Multnomah County, Ore.

Ex-officio – NACo President **Sallie Clark**, commissioner, El Paso County, Colo.

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Sallie Clark

Federal policies matter to counties and counties matter to America. That was message we brought to Washington, D.C. during NACo's successful Legislative Conference last month. At the core of NACo's mission is federal advocacy, and the Legislative Conference presented an opportunity like none other, for us to make our county voices heard in Washington.

Thank you to all counties, parishes

and boroughs that joined us in advocating for federal policies that impact us and for participating in learning opportunities that will benefit our residents. We focused on significant policy issues like surface transportation, marketplace fairness, the Payments in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools programs and regulations that relate to the environment, human services, justice and county employees.

As part of NACo's Safe and Secure Counties initiative, another major focus was achieving mental health and criminal justice reform. We announced the creation of a joint national task force on the opioid epidemic plaguing our communities. The City-County Task Force Addressing Heroin and Opioid Abuse is composed of county and city leaders from across the country in partnership with NACo and National League of Cities (NLC). The task force will aim to enhance awareness, facilitate peer exchanges and identify sound policy and partnership solutions. (See adjacent story.)

We were also pleased to announce at the conference the new *Counties Matter* civic engagement campaign designed to help us tell the county story. This rollout was just the begin-



ning of the campaign, and we hope you will use the *Counties Matter* materials in your home counties to highlight the critical role we play in residents' lives every day.

In the coming weeks, we will work with state associations of counties to incorporate state-specific data into the *Counties Matter* campaign. In the meantime, we encourage you to visit www.naco.org/CountiesMatter to download the national brochure, video and other materials to spread the message that *Counties Matter*.

We hope these tools will be particularly useful during National County Government Month coming up in April. They can be very helpful when giving presentations to your local community and explaining not only why *Counties Matter*, but also why NACo membership is important to our citizens.

There was one word I kept hearing members use to describe the Legislative Conference: energy. We must leverage that energy and momentum as we continue our year-round advocacy efforts to achieve results for our residents. Our voice is stronger when we are united, and thanks again to all the county officials who participated. **CN**



LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE REVIEW

Counties accept challenge to combat rural poverty

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack laid down the gauntlet at NACo's 2016 Legislative Conference by asking counties nationwide to commit to reducing rural childhood poverty.

He announced the Rural Impact County Challenge at the White House Rural Council's Poverty Summit, Feb. 23, held in conjunction with the conference.

The challenge asks at least 100 counties pass resolutions by this summer that prioritize reducing rural child poverty — and to develop new, or fine tune existing, “actionable plans” to address the needs of rural children and families.

At the summit, 13 counties signed pledges to accept the challenge.

“County officials have an extraordinary opportunity, and I think responsibility, to provide leadership,” Vilsack said. “You can help us tailor our programs, use them in a very focused and coordinated way to have a profound impact.”

Jessica Carson, a researcher with the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy, framed the issue of childhood poverty with data the Carsey School had released that very day.

In 1980, 36 percent of counties had at least 20 percent of children in poverty. However, by 2010 that number had grown to 58 percent, she said. Rural counties consistently have a much higher incidence of child

poverty than urban counties. In 2010, approximately two-thirds of rural counties had high child poverty compared to about half of urban counties, she added.

The summit, titled Opportunity for All: Building a Brighter Future for Rural Families, featured two panels: Rural Poverty: Prevalence and Implications for Child Well-being, and Evidence-based and Promising Practices for Addressing Rural Childhood Poverty.

Dr. Bernard Dreyer, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, was among the panelists for the first session, and he likened child poverty to a “significant non-communicable disease.”

“Poverty can't be seen on an x-ray; poverty can't be heard through a stethoscope, and yet pediatricians have an important role to play in identifying poverty, in the examining room, just like we diagnose an ear infection or asthma,” he said.

Childhood poverty can have a “profound negative” effect on infant mortality, immunization rates, nutrition, language and social-emotional development, he added. “What's more, the effects can lead to toxic stress that alters the way young children's brains develop.” Some examples of toxic stress are intense or prolonged exposure to adversity, such as family violence, emotional abuse or a caregiver's drug abuse.

“This leads to lower educational attainment, higher crime rates, teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse, all of which



Dr. Donald Warne discusses some of the unique poverty issues faced by Native-American children and families. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

make it hard for those who are born into poverty to break the cycle.”

He added that childhood poverty costs the U.S. economy more than \$500 billion per year in lost productivity.

The summit's second panel highlighted effective steps that are being taken to reduce child poverty, many of which have to do with good nutrition and early childhood education.

Audrey Rowe, administrator of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, said opportunities exist to vastly improve rural children's access to nutritious foods. Thirty-one percent of rural grade school children receive free and reduced price meals, she said, but 43 percent of families who meet income eligibility guidelines don't participate in any child rural poverty nutrition programs.

One program that's reaching more children is the Community Eligibility Program under the Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act.

“This allows children to participate in our school meals program so that if the school is in an area that is high poverty, all of the children in that school are able to receive a school lunch or a school breakfast,” Rowe said, adding that this helps remove any stigma that might discourage participation in a “free” program.

As did other speakers, Anne Mosle, vice president and executive director of the Aspen Institute's Ascend program, touted the potential of “two-generation” solutions to alleviating persistent poverty.

“A two-generation approach,” she explained, “is simply children and their parents — or adult in their life — moving forward together, through education, economic support, workforce development and good employment.”

Ascend identifies promising practices from early childhood education centers to postsecondary institutions, and from community organizations to social capital-building programs.

If a child's parents and the family are not secure, not healthy, not educated, there's no way that child will be, Mosle said. The approach promises both upstream and downstream benefits.

“And when that child starts to succeed to read, to excel, the motivating impact that has on the family is powerful.” **CN**



Governors' Roundtable discussion tackles persistent rural poverty

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

With rural counties accounting for 85 percent of counties in persistent poverty, four governors discussed steps their administrations are taking to alleviate poverty in their rural areas. The answer was elementary — elementary education and beyond.

For Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam (R), now in his second term, the aggregate employment picture is great, with a higher raw number of people with jobs than ever before.

"But the growth is not uniform across the state," he said. "While unemployment is down four points, that's not across the board and our rural areas are struggling the most."

He identified tourism as one of the greatest sectors of potential growth under current conditions, but even that had a caveat.

"We did a survey, asking of all the jobs that will exist 10 years from now, what will they look like," he said. "We found that 55 percent will require some kind of certificate beyond high school. In our rural areas, we have about 15-20 percent, so it made that challenge really acute."

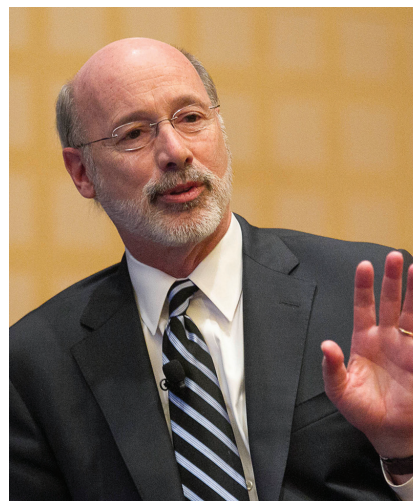
Haslam's answer was the Tennessee Promise: two years of free community college or technical school education to anyone who graduates from high school.

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) has seen the ebb and flow that comes with the level of federal investment in his commonwealth.

"We're the number one recipient of Department of Defense dollars, we have 27 military installations, the largest naval base in the world, Quantico, the CIA, the Pentagon, all in Virginia," he said. "That's great when



GOV. GARY HERBERT (R-UTAH)



GOV. TOM WOLF (D-PA.)



AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK - MODERATOR



GOV. BILL HASLAM (R-TENN.)



GOV. TERRY MCAULIFFE (D-VA.) ALL PHOTOS BY DAVID HATHCOX

they're spending money, but when you have a government shutdown, a sequestration and another sequestration, it has a dramatic impact on the economy."

He reflected on what economic downturns and subsequent migration could mean for the economic viability of the southern parts of his state.

"Coal, tobacco, textile, furniture... they have all been decimated and what is left are probably the most honest, hardworking folk you have ever met in your life," he said. "But I have zero chance of bringing a business to a community if they don't think they'll have a workforce, 20 or 30 years from today. You need a workforce, and that workforce starts with education, with pre-K."

And what's just as import-

ant as what they learn is the condition in which they try to learn, so McAuliffe is working to provide universal breakfast to all students by the end of his term-limited four years in office.

Both McAuliffe and Haslam convene "children's cabinets," representatives from departments that enact policy which affects children,

Utah Gary Herbert (R) stressed the natural support systems that come with the family unit, provided it's done in the right way.

"We teach our children in schools, if you want to avoid poverty, here are four steps: get a good education...get a job...get married...have children, and do them in that order," he said. "You'll have a better chance at staying out of poverty than peo-

ple who do them out of order."

He touted the state's 10 percent child poverty rate, compared to the 15 percent national average. And he stressed flexibility in programming.

"What works in an urban area of Utah might not work in a rural area," he said. "We trust the local officials to do it best," and tell the state how their demographics will impact program delivery.

First-term Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf (D) sees a lot of his state's rural population facing a crisis of intergenerational transfer of farm assets.

"We're a mid-Atlantic state, but agriculture is our biggest industry," he said. "We have to make sure the younger generation wants to stay where they grew up and take over the family farm."

But those rural communities need more than just farms to be attractive, and sparse population makes it hard to reach critical mass for development. Regardless, Wolf has made education funding a centerpiece of his administration, enough so that his budget request to raise education funding has led to an eight-month budget impasse with the Legislature.

Having a good education system "is a special set of challenges in rural areas, where you have less-dense population, you need to take advantage of new technology like distance learning to make sure children have access to the 21st century world," he said. "We need to be able to provide a good education to our kids, if they don't get that education, we're all in tough shape." **CN**



County leaders take criminal justice reform plans to Capitol Hill

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

County leaders balanced compassion for offenders suffering from addiction and mental health disorders with tough talk on accountability at a Capitol Hill briefing on criminal justice reform Feb. 22.

NACo members described steps their counties were taking to address underlying causes of criminal behavior and ways to treat them and

voiced support for the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act.

Shelby County, Tenn. Mayor Mark Luttrell, who previously served as his county's sheriff, summed up members' views and pointed out that counties have the largest financial stake in criminal justice reform because of all the steps in the process that county services touch.

"There are people who need to be in prison, but we also

know there are people in prison who could be more effectively handled outside of the perimeter of prison," he said.

"I do not think the objective of the criminal justice reform should be to reduce prison populations. Certainly that should be a byproduct.

"Some people just can't be reached through programming and rehabilitation," he admitted.

"Bad people" stoke fears in legislators, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman acknowledged.

"It's a real fear for elected officials to give an alternative to incarceration, because they immediately thought of the Willie Horton story," she said.

"I can't think of a beneficial reason to incarcerate people, just for holding them for mere convenience over dealing with the problem that may have led to the infraction to begin with."

Redirecting resources to human services to meet the needs of mentally ill and addicted inmates, she said, will ultimately make communities safer.

Luttrell underscored the need for preventive measures not only to cut down on crime, but also improve the lives of those affected.

"So many issues we face are systemic issues that take years and years to address," he said.

"If we don't embrace the chance to fight crime at that origin, we're missing significant responsibilities. If we only focus on arrest, prosecution and conviction we're just reaping the harvest."

Luttrell, who is running for a congressional seat, said the challenge county officials face is being able to continue the momentum they have built in the mess of an election year.

"There's worry that criminal justice reform will be buried under an election year, but I think we have a unique opportunity this year. There's bipar-



Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) makes the case for keeping mentally ill individuals out of jail at Capitol Hill briefing. Photo by David Hathcox

tisanship around this issue."

On one hand, he said, providing better, more appropriate services is the right thing to do. On the other hand, "it's also the cost effective thing to do."

Some people just can't be reached through programming and rehabilitation efforts.

Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.), who sponsored the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act, spoke in support of crisis intervention training for law enforcement as a way to better manage situations involving the mentally ill and expedite diversion to mental health treatment programs, rather than jail.

"It doesn't make sense for our law enforcement officers who often put their lives at risk when they are called upon to

intervene in a mental health crisis," to continue without special training, he said.

"It doesn't make sense for courts, which are inundated with cases of people who are affected by mental illness. It doesn't make sense for people who have mental health conditions who would often benefit more from treatment and intensive supervision than incarceration. It certainly doesn't make sense for taxpayers who foot the bill for high incarceration costs and overcrowded jails and prisons. And (who) must pay again when untreated mentally ill prisoners are released, often in worse shape than when they are first locked up."

Fulton County, Ga. Chair

WORD SEARCH

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH, ALASKA

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FEATURED COUNTY IN 'WHAT'S IN A SEAL?'

Created By: Charles Taylor

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- ALASKA RAILROAD** (Built its first station in Wasilla in 1917)
- ATHABASCAN** (Original inhabitants of the Alaskan interior)
- COAL** (Was mined from fields north of Palmer, the borough seat)
- COLONISTS** (People from Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin who settled and farmed in the borough)
- COOK INLET** (Body of water into which the Matanuska and Susitna Rivers empty)
- DENA'INA** (Indigenous first inhabitants of the Mat-Su Valley)
- DENALI BOROUGH** (Neighbor to the north)

- GOLD** (Mining brought population growth in the early 1900s)
- MAT-SU** (Name by which borough is commonly known)
- OIL** (Pipelines fueled Wasilla's economy in the 1970s and '80s)
- PALMER** (Borough seat)
- SOUTH CENTRAL** (Region of state where borough is situated)
- VALLEY** (Formed by Alaska Range, Talkeetna and Chugach mountains)
- WASILLA** (Largest city)
- WILLOW CREEK** (Valley where gold was mined between 1907 and 1950)

WORKSHOP: Keeping Counties Moving: Understanding the Role of Freight Transportation as an Economic Engine

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer



John Vickerman, president of port design firm Vickerman Associates, described the global freight environment and the trends that have driven it in this workshop on Feb. 22.

Transoceanic freight stands out because the vast majority of consumer goods are shipped.

"Cargo will flow down river to the lowest cost, best service levels," he said, noting that a one-day difference in delivery time was enough to make a shipper rethink things.

Shipping times will change with improvements to the Pana-

ma and Suez canals and the westward migration of manufacturing and production hubs toward southeast Asia from China. Still, six of the 10 busiest ports in the world remain on the Chinese mainland, with three others elsewhere in Asia.

Capacity is also an issue, though, and as freight ships get larger, they need deeper ports, and the lack of deep water ports in North America is contributing to a competitive disadvantage

"We have 386 public port authorities in North America, but ocean carriers do not consider us a best option," Vickerman said.

What shippers want in ports is



Workshops provide superior learning opportunities for attendees like Brian Westande and Marion Ashley from Riverside County, Calif., seen here at County Economies 2015. Photo by David Hathcox

two-day transit by land to Chicago, and three-day transit to New York and New Jersey.

Steve Cernak, director of Port Everglades in Broward County, Fla., which handles domestic

and international cargo and can connect to 70 percent of the U.S. population within two days, he said.

"Our industry requires consistent reinvestment," he said.

"We have \$1.6 billion capital that we'll be reinvesting over 20 years, but we have to use public private partnerships, we have to diversify our funding."

Commissioner Brittany Pittman described how Murray County, Ga. used an inland port to revive a stagnant rural economy.

"We had rail, a manufacturing workforce and an excellent U.S. highway system to help," she said. "All were underutilized resources."

The port will load shipping trailers carried by truck onto trails that will make a nearly-400-mile trip to Georgia's port north of Savannah. **CN**

CountyNews HOT TOPICS

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP: Counties on the Frontlines: The Escalating Substance Abuse Epidemic

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

The supply and demand issues of the opioid drug abuse epidemic exist on two levels — macro and micro.

On the macro level, the nation's 28 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) are bent on disrupting the supply of heroin and other opioids from major dealers. At the micro level, individual physicians are examining their prescribing practices.

Panels of law enforcement and medical professionals advised counties on attacking the problem on both fronts during a two-part workshop, Counties on the Frontlines: The Escalating Substance Abuse Epidemic, at the Legislative Conference.

Mary Lou Leary, deputy director of State, Local and Tribal Affairs at the Office of National Control Policy (ONDCP), said at the county level, the past 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in drug overdose deaths.

From 2000–2004, the average annual death rate nationally was 7.9 drug overdose deaths per 100,000, but it increased to 11.5 from 2005–2009, and to 13.5 from 2010–2014.

In 2014, there were more than 10,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States, she said, and opioid pain relievers were involved in almost 21,000 of those.

Thomas Carr, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-Baltimore HIDTA, explained how five HDTAs are collaborating in a regional effort to interrupt the flow and consumption of illegal prescription and street drugs. HIDTA programs are funded by grants from ONDC. They focus on inter-agency collaboration, promote information and intelligence sharing, and offer specialized training and other resources to participating law enforcement, treatment and criminal justice agencies, he said.

The pipeline for drugs flowing into Carr's HIDTA follow a

path down Interstate 95, from New York to Philadelphia, to the Washington, D.C. area and beyond into West Virginia.

"Five HDTAs got together and said we have a similar problem," Carr said, "it's regional and it's time we looked at sharing and trading information." Using a \$2.5 million grant from ONDCP, the HDTAs have embarked on an intelligence and information gathering project.

"The purpose of our strategy is to develop actionable intelligence," he said — by analyzing communications, the dots between user and dealer can often be connected.

"If you look at these folks that overdose, the last person they called is not their priest; it was their dealer," Carr explained. "And when you look at all these different overdoses, you can see a lot of them are calling the same person."

Public health agencies deal with more of the demand-side consequences of the opioid overdose epidemic. Dr. Lamar

Hasbrouck is executive director of the National Association of County/City Health Officials (NACCHO). There, too, coordination and collaboration are essential.

He said the most significant threat to solving the heroin-prescription opioids abuse problem isn't lack of funding or resources. It's "denial."

"We can't hope ourselves out of this; we can't pray ourselves out of this. We can't arrest our way and talk ourselves out of this," he said. "The solution really lies in how we act."

"...I realize that counties... don't have the bandwidth for a problem this large sometimes. It seems overwhelming so they can't do everything," he added. "My challenge to every county is to choose one or two things off of the menu of best practices and things that we know work, and get started there."

One piece of low-hanging fruit is education — for doctors and patients.

"Oftentimes the medical com-

munity underestimates the addictive potential of prescription pain killers," Leary said. But patients play a role as well as and should be asking their doctors if painkillers being prescribed are appropriate in dosage and quantity, Hasbrouck said.

"We have to do physician education, but we also have to do consumer education. That's the link between supply and demand that I'd like to highlight," he said.

Prescription drug monitoring programs play an important role in the doctor-patient relationship, according to Leary. Such programs provide a repository of physician-reported data on prescribed controlled substances. "They can be used to point to medical providers who are overprescribing," she added. But they can also be useful to prescribers themselves, as a tool to identify patients who might be "doctor-shopping" to obtain multiple prescriptions.

Fulton County, Ga. explores intervention teams model

From **JAIL** page 6

man John Eaves agreed, having seen, firsthand, effective crisis intervention teams from Johnson County, Kan. and Salt Lake County, Utah. Johnson County deputies respond to calls with embedded intervention team members and Salt Lake County deputies receive direct training.

"We are looking into which of those two models or a hybrid in terms of how we can work with our law enforcement community and make sure that when a person is arrested, the default option is not putting them into the Fulton County Jail," Eaves said. "With intentionally, being focused and being deliberate, we can reverse the tide."

Tarrant County, Texas Judge Glen Whitley argued for programming for first-time offenders, people who "think it's something stupid."

"If you put them into the jail system and you leave them there very long, you're starting them on that downward spiral where you're labeling them and keeping them from being successful, or you're turning them into 'criminal science' students," he said.

"This is not an attempt to get bad people out. It's an attempt to identify those folks who we can truly rehabilitate or who do not belong there in the first place, and hopefully prevent them from entering the cycle that can be very hard to get out of." **CN**



Better coordination is key to fighting opioid epidemic on multiple fronts

From **HOT TOPICS** page 7

The methods of opioid drug abuse can range from ingestion to injection.

Injection drug use has in some areas led to an increase in reported cases of hepatitis C and HIV viral infections, Leary said. In those cases, "safe syringe services" can avert the type of public health crisis that's been seen in several southern Indiana counties. These are more than just "needle exchanges."

"What safe syringe services are all about is coming in, bringing in your dirty needles and not just picking up a batch of clean ones," she explained, "but getting tested for infectious diseases, getting referrals to treatment, getting assessment, counseling and so on. It's kind of a one-stop-shop."

Safe drug disposal is an area where consumers can play a greater role in stemming the prescription opioid supply, Leary and Hasbrouck agree — even in areas that don't have formal drug take-back programs. Home disposal is an option that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) endorses.

Hasbrouck said that absent Drug Enforcement Administration-approved collection sites, some leftover or expired medications can be discarded with household trash.

The FDA recommends mixing medicines with an unappealing substance such as dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds; placing the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag; and throwing the container in your household trash.

A small number of medicines

can be flushed down a toilet or sink once they're no longer needed.

FDA maintains a list of prescription drugs that can be flushed, which includes several opioids such as Percocet, extended-release OxyContin pills and Duragesic (fentanyl patches).

There are no simple answers to solving the opioid abuse crisis, but all of the sessions' speakers pointed to interagency collaboration between public health, law enforcement and the criminal justice system — at the federal, state and local levels — as being essential.

"It's going to take resources," Hasbrouck said, "and by that I mean money, by that I mean people. But more important than resources is resourcefulness." **CN**

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Speakers assess trends in political climate

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MITCH MCCONNELL

While President Obama may have the constitutional responsibility to nominate a candidate to fill the late Justice Antonin Scalia's seat on the Supreme Court, it's the American people, through the next presidential election process, who should decide, according to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

McConnell, who has already laid down a marker about the Senate's not considering an Obama nominee, repeated his promise at the Closing General Session. "Let the people decide. The Senate will not be filling that vacancy this year," he said.

But he also promised that despite election year politics, the Senate will make progress this year, especially in the areas of criminal justice reform and helping in the battle against substance abuse.

As Kentucky's longest serving senator, McConnell got his political start in county government when he served as judge-executive of Jefferson County, Ky.

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ANTHONY FOXX

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx announced \$500 million in TIGER grants while addressing the Closing General Session.

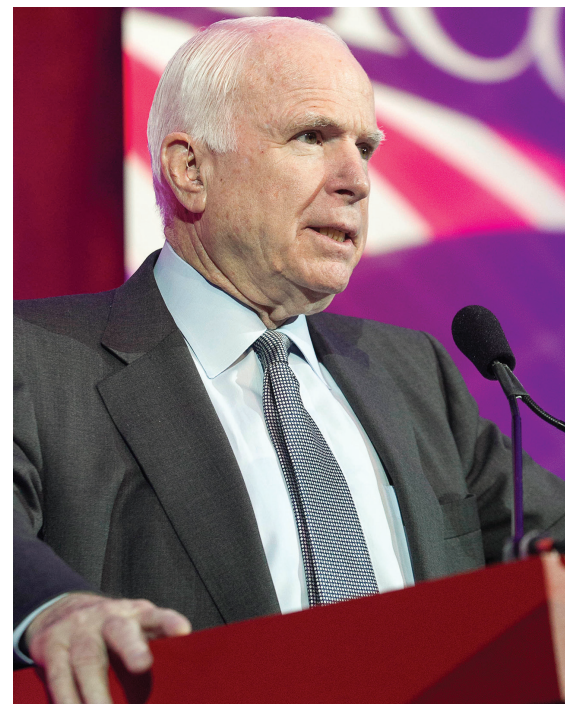
The competitive grants go to projects that increase access to transportation and generate economic development, and applications are due April 29.

"We need to identify ways to make our system smarter, make our system more well integrated so that the assets and the facilities we have today can punch above their weight," he said.

Foxx, formerly mayor of Charlotte, N.C., thanked NACo



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) speaking at the Closing General Session Feb. 23. Photo by David Hathcox



Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) speaking at the Closing General Session. Photo by David Hathcox



Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx speaks at the Closing General Session. Photo by David Hathcox

members for their work in lobbying members of Congress in support of what became the FAST Act, a five-year \$305 billion surface transportation bill, which also included provisions for speeding up permitting for construction projects.

"I don't think we'd have had a bill passed last year had it not been for the vigorous advocacy of your members," he said. "It helps to have folks all around the country talking to their business community and their members of Congress.

"While the bill is not perfect...it serves as a bit of a down payment on what our system needs."

What the transportation system needs will be dictated by population growth and economic shifts, both of which are examined in *Beyond Traffic*, a comprehensive study of the domestic transportation system now in the draft stage.

With the projected population growth of 70 million over the next 30 years, a corresponding 45 percent increase in freight volume could add 65 more trucks to the road, on top of non-commercial traffic.

Americans drove 3.15 trillion road miles in 2015, 150 billion more than 2014, but Foxx warned that more roads weren't necessarily the answer.

"We can't just build our way out of this congestion," he said.

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R-ARIZ.)

The nation's armed forces were a major focus of Sen. John McCain's remarks to conference attendees. He chairs the Senate Armed Services Com-

mittee. But he also touched on issues related to the environment, immigration and what he sees as the overuse of executive privilege by the White House.

He acknowledged improvements in the Department of Veterans Affairs since a scandal rocked his state some years ago, where 50 veterans awaiting treatment at the Phoenix VA Hospital died while on a "waiting list" that did not exist.

"It's hard turning this giant bureaucracy around," McCain said of the VA, "and I'm proud of Republicans and Democrats working together on this challenge that we all have."

He advocated for further changes in the health care system for veterans — in particular — universal availability of a Choice Card that allows veterans to seek treatment from the provider of their choice. Currently, this option is only available to certain ex-military.

The VA provides the best care possible for traumatic brain injury, PTSD and prostheses, he continued, but the Choice Card

See **SPEAKERS** page 10



White House IT head says ‘nerds are sexy again,’ signaling dramatic cultural transformation

From *SPEAKERS* page 9

would make it possible for former service members to receive care in their own communities.

“We have no greater priority than to care for those who have served and sacrificed on our nation’s behalf,” he said, drawing audience applause.

Later, he took questions from the audience on a range of topics.

In response to one, he disdained President Obama’s use of executive orders to subvert the will of Congress. In a non-partisan spirit, he added, that applies to any president — current or future, regardless of party. To do otherwise, contradicts the system of checks and balances that the nation’s founders intended.

WHITE HOUSE DEPUTY CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER DJ PATIL, PHD

From his position as the White House’s chief data scientist, Tech Summit keynote speaker DJ Patil has seen a dramatic cultural transformation.

“Nerds are sexy again,” he said.

Speaking at the semi-annual NACo Technology and Innovation Summit, Patil said the proliferation of data-driven

analysis, services and products, and the demand for analytic skills has helped that. And that appreciation goes to the top. “The president recognizes that data one of those fundamental lever arms that can change the trajectory of policies, progress and all of the things that we do,” he said.

With more and more data sources available to the public, the difference truly is made by who is interpreting and using the data.

“If everyone is looking at the data, you can solve problems faster,” Patil said. “When a government agency makes data available, it’s not the general public rushing in to look at it, it’s other departments... It refutes the notion you need someone to come in from Silicon Valley to rescue government. People in government need an opportunity to show what they can do.”

He explained how Miami-Dade County, Fla. was able to use data about its inmates to drive revisions to emergency dispatcher training which, when combined with crisis intervention team implementation, helped divert mentally-ill offenders to treatment, rather than the jail, which has reduced the inmate population enough



Chris Wallace, host of Fox News Sunday, regaled the crowd with witticisms and insider political knowledge. Photo by David Hathcox

that the county has closed one of its jails and saved \$12 million in a year.

Perseverance, Patil said, was crucial to making data analysis work.

“There’s no company that got data policy right on the first

three tries,” he said. In that process “you need a tolerance to know that you’re learning and the discipline to stay with it.”

He stressed the need for a data ethics component in training for data scientists. And he predicted the number of entities willing to share data would increase once they could find demonstrable benefit.

“(You’ll) want data to augment your decision making process,” he said. “People don’t have the same fear of data once they see how it’s being used to bring value to you.”

CHRIS WALLACE

If Fox News Sunday host Chris Wallace ever quits his day job, he might have a future in stand-up comedy. He warmed up the Opening General Session audience with punchline after punchline before delving into the serious business of the current political landscape.

Wallace analyzed the field of presidential candidates’ chances of winning their par-

ty’s nomination. As has been the case throughout the primary season, Donald Trump’s name was mentioned often, both for the unlikelihood of his rise and concerns about his temperament.

Trump has a real shot at being the GOP nominee, Wallace said, but to grow his support, Trump is “going to have to stop making enemies he doesn’t need to make and ... build his coalition bigger than it is.”

As for the Democrats, Wallace said entrance polling of voters in Nevada’s Democrat caucus found Hillary Clinton with the most support from women and elderly voters, but Sen. Bernie Sanders was favored by more Hispanics. The Vermont senator’s biggest challenge, Wallace said, will be attracting black voters.

That shouldn’t be a problem for Clinton, who with her husband, has had “a 25-year relationship with African Americans.” This should stand her in good stead in South Carolina and other states that have large populations of black voters.

For all of the candidates, the trek to the nomination will be less about “retail” politics and more about “wholesale” from here on out, he said.

“Now it’s going to be fly and buy.... Nobody has the kind of ground game that they had earlier, so a lot of it is going to be wholesale politics where you go in, you hold a mass rally...and then you have to fly off to the next states,” he explained.

In this election year, neither Congress nor the president expect to get much accomplished, Wallace said, but there is some bipartisan agreement around criminal justice reform. For that reason, it has the best — if not only — chance of moving forward. **CN**

(Charlie Ban, Beverly Schlotterbeck and Charles Taylor, County News staff, contributed to this report.)



DJ Patil, the White House chief data scientist, delivers the keynote speech at the Chief Information Officers Forum Feb 20. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Steering committees explore new legislative policy

NACo's 10 policy steering committees and their subcommittees meet during the conference to consider new legislative policies. Their agendas include briefings from top public and private sector representatives on issues of critical importance to counties. Following are a few examples.

LUCC Steering Committee

HUD Secretary Julian Castro updated the LUCC Steering Committee on his department's initiatives to improve the quality and access to public housing.

"When a person chooses a home, they're really choosing much more than that," he said. "They're choosing their job opportunities they're choosing their children's schools, their access to food in that neighborhood. When folks are discriminated against when looking for

a home they're also denied a fair chance to succeed in life."

The department published fair housing guidelines at the end of 2015 and released an assessment tool for local governments to use in preparing their fair housing assessments.

In response to less than one-third of Community Development Block Grant funding being spent on actual housing, rather than infrastructure projects, HUD is working with county executives, mayors and city council leaders to design plans to use federal resources in a "more focused way."

He called on county leaders to commit to ending homelessness, and offered a tip.

"The most successful approach to addressing chronic homelessness involves putting individuals and families directly into affordable units," he said, noting that 21 communities and two states have effectively ended veteran home-



Kitty Barnes, Catawba County, N.C., and Environmental Energy and Land Use Committee member, passes on a sample of a byproduct of hydraulic fracturing during the session "Frac or Fiction."

Photo by Leon Lawrence III

lessness.

Castro stressed the importance of connecting public housing residents, children particularly, to the Internet.

He touted HUD's measures to improve options for people with criminal records. Those include connecting them to reentry services, barring landlords from using arrest records to keep someone from renting a home, and ending the one-strike policy for drug offenses and offenders' families that would disqualify them from public housing.

Public Lands Steering Committee

When public lands issues got a national media spotlight, it was far from what anyone involved in policymaking would have wanted.

Public Lands Steering Committee members got a first-hand report from Harney County, Ore., Judge Steven Grasty on the 40-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Grasty explained that without the intimidation factor, the occupation of the refuge would have been completely different. The

presence of firearms in both the tower on the refuge, and out and about in town muddled the issue of federal land ownership in a rural county to a wide audience.

"You don't put guys in a tower with long-ranged weapons and not call it an armed takeover," he said. "(Ammon Bundy) saw a welcoming community and saw it as support (for his cause)...and you had armed men from this group guarding the Safeway. That's intimidation."

Grasty pointed out that outsiders made up most of the force, noting he picked out 25 familiar faces in a protest of more than 300, but it was an impetus to encouraged elected officials to keep a closer eye on what is happening in their counties.

"Do you really know your community?" he asked. "Are there groups you aren't talking to? If someone starts up a committee of safety, you have to be very attentive to that."

He did find a silver lining: a boom in attendance at County Court meetings.

"We usually we have 4-5 people in the meetings, now we have 35," he said.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Thomas Tidwell

U.S. Forest Service Chief Thomas Tidwell said his department was running smoother and more efficiently than ever before.

The big figure: the forest service's timber harvest has reached its 1998 level, despite cutting more than one-third of its staff. And, of its 328 decisions in 2015, only 10 were challenged in court.

How is that happening?

"We're doing a better job bringing everybody together, providing the time so that everybody has a chance to contribute, and reach an agreement without going to court," he said. "Once you start to build that trust, the next time it gets a little easier, a little faster, and you're able to take on much larger projects that really make a difference."

Regarding President Obama's 2017 budget proposal, "I have to feel fortunate that the budget is flat," he said. "The only place there's significant increase is fire suppression."

The research and development budget has been cut,



HUD Secretary Julián Castro speaks at the Lague Urban County Caucus Steering Committee meeting. Photo by David Hathcox



Breakfast Roundtable offers a look at economic impact of aging on counties as elderly population grows

From *POLICY* page 11

to Tidwell's chagrin, because wood has a future as a green building material, as demonstrated by the construction of a 12-story wooden high rise in Portland, Ore.

At the same time, he doesn't want commercial interests driving forest policy.

"We have to change this perception that we're cutting trees for somebody to make money versus we're harvesting timber to maintain our forests," he said. "Without management, the science is so clear, were going to continue to lose the productivity of our forests."

Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze

Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze explained the bureau's revisions to resource management plans (RPM). Dubbed "Planning 2.0," it aims to increase public participation in the planning process and ensure the most up-to-date data is used.

"It has taken us 8–10 years to complete some RPMs and cost \$1 million a year," he said. "It's too slow, people have a hard time tracking their comments and if they have any influence in the process."

One immediate change is a small-scale release of planning options before they are developed to draft form.

"It's a halfway step," Kornze said. "We come back to the public have them give us a gut check, if these options we lay out and our justification are reasonable. There will be instances where we have to start over, but doing that later on kills the public participation. And new information comes to us later on."

He touted the development of solar power facilities on BLM land, all of which have begun in the last seven years, as "providing an onramp for a lot of rural communities to get into the energy game."



Peter Arno, Ph.D., senior fellow and director of health policy research at the Amherst Political Economy Research Institute, discusses a growing reliance on Social Security among the aging. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

Health Policy and Human Services and Education Steering Committees

Breakfast Roundtable: The Economic Impact of Aging on Counties

Convened by the Health Policy and Human Services and Education steering committees, and the Healthy Counties Advisory Board the roundtable featured expert discussions about the challenges counties will encounter as the baby boom generation continues to age.

Already at 14 percent of the population, those aged 65 or older are expected to double by 2050.

The older population is increasingly reliant on Social Security benefits as their sole source of financial support, according to Dr. Peter Arno, senior fellow and director of health policy research, University of Massachusetts Amherst's Political Economy Research Institute.

Arno's Regional Social Security Support Index, which measures the dependency of the older population at both the state and county levels, shows lots of diversity among

and within the states. North Dakota, for example—which was the only state to reduce its dependency on Social Security benefits—still has pockets of counties where dependency remains high. Overall, however, the index shows that dependency has shifted dramatically since 2008. "Social Security plays an incredibly important role for income support and poverty reduction," he said.

He pointed to research that

shows how Social Security benefits cycle through the economy, providing important economic benefits in communities.

He believes Social Security is very stable. He said as much in answer to a question about the fund's long-term prospects.

"Social security is extraordinarily well-financed despite what you hear in the media," he said. It's 100 percent solid

through 2034. After then, estimates project 20 to 25 percent reductions, but that's very unlikely. "It's never been allowed to happen before," he said.

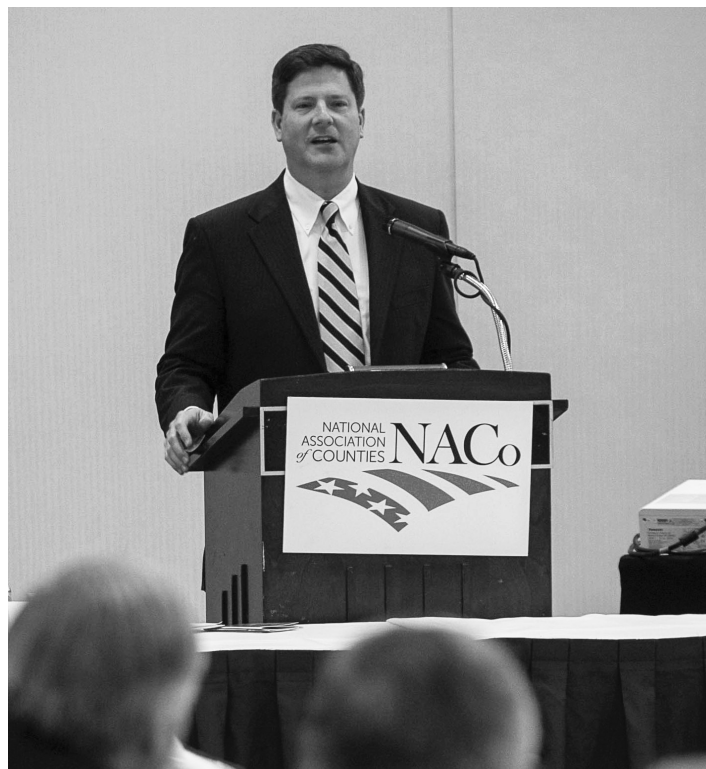
What changes does he see in the future as the aging population continues to grow? More resources will need to be directed towards the aging population and developing an infrastructure in communities to support its aging members.

He was asked how to improve Social Security's solvency. "Lift the cap on earnings like was done with the Medicare tax in the mid-1980s. That would solve 80–90 percent of the solvency issues."

The most repeated takeaway from the discussion about health care for the aging population: health happens outside of acute care facilities. Chronic conditions must be managed; transportation must be available for doctors visits; meals provided for recently discharged patients and community infrastructures developed that encourage exercise of both brain and brawn.

Dr. Joseph Agostini, national medical director for Aetna Medicare, suggested several ways to help improve the quality and cost of health care for the Medicare population.

First, ensure access to primary care physicians for wellness and prevention services. Think about how to develop liveable and walkable communities for older populations. Next, identify and engage people with chronic conditions to help them manage their conditions better. Encourage coordinated and follow-up care as people transition from a hospital to a nursing facility to their homes. And finally, he advised making certain there is a palliative care system in the community that stresses care for the whole person as they become closer to dying. **CN**



Nick Rossi, staff director, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, briefs members of the Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee. Photo by Leon Lawrence III

(Charlie Ban and Bev Schlotterbeck, County News staff, contributed to this report.)



Resolutions



North Dakotans Charlotte Sandvik, Cass County, and Daryl Dukart, Dunn County, listen up at the Board of Directors meeting. Photo by David Hathcox

NACo's Board of Directors adopted the following resolutions as interim policy at their 2016 Legislative Conference meeting. They will be considered for final adoption by the membership as a whole at the Annual Business Meeting, July 25 in Los Angeles County (Long Beach), Calif.

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Urge and Request the United States Congress to Provide for Free Burial of Spouses and Dependents of Veterans at all Veterans' Cemeteries

ISSUE: Spouses and dependents of veterans are interred for free at national veterans cemeteries but state, territorial, and tribal governments frequently charge for such burial.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges and requests the United States Congress to

fund the expenses of burial of spouses and dependents of veterans at cemeteries which are operated by state, territorial and tribal governments and which receive funds from the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.

Support the Promotion of the Arts and Culture in America's Counties

ISSUE: Counties, especially rural counties, underutilize the arts and culture as an economic engine to help with job growth, increased economic activity and enhanced revenue collection.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties

(NACo) supports increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the arts education program within the Department of Education to provide counties with additional resources to develop and expand cultural resources in their counties.

Affirmatively Further Fair Housing

ISSUE: Support the direct allocation of funding and technical assistance resources to aid local governments in complying with the Affirma-

tively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Final Rule and in completing the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) planning process.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide dedicated resources to enhance the ability of counties and local governments to comply with HUD's AFFH Final Rule and complete the required AFH planning process, including but not limited to: increased flexibility to utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds beyond

existing statutory and regulatory caps for fair housing planning and implementation; and dedicated funds for local governments to offset the increased costs associated with undergoing the mandated AFH planning process. In addition, HUD is urged to provide enhanced technical assistance to counties and local governments to aid them in developing comprehensive AFHs, such as best practice guides, toolkits and sample agreements for regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration, fair housing program implementation guidance,

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Resolution details funding levels for core HUD head programs in FY17 appropriations measure

From *POLICY* page 13

and specialized assistance for public housing authorities.

FY 2017 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

ISSUE: Support FY 2017 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to support the following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs in the FY 2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than \$3.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than \$1.2 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); \$2.6 billion for Homeless Housing Assistance grants, including at least \$270 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) project-based and tenant-based rental assistance contracts, full funding for administrative fees under existing administrative fee methodology to cover the costs of administering the program, \$75 million for HUD Veterans Affairs supportive Housing Vouchers and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

In addition, NACo does not support the imposition of a funding threshold to receive HOME Investment Partnerships program funds directly or the revision of "grandfathering" provisions that would remove participating jurisdictions from future funding eligibility.



Pricilla Taylor, Palm Beach County, Fla., speaks at the Board meeting while Associate Legislative Director Mike Belarmino looks on.

Photo by David Hathcox



Dennis O'Laughlin, Dane County, Wis. speaks up. Photo by David Hathcox

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE Implementation of the EPA's Clean Power Plan

ISSUE: The socio and economic impact of the proposed Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Power Plan.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to appropriate funding, tax credits, and/or other fiscal incentives to develop and commercialize technologies to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which ensures cost competitive and stable energy prices with system reliability, before implementation of the Clean Power Plan.

Stormwater Runoff from Forest Roads

ISSUE: Exemption of forest roads from Clean Water Act requirements.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) believes that all public and private roads that access forest land should not be considered point sources and thus should not be subject to storm water regulations or requirements.

FINANCE, PENSIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Support Full Funding of the 2002 Help America Vote Act

ISSUE: States have used or obligated funds appropriated by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) to implement the requirements of the law and to improve the administration of elections. However, fulfilling the original intention of HAVA and fully funding the law is necessary to ensure states have the financial resources they need to sustain the improvements they have made since 2002.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress

to fully fund the requirements payments of the Help America Vote Act. These funds are allocated to states to continuously upgrade voting systems, register voters in statewide voter registration databases, provide provisional voting options, improve voter accessibility, and implement other improvements to the administration of elections.

HEALTH

Support the Restoring the Partnerships for County Health Care Costs Act of 2015 (H.R. 4201)

ISSUE: Support the efforts to ease the burden of inmate medical costs on local governments.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to not only pass legislation to improve the current situation and ease the burden put on local governments caused by the expanding cost of medical services that are provided to inmates in public institutions, but to also ultimately cover all inmate medical costs under Medicare and Medicaid.

Urge CMS to Enhance Medicaid Flexibility for Justice-Involved Populations

ISSUE: Section 1905 of the Social Security Act prohibits Medicaid from paying for inmates' care while in county facilities even while they are pre-trial and presumed innocent—which leads to uncoordinated systems of care for inmates, decreased health outcomes, and increased recidivism rates.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to utilize all necessary measures, including waivers, to enhance flexibility

See *POLICY* page 15



JPS Committee: Make sure FEMA treats rural residents the same in 'individual assistance' criteria

From *POLICY* page 14

within the Medicaid program to improve the continuity of health care for justice-involved individuals.

Urge CMS to Modify Proposed Regulation on Medicaid Managed Care

ISSUE: Language in a proposed rule that would overhaul the Medicaid managed care program would limit the ability of states to make supplemental payments to providers.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to preserve the ability of states to provide supplemental support to targeted local government providers for services provided to Medicaid managed care enrollees.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Support Age Appropriate Visitation for Out of State Youth

ISSUE: Visitation of older out-of-county foster youth through computer technology.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports federal legislation to allow child welfare staff to conduct visits through computer technology, rather than in-person, with older youth (over 18 years of age) in extended foster care who are attending college out of state or connecting with relatives.

Repeal and Reform the Social Security COLA Formula

ISSUE: The Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Formula, which is designed to reflect increases in the cost of living, will not increase in 2016.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to repeal and reform the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Formula to en-

sure that the program properly accounts for the true cost of living of Social Security Benefits recipients — many of whom rely solely on these benefits to provide for their everyday needs — in 2016 and beyond.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Modify the "Individual Assistance" Criteria used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that Rural Residents are treated in a Fair and Equitable Manner

ISSUE: Current FEMA criteria requiring "concentration of damage" for access to Individual Assistance Programs and its impact on rural residents.

ADOPTED POLICY: FEMA and/or Congress should take immediate action to modify existing "concentration of damage" criteria for Individual Assistance Programs, so that these criteria do not unjustly deny rural residents critically

needed access to Individual Assistance Programs.

The 2017 Reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program

ISSUE: County priorities in the reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congressional committees of jurisdiction to include local and state stakeholders in the process of drafting legislation to craft an affordable and sustainable reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program, the current authorization of which is set to expire in 2017. NACo's positions on the following issues are as follows:

■ **Rates** – should be publicly disclosed and affordable. Section 205 (Pre-FIRM) subsidies should be applied to all categories of property;

■ **Program Administration** – Write Your Own (WYO)

payments must be capped, and risk should be spread by increasing the pool of policyholders;

■ **HFIAA** – key provisions from the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act (P.L. 113-89), namely grandfathering, premium increase caps and the reserve fund set-aside should be retained, and the 1 percent limit on premium to coverage ratio should be changed to a hard cap;

■ **Mapping** – should be transparent and fair to local communities, appeal caps must be lifted and a method to pay for elevations should be developed;

■ **Mitigation** – funding for mitigation should be increased, and NFIP premiums should be allowed to count as community and homeowner mitigation efforts;

■ **Consumer Protection** – a policy review process should be created, Flood Insurance Advocates should be regionalized, and Force-Placing pro-

See *POLICY* page 16



Taking a vote. Facing the camera: Michael McGinley (left), Beaverhead County, Mont.; Mark Whitley, Beaver County, Utah; and Ron Whitehead, Washington County, Utah.

Photo by David Hathcox



Public lands resolutions address resource extraction, forest roads, concessionaires on park property

From *POLICY* page 15

visions should be amended to keep policyholders in NFIP instead of surplus line.

Support Legislation to Limit FEMA's Deobligation of Public Assistance Funds from Eligible Applicants

ISSUE: Since 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has sought to recover and deobligate previously-approved federal disaster recovery funds distributed to local governments.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports legislation that would preclude FEMA from immediately rescinding previously obligated funds from the grantee (the state), once the sub grantee (local recipient/county) has stated its intent to appeal FEMA's decision in a timely fashion. NACo also supports legislation (H.R. 1471), which establishes a 3-year statute of limitation on deobligating Public Assistance funds from the date a project is certified complete by the state (grantee).

FEMA's "Disaster Deductible" Proposal and its Potential Impacts on Counties

ISSUE: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has released an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking that puts forth the concept of a "disaster deductible," which would have to be fulfilled by recipients of FEMA Public Assistance funds before they receive such funding to assist in disaster recovery.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges FEMA to closely consider the potential impacts of a proposed "disaster deductible" on the ability of local governments to protect their residents and communities following disasters. Political and fiscal impacts of changes



Anthony Hyde, Columbia County, Ore., signals for attention at the Board meeting. Photo by David Hathcox

to federal policy are often felt most acutely at the local level, and FEMA's efforts to lower federal disaster spending while incentivizing mitigation should not come at the expense of county governments.

NACo stands ready to work with its federal partners to ensure that the impacts of a "disaster deductible" on local governments are carefully considered throughout a potential rulemaking process, so that any policy changes can advance, and not hinder, our shared goals of keeping local communities safe and secure in the midst of rising natural disasters.

PUBLIC LANDS

Oppose Continued Wilderness Characteristic Inventory

ISSUE: Wilderness characteristics cataloging and inventory without the right of the public and public entities to comment, challenge, protest, and appeal.

POLICY: The National Association of Counties opposes any continuing wilderness characteristics inventory and cataloging by federal land management agencies without input and consent of impacted county governments. Fur-

ther, NACo opposes any and all administrative addition, whether backed by inventory or not, of any designation or addition to the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), without the input and consent of impacted local governments. Such additions prohibited would include, but not be limited to Wilderness Study Areas, National Monuments, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Outstanding Natural Areas, and Forest Reserves.

Support for Historic Rights-of-Ways Legislation

ISSUE: While the National Association of Counties (NACo) platform supports resolution of the claims of counties under R.S. 2477, it is general in nature, and the process in place requires quieting title through Federal District Court litigation and action. H.R. 4313, the Historic Routes Preservation Act, has been introduced to provide an efficient and cost-effective method for the federal government to confirm such claims.

ADOPTED POLICY: NACo supports passage of H.R. 4313, the Historic Routes Preservation Act, and introduction, consideration and passage in the

Senate of this bill or a companion creating an administrative process for confirming historic rights-of-ways on federal lands for qualifying roads, including the waiver of the statute of limitations regarding timely filing of such applications where qualifying roads cross "reserved" land.

Urge Congress and/or Department of the Interior to Take Actions to Stop the Moratorium on Leasing of Public Lands for Extraction of Carbon Based Resources

ISSUE: Moratorium on carbon based natural resource leasing on public land while leasing process is rewritten.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports: (1) the continued issuing of leases by federal land management agencies for carbon based resource and fuel development on all public lands approved for such leasing in the agencies' current resource management plans according to current procedures and processes; and (2) the immediate elimination of all pending moratoriums against such leasing.

Support Third Party Recreational Concessionaires in County Parks on Bureau of Land Management Land

ISSUE: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) believes it does not have statutory authority to allow third party concessionaires to provide recreational opportunities such as camp grounds, horseback riding, and golf courses on BLM land leased or patented to counties.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the strengthening of recreational opportunities and the resulting economic benefits through public-private partnerships on all public lands, including BLM land leased or patented to counties.

County Commissioner Approval Required For Any and All Land Acquisitions by Federal Agencies

ISSUE: Yearly property tax revenue is lost permanently to counties, when the federal government acquires private lands utilizing federal funding.

ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to require all federal government agencies to obtain the approval of a Board of County Commissioners for any utilization of funding for acquisitions of private or state lands in the county where the acquisition is occurring.

TRANSPORTATION

Support of Innovative, Connected, Automated Technology for Transit Solutions

ISSUE: Innovative, advanced, connected, cost-effective technology, such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and connected, automated vehicles and systems, can substantially improve safety, mobility, and connectivity of shared public transit but is not being widely considered despite current public use in Europe, Asia and, in limited form, the United States.

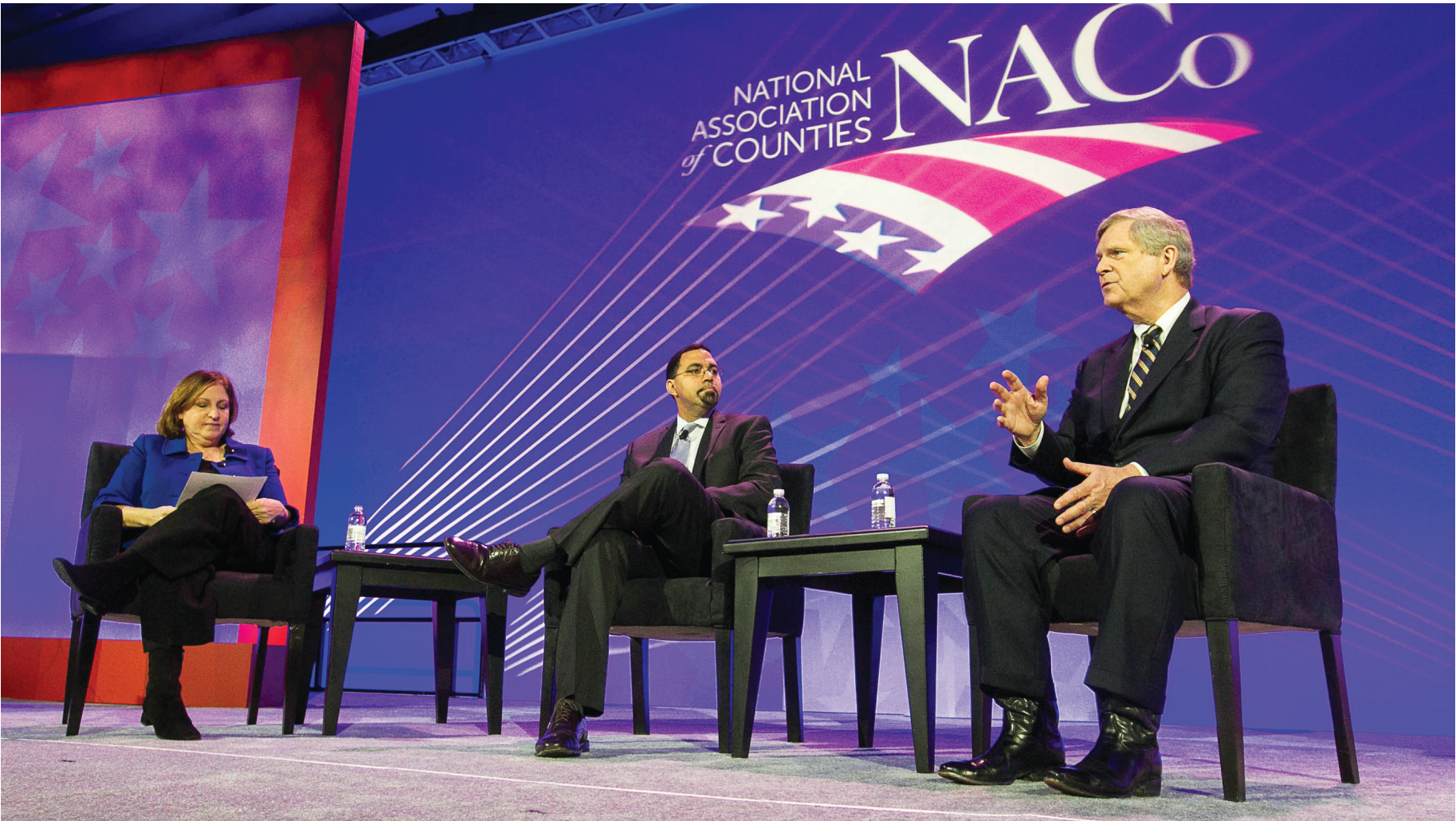
ADOPTED POLICY: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges modifying U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Transit Administration, or Federal Highway Administration policy in all appropriate innovative, advanced, connected, cost-effective technology grant guidelines to allow Automated Transit Networks as eligible for capital funding and to encourage states, local governments, or Metropolitan Planning Organizations to consider innovative, connected, automated technology in planning for transportation solutions. **CN**



Legislative Conference in Pictures



The scene at the Opening General session Feb.22. All Photos by David Hathcox unless noted.



Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack answers a question posed by *Washington Post* columnist Ruth Marcus about rural childhood poverty as Acting Education Secretary John King waits his turn.



Cathelia Robinett, eRepublic president, addresses Women of NACo members at their conference breakfast.



Ribbons, ribbons everywhere, which ones to pick? That's the question confronting Rod Runyon, Wasco County, Ore., and Karen Joplin, Hood River County, Ore.

Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Jonathan Rubin, Bucks County, Pa., and Antonio Oftelie discuss the human services value curve after Oftelie's presentation on the concept at a subcommittee meeting.

Photo by Leon Lawrence III



BYOD's were everywhere. Kareem Murphy, Hennepin County, Minn.'s deputy director for human services and public health, takes notes on his tablet at a steering committee presentation. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Call it speed dating for foreign investment. Judy Lytle, Surry County, Va., listens carefully as Martin Niekert from Germany Trade and Invest explains opportunities in his country for investors. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Melvyn Houser, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, at the Membership Committee meeting discusses the new survey proposal.



Former NACo President Karen Miller comments during Board Forum discussions.



Pat Fleming, senior NACo fellow, leads discussion on lessons learned at counties at Stepping Up workshop. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Bobby McGovan, Hinds County, Miss., and Stanley Moore, Cook County, Ill., spend some networking time.



Antonio Tosino Meirelles, Brazil Industries Coalition, answers questions about his country's trade policies at Foreign Investment and U.S. Exports: A Networking Opportunity. Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Kathy Dahlkemper, Erie County, Pa., listens intently at the Human Services and Education Steering Committee meeting.



El Paso County, Colo. Commissioner Sallie Clark, gracious in her Denver Broncos' Super Bowl victory, exchanges a t-shirt with Glen Webb, a Pitt County, N.C. commissioner and Carolina Panthers fan. Webb is president of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.



Julie Howell, senior health policy advisor, San Diego County, Calif., at the Health Steering Committee meeting.



Alysoun McLaughlin, Montgomery County, Md., at the Pension and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee meeting
Photo by Leon Lawrence III



Patrick Ferrell, Chatham County, Ga., brought his son, Shane, along. Shane's 11th birthday fell during the conference.



Buddy Boe, St. John the Baptist Parish, La., and Matthew Bell, Weber County, Utah, review the day's events.



Fred Belfield, Nash County, N.C., takes notes at the County Economies 2015 workshop.



Debbi McGinnis, Polk County, Mo., and Lynn Padgett, Ouray County, Colo., exchange views at the Board of Directors meeting.



Liz Archuleta, Coconino County, Ariz.; Greg Cox (c), San Diego County, Calif., and Robert Steele, Cook County, Ill., campaign for NACo second vice president during the conference.



The U.S. Marine Corps band gets the conference started on the right note at the Opening General Session.



Thompson Reuters Managing Director Steve Rubley accepts the 2016 Award for Corporate Excellence from NACo President Sallie Clark.



Mary Ann Borgeson, Douglas County, Neb., introduces featured Women of NACo speaker Cathelia Robinett.



Henry Heimuller, Columbia County, Ore., asks a question of Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx after his presentation at the Closing General Session.

New group forms for LGBT leaders, allies

By Charles Taylor
senior staff writer

What began as informal receptions at NACo's conferences has morphed into a new affinity group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) county leaders and their supporters.

The National Association of County LGBT Leaders & Allies Inc. formally organized by approving bylaws and electing officers on Feb. 23 at NACo's 2016 Legislative Conference.

Hidalgo County, N.M. Treasurer Tyler Massey was elected chair. Additional officers are: Lucinda Andreani, deputy public works director, Coconino County, Ariz., vice chair; Eric Peterson, government affairs liaison, Milwaukee County, Wis., secretary; Councilman Jay Breneman, Erie County, Pa., treasurer; and Councilmember KipuKai Kualii, Kauai County, Hawaii, board member-at-

large.

"I'm honored to have been chosen by my colleagues to lead this new group," Massey said. "We will work together to support each other, ensure that every voice is heard and encourage other LGBT county leaders and allies to actively participate in NACo."

The organization, whose acronym is NACLGBTA, is "dedicated to the promotion of equality, non-discrimination, fairness, and justice for all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity in the sphere of county government and in the general public as a whole and to provide a collegial setting for persons sharing that purpose to gather and coordinate efforts," according to its bylaws. **CN**

For more information about the group, please contact Tyler Massey at hctreasurer@aznexus.net.

10th Circuit OKs reporting Internet purchases to state tax collectors

by Lisa Soronen
executive director
State and Local Legal Center

In a significant ruling, Direct Marketing Association v. Brohl, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has held as constitutional a Colorado law requiring remote sellers to inform Colorado purchasers annually of their purchases and send the same information to the Colorado Department of Revenue.

In an earlier decision, Quill Corp. v. North Dakota, decided in 1992, the Supreme Court held that states could not require retailers without an in-state physical presence to collect use tax. In an effort to improve tax collection, yet not trespass on the Quill decision, the Colorado Legislature in 2010 began requiring remote sellers to inform Colorado purchasers annually of their purchases and send the same information to the state's department of revenue.

The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) sued Colorado in federal court claiming the law was unconstitutional under Quill. The 10th Circuit disagreed concluding that Quill, "applies narrowly to sales and use tax collection."

The 10th Circuit further concluded the Colorado law doesn't discriminate against interstate commerce because the DMA was unable to point to any evidence that the notice and reporting requirements imposed on out-of-state retailers are more burdensome than the sales tax collection and administration requirements imposed on in-state retailers.

At least three other states have similar notice and reporting requirements (Oklahoma, South Dakota and

Vermont).

The State and Local Legal Center filed an amicus brief in 10th Circuit arguing that Quill does not apply to the Colorado law, and that the notice and reporting requirements aren't discriminatory.

It also discussed the devas-

tating impact Quill has had on state and local governments in light of the rise of Internet purchases, the failure of Congress to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act, and states' need to improve use-tax collection through statutes like Colorado's. **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

DEBBI MCGINNIS

Board of Directors
Collector of Revenue
Polk County, Mo..



Number of years active in NACo: 16

Years in public service: 21

Occupation: Collector of Revenue

Education: Chancellors degree in public administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis; B.S. in agricultural economics, Missouri State University

The hardest thing I've ever done: bury my oldest child

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Harry Truman, John Wayne and Ronald Reagan (Jesus is already there)

A dream I have is to: write a book.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: climb Masada in Israel.

My favorite way to relax is: sit by water and read.

I'm most pleased with: my children and their accomplishments.

Every morning I read: my email and Facebook.

My favorite meal is: Fettuccini Alfredo.

My pet peeve is: signs with misspelled words.

My motto is: Take the high road (it's less crowded up there).

The last book I read was: *Fearless* by Eric Blehm

My favorite movie is: *Dumb and Dumber* (don't judge)

My favorite music is: Southern gospel.

My favorite president is: Ronald Reagan.

My county is a NACo member because: of the benefits it extends in lobbying efforts, the prescription drug program and the education.

You'd be surprised to learn that I:
built a computer from scratch.



Board members of the National Association of County LGBT Leaders & Allies, which formally organized during the Legislative Conference, pose for a group photo at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel: (l-r) Jay Breneman, treasurer; KipuKai Kualii, at-large; Lucinda Andreani, vice chair; Eric Peterson, secretary; and Tyler Massey, chair. Photo by Paul Beddoe



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH, ALASKA

Introduced in: 1964

Created by: Barbara Smith and Arthur Theodore

Matanuska-Susitna Borough, named for the Matanuska and Susitna rivers in south central Alaska, is one of the few agricultural areas in the state. That identity is reflected in the borough's seal, which was selected from seven entries by school children in 1964. The designers of the winning seal, Barbara Smith and Arthur Theodore, won the \$25 prize funded by the borough and Koslosky's Department Store.

Borough Clerk Lonnie R. McKechnie assisted with this report.



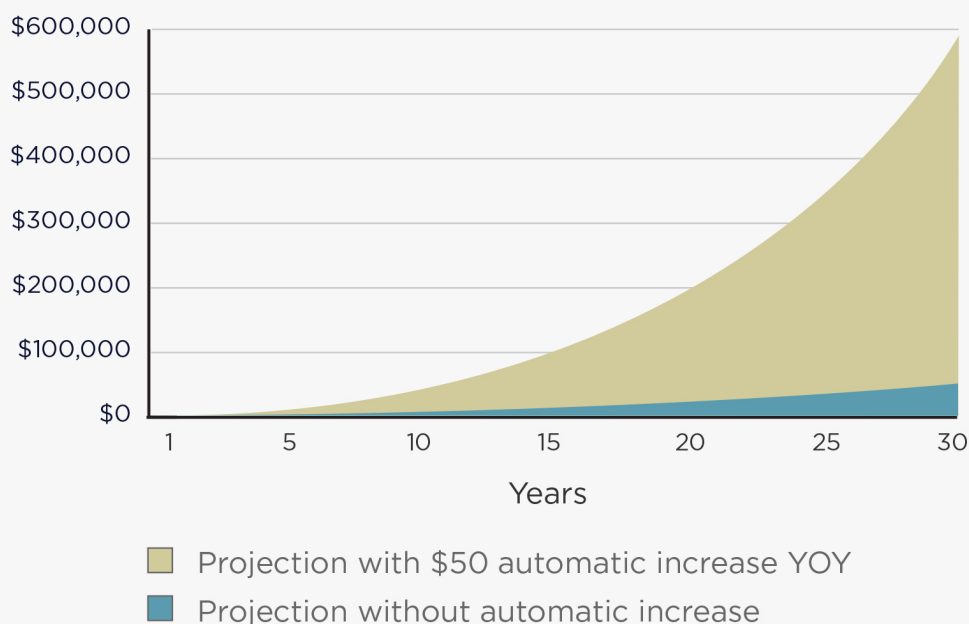
A moose, mountain sheep, salmon and bear adorn the outer ring of the seal, representing local wildlife.

The center of the seal features a "horn of plenty" overflowing with local produce, a cow, representing the dairy business, logs and trees to represent the timber industry, a coal miner with his pick and ore car, and a skier heading down the mountains, over which the sun rises.

MONEYMATTERS

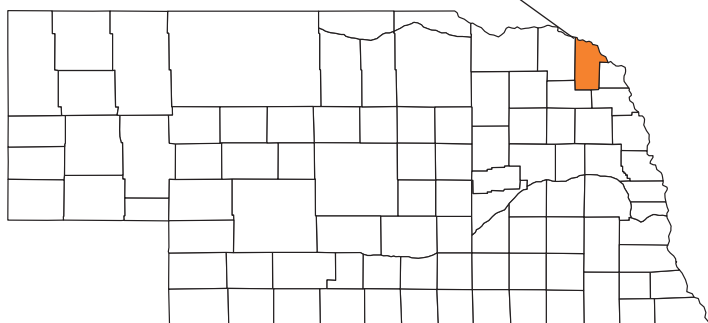
Put your retirement savings increases on 'auto pilot'

How automatic increase may help:



GET TO KNOW...

Dixon County, Neb.



Welcome to NACo, Dixon County, Neb.

Settled in the mid-1800s, Dixon County — carved out of **Dakota County** — grew in population after the railroads came to town. One of those towns, Allen, was built on a hillside, which didn't sit well with some of the settlers who felt it would be better to have a flat town. So the buildings were raised on poles so that the dirt from underneath could be excavated and leveled, then they were lowered back down.

Get to know another new NACo member in the next County News.

Plan sponsors like you know that most employees should be saving more for retirement. You also know that increasing contributions bit by bit every year can make a significant difference for participant accounts at retirement.

Participants who have vowed to save more money for retirement in 2016 now have a new tool to help them achieve this goal. Nationwide's new "auto increase" option will allow participants to decide now how much they want to increase their per-pay contributions each year.

After the annual increase would go into effect, Nationwide will send a notice to the email address participants have provided, specifying the new contribution amount and explaining how they can adjust or opt out of the increase altogether.

Of course, participants always remain in control of their contribution amount,

subject to regulation. They have the discretion to adjust contribution levels at any time of the year — regardless of their enrollment in the auto increase option.

As you can see from the chart (see above), auto increase can make a big difference for participants' retirement savings over a career. Even a \$50 year-over-year contribution increase can significantly boost a retirement savings account.

The first step in helping participants succeed through your plan is making sure they know about the many features designed to help them. A Nationwide representative will gladly help you promote Auto Increase and the other features Nationwide offers to make deferred compensation participation easy and automatic. **CN**

Nationwide Retirement Solutions (Nationwide) makes payments to the National Association of Counties (NACo), NACo

PEB LLC and the NACo Financial Services Center Partnership (FSC) for services and endorsements that NACo provides for all its members generally related to Nationwide's products and services sold exclusively in public sector retirement markets. More detail about these payments is available at www.nrsforu.com.

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BRIGHT IDEAS | WASHINGTON STATE COUNTIES, WASH.

Dashboard Lights the Way for County Transportation Planning and Advocacy, Unifies 39 Wash. Counties

PROBLEM: No transportation plans or databases measure all of Washington state's counties' transportation infrastructure.

SOLUTION: The Washington State Association of Counties compiled data from each county in a website.

By Charlie Ban
senior staff writer

From the rush-hour traffic jams of King County to the lonely roads of Adams County, the condition and environment of Washington state's transportation infrastructure varies, but there is no single transportation plan for all 39 counties.

So it was hard for the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) and other statewide advocates, in 2011, to articulate the challenges facing more than 12,700 miles of locally owned roads.

"What we know is that we have about half the roads in Washington state, about 3,000-plus bridges, so we had a lot of data about it but we didn't know what that data told us," said WSAC Executive Director Eric Johnson. "What we wanted to do was tell the county road system's story with accuracy and numbers, and be able to drive financial decisions on the county level or when the state distributes (federal) FAST Act dollars."

Fortunately, rather than having to survey all 39 counties for their individual statistics on roads and bridges, WSAC and the Washington State Association of County Engineers (WSACE) were able to lean on the County Road Administration Board (CRAB), which had

a trove of road data, to help out.

"We're fortunate we have CRAB," said Gary Rowe, WSACE's managing director. "The extent to which they collect data on county roads is fairly unique, and saved a lot of time and effort, especially the county engineers who would have had to compile all of this information."

So CRAB got to work.

"It was one of those projects that came to us out of left field, but once we figured it out, we realized that there were six categories that the state had for its roads (preservation, safety, mobility, stewardship, environmental and economic vitality) and that we could present the data in the same way, things were easier to assemble," said Walt Olsen, CRAB's deputy director of engineering. "We think it's some of the most useful information that's available to the public anywhere in the country."

The dashboard website launched in 2014. The costs — paying for association personnel time and consulting work — totaled \$1.45 million over five years.

Dashboard information can be viewed on a county-by-county basis, showing that in 2014, 7 percent of rural Adams County's roads were unpaved arterials and urban King County saw a steady reduction in serious injuries from collisions on county-owned roads over the last five years.

"Where the dashboard really gets interesting is when you drill down into the data, really see what's going on in each county," Olsen said. "At the same time, you have to remember the numbers are metrics not measures, so we're not comparing, because the counties are all so different."

The beauty of the data, Olsen

said, is that it shows the consistency with which the transportation system operates, which can be tracked year-to-year within five data sets, so far, with more to come.

"Everyone knows bridges are an issue in the U.S.," he said. "Through the preservation tab, you can see [for] all county bridges over 20 feet, we're in generally in good shape, they're mostly in good or excellent condition. We have work to do, but we're not hurting."

New data for 2015 will be available after April 1, and Olsen said it will be integrated by May, and from now on the dashboard will be able to display a rolling five-year range of metrics.

What has come up on the dashboard has meant a lot to people who have viewed it, both within counties and on the statewide scale.

"I think our fair-and-better road mileage is good, but we work really hard to make sure county arterials are taken care of," Olsen said. "When you get away from the metropolitan area, there are fewer options, and bad roads on farm-to-market routes can be problematic for any number of crops."

Rowe is anticipating adding data to the dashboard, including freight traffic on county roads.


Johnson said that data that shows him where money is best spent on roads, a case the state association can make to the Legislature.

"Most of the new growth is going to occur in the cities, so capacity is not as big of an issue to us as maintenance and preservation of the existing system is going to be," Johnson said.

But the biggest revelation, he said, was how dramatically the cost and funding curves

diverge.

"The costs to maintain the system are going up, and the revenue and resources to do preservation work have gone down — and it's startling," he said. "The impact on the safety of the system is startling. Property tax is our main funding mechanism, and it's capped at 1 percent, so we have a flawed funding system, but thanks to the dashboard we can demonstrate that graphically."

The Washington State County Transportation Metrics dashboard can be viewed at www.wsacmetrics.org. 

Bright Ideas features noteworthy and award-winning programs. The Washington State County Transportation Metrics program was named best in category for transportation programs among entries for the 2015 NACo Achievement Awards.

ON THE MOVE➔

NACo OFFICERS, COUNTY OFFICIALS

NACo President **Sallie Clark** was a featured speaker, March 2, at the South Carolina Emergency Management Association's meeting in Horry County (Myrtle Beach), S.C.

NACo's Rural Action Caucus (RAC) and Veterans and Military Service Committee met Feb. 24 with the White House Domestic Policy Council on a variety of rural topics, including veterans workforce issues, rural economies and rural substance abuse issues. RAC Chair **Lynn Padgett** led the discussion.

NACo STAFF

Paul Beddoe, deputy legislative director, briefed participants on NACo's legislative priorities at the County Commissioners Association of West Virginia's Legislative Conference. The meeting was held in Kanawha County (Charleston), W.Va. March 6–8.

Carlos L. Greene recently joined NACo as a senior

program director for NACo's Financial Services Center. Previously, he served as a managing director with Nationwide Retirement Solutions and was responsible for

managing existing client relationships in the South and Southeast regions. He was also responsible for building new public sector 457 (b) deferred compensation and 401 (a) defined benefit relationships.

COMING UP

On March 3–5, **Andrew Goldschmidt**, membership-marketing director, will be in Caddo Parish, La. for the Police Jury Association of Louisiana Legislative Conference and on March 13–14 in Dauphin County, Pa. for the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Spring Conference.

Meanwhile, **Alex Koroknay-Palicz**, membership coordinator, will represent NACo March 10–11 at the Iowa State Association of Counties Spring School in Polk County.



Greene

the HR DOCTOR

With Phil Rosenberg

Phil Rosenberg

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

Lessons from a Sandwich Shop

The HR Doctor recently spent a couple of days consulting with a city government in crowded South Florida. Much of the time was spent with police leaders. As with all hungry government bureaucrats and consultants, lunchtime led to an important decision — where to eat? There was no doubt whatsoever in the police chief's mind about where to go. There was a small family-owned sandwich shop downtown.

As we walked into the place, we encountered the SWAT team on a training break chomping away on great sandwiches served with obvious pride by the restaurant owner.

Each SWAT team member was greeted personally by the chief with handshakes and a reassuring pat on the back. He was clearly well respected and well liked. Even this total stranger HR Doctor was warmly greeted by very friendly, if not also large and powerful looking police officers.

While I would like to think that the warm greeting was the result of my sparkling personality, it was probably due to my Under Armor shirt and Tactical 5.11 pants, which helped me bond. I'm sure also being with the chief helped too.

Whatever the reason, something wonderful was evident as I watched and considered the atmosphere created by simply walking into a restaurant with police command friends.

The SWAT team members were seeking something we all seek, but many of us do not find. They had found a family. They had found a purpose. They had found a close bond with one another as they learned the tactical skills of

their profession and learned that they can rely without question on the dedication and support of one another.

There are leaders in the politics of our country who argue that the United States has a "mission" to spread around the world that they feel people want most. They believe that the ultimate quest of people everywhere is for freedom. However, for most people freedom is not first on their minds. Rather, it is security. Not only the security of worrying less about terrorist attacks or lone gunmen randomly killing innocents, but rather, the security of knowing that they will have the food they need and the water necessary for survival, not to mention shelter and clothing. They want the security of having a sense that their children will be able to grow and survive and have a better life than they had.

Whatever the reason, something wonderful was evident as I watched and considered the atmosphere created by simply walking into a restaurant with police command friends

Finding greater security requires the very same qualities I found, ironically, in my visit to the sandwich shop. Having a purpose in life, which allows for making a positive difference in our families and our communities, and being part of a trusted team are key elements. So is having the courage to take actions to bring about positive results. Those are important ingredients in the quest for security just as they are in the quest for our individual freedom.

Despite the headline grabbing failures of behavior by a small minority of law enforcement officers, overwhelmingly everyone in the society regardless of color or economics owes much to a group of "blue people" whose dedication and teamwork provides what our society needs.

We can't experience a life of freedom without also an appreciation for security. Freedom and security are intimately bonded together. We have learned much about how important this bond is, but apparently we have so much more to learn.

To believe otherwise is to display what the Greeks called "hubris," or arrogant pride. The arrogance to think that we can tell other people or other countries how to live their lives and to pretend that we know what's best for other adults in the world inevitably leads to trouble and failure.

The lead question in America for the next generation will be whether we can put aside our poor language toward one another, our tendency to shout rather than to listen, and our individual arrogance and learn the importance of balance between freedom and security. The debates of the second, such as smart phone encryption, or "freeing" the people of Syria, or which presidential candidate can outshout or out-insult the others are but fleeting issues. The much more significant concern is whether our country will survive this next century as a world leader.

The balance between freedom and security is a very hard one and there will be stumbling and tripping along the way. Yet for me, when I wonder about that balance, my thoughts now turn to the sandwich shop. They turn to the "power of the team" with purpose, dedication, skill and courage. The team with less arrogance and more emphasis on all that ties us together — not bad lessons for every American to consider. **CN**





**LIGHTS,
LEADERSHIP,
ACTION!**

NACo's Annual Conference and Exposition

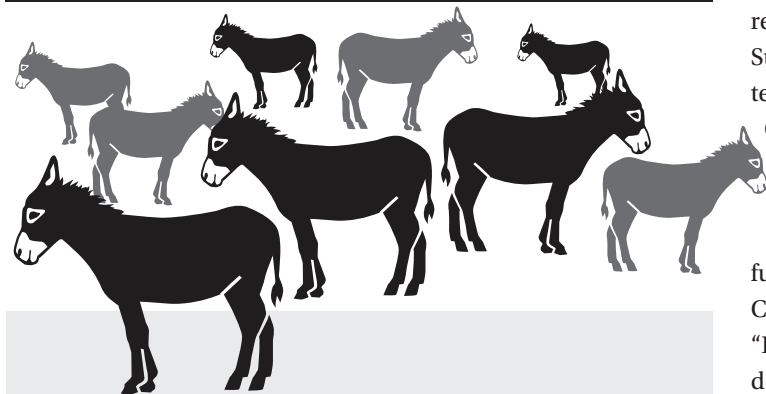
JULY 22-25, 2016

Los Angeles County, Long Beach, Calif.

Register Today!

www.naco.org/Annual

CN ACROSS THE NATION



ARIZONA

■ Supervisors from **LA PAZ, MOHAVE** and **YUMA counties** met with federal officials in Washington, D.C., hoping to find a solution to the **overpopulation of wild burros** in the state's western counties.

The federal Bureau of Land Management estimates there are more than 4,400 wild burros in the state.

Kurt Davis, chairman of Arizona's Game and Fish attended the meeting. He said the burros are "ferocious eaters" that wreak havoc on the desert's delicate ecosystem.

Mohave County Supervisor Hildy Angius said one of her constituents incurred \$96,000 in damages caused by burros last year, the *Arizona Republic* reported.

County officials are looking for a long-term, humane solution. Among the options that were discussed include a burro "adoption" program and contraception.

from the Gold King into a tributary of the Animas. Since then, the agency has spent \$8 million on the spill, according to *The Durango Herald*.

Local officials have for years resisted EPA efforts to use the Superfund to deal with a cluster of toxic mines, including the Gold King. They've feared loss of local control and harm to the tourism economy.

"I was not in favor of Superfund. I still don't like it," said Commissioner Ernie Kuhlman. "But if we don't do it, it will be done for us."

"If we don't make this move, they will, and we won't have a seat at the table."

HAWAII

Counties would be prohibited from **regulating geothermal power plants** under a bill making its way through the state Legislature.

Under Senate Bill 2535, only the state could regulate "geothermal resources development and geothermal resources exploration," unless it authorizes counties to do so, the *Hawaii Tribune-Herald* reported.

The measure comes in response to **HAWAII COUNTY's** 2012 adoption of a ban on evening geothermal drilling after neighbors complained about noise from an electric utility's nighttime activity.

ILLINOIS

Seven greater-Chicago-area counties and the city will work with the Brookings Institution over the next 10 months to **attract more foreign investment** to the region.

The Washington, D.C.-based think tank will work with **COOK, DUPAGE, KANE, KENDALL, LAKE, MCHENRY** and **WILL counties** to raise the metropolitan area's profile abroad.

"There is no singular voice," Mike Jasso, Cook County's economic development director, told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Currently, 6 percent of the region's workforce is employed by foreign-owned firms.

MICHIGAN

If the mosquitoes that carry

Zika virus are found in **OAKLAND COUNTY**, there's a plan in place to deal them.

The county's strategy includes a health division staff meeting with the county's municipalities this month to give an update mosquito-borne disease prevention and control; ongoing distribution of educational posters to all obstetricians and gynecologists; and providing educational information to the public through social media.

NEW YORK

■ **WARREN** and **WASHINGTON counties**, already sharing a border and one of the biggest tourist attractions in the region, have begun to **share tourism promotion resources**. Washington County's tourism office is currently understaffed.

Warren County's Tourism Department will include information about Washington County attractions in some of its electronic marketing. Washington County in turn will mar-

ket the lodging availabilities in Warren County.

The mindset has changed from years ago, when the counties viewed each other as competitors, *The Post-Star* reported.

■ In response to the opioid abuse epidemic, **SUFFOLK COUNTY** has launched a **24-hour hotline** for screenings, referrals and follow up for anyone seeking assistance.

The nonprofit Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence will staff the service, which is scheduled to launch in April, the *Long Island Exchange* reported. The Suffolk County Health Department will provide oversight and analyze data to monitor its effectiveness and identify trends and emerging issues in the community.

OHIO

A performance audit by the Ohio Auditor of State found that Great Parks of **HAMILTON**

ARIZONA

■ **MARICOPA COUNTY** Attorney Bill Montgomery is just saying "**no**" to iPhones for his staff.

"Apple's refusal to cooperate with a legitimate law enforcement investigation to unlock a phone used by terrorists puts Apple on the side of terrorists instead of on the side of public safety," Montgomery said. The FBI wants access to data on an encrypted Apple smartphone that was used by suspects in the San Bernardino County shootings last December.

His office will discontinue providing iPhones as replacements or upgrades for existing employees. There are currently 564 smartphones deployed throughout the office; 366 of them are iPhones.

CALIFORNIA

■ Candidates for local elected office in **SACRAMENTO COUNTY** will be required

to file **campaign disclosure statements online**. The move, approved unanimously by the Board of Supervisors, is expected to make it easier for the public to track spending in political races. The mandate goes into effect Aug. 1.

It will apply to candidates for county offices, special districts and some school districts, according to *The Sacramento Bee*.

Currently, the public has limited ability to remotely access campaign finance records, which typically has required a trip to a county office.

COLORADO

SAN JUAN COUNTY leaders — along with town of Silverton officials — voted to ask the state to **seek Superfund status** for the Gold King mine and several others that feed into the Animas River, the *Denver Post* reported.

Last August, the EPA accidentally released 3 million gallons of heavy-metals-laden sludge

CALIFORNIA

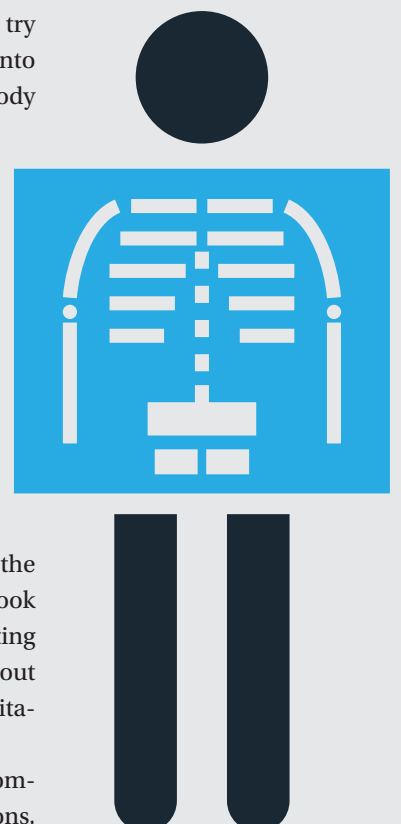
■ Authorities say a new **digital body scanner** is improving security at both **MERCED COUNTY** jails.

The \$220,000 piece of equipment is meant to thwart those who would try to smuggle illegal items into the jails concealed in body cavities. The scanner can reveal objects such as drugs, explosives, weapons, needles, nails and scissors, the *Merced Sun-Star* reported.

The image looks like an x-ray — contraband typically shows up in a darker color, jail officials said. Unlike airport scanners, which look for material above the skin, the jail scanners look inside the body, eliminating any privacy concerns about soft tissues, such as genitalia, being displayed.

Capt. Greg Sullivan, commander of jail operations,

said the scans are safe. "You can go through this machine up to 10 times a day, 365 days a year without violating the limit for radiation exposure."





GEORGIA

Members of the **CHATHAM COUNTY Youth Commission**, visiting Washington, D.C. on Feb. 22, met for two hours with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, himself Chatham County native.

The commission was founded in 1992 by county Commissioner Priscilla Thomas, who continues her involvement. During their trip, the group also met with U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter (R-S.C.), toured the capitol, and visited the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. Photo courtesy of Chatham County, Ga. Youth Commission

COUNTY provides a **lower tax burden** than other county park district in the state.

The parks district itself asked for the audit, according to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, ahead of the expiration of its current levy and before putting another levy on the ballot.

OREGON

Homeless and affordable housing service delivery may change dramatically in Portland and **MULTNOMAH COUNTY**, with the county handling homeless services and the city managing affordable housing.

The Oregonian described the current division of urban services as “ambiguous.” A study group has recommended the creation of a Joint City-County Office of Homeless Services, which would report directly to Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury, and employees would be “hosted” at the county.

Both the city and county have declared “housing states of emergency.”

TEXAS

Sandy streets may be on the way out in parts of **BEXAR COUNTY**. The Commissioners Court will consider repairing roads in a private subdivision that can’t reliably carry ambulances, mail trucks, garbage trucks and police cars.

The roads are private and currently ineligible for local public funds and many federal grants, so the county may assume control, the *San Antonio Current* reported. Paving the roads in the subdivision would cost roughly \$5.5 million, with another \$11 million going to sidewalks and curbs.

VIRGINIA

AUGUSTA COUNTY may go back to **paper ballots** in the November General Election, now that the county’s touchscreen voting machines are reaching the end of their 10-year lives. The dearth of replacement parts and concerns about malfunctions have motivated the change.

The proposed optical and digital scanning equipment that would replace the current

voting machines is expected to cost \$350,000, but according to *the News Leader*, the county’s Board of Supervisors may wait until after the presidential election to change systems.

WISCONSIN

■ County executives may be barred from **simultaneously serving in the state Assembly**. A bill to that effect passed the

Senate on a 53–40 vote.

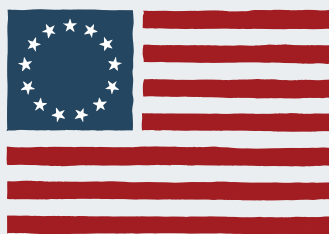
The bill was in response to the candidacy of **WINNEBAGO COUNTY** Executive Mark Harris, a Democrat who is running to fill a vacant Senate seat, *The Capital Times* reported. The bill does not preclude a county executive from running for a seat in the Legislature; it only says he or she cannot hold both posts at once.

■ **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** says its no-strings-attached, **free housing program for the homeless**, launched in September, is saving the county money.

“Housing First,” based on a national model that’s been successful in a handful of other cities, took in 100 people within three-and-a-half months. Once settled into housing, the formerly homeless are introduced to addiction services, if needed, but sobriety is not mandatory.

The county is basing its savings estimate on the \$35 per day cost compared to \$100 per day to keep them in jail or prison, plus \$950 for police responses and more than \$1,000 for trips to the emergency room, according to TMJ4 News.

The county plans to double its capacity in the program over the next year. **CN**



NEW JERSEY

The Cedar Bridge Tavern might not have the same name recognition as Lexington and Concord, but the site of one of the **last skirmishes of the Revolutionary War** is getting a boost to make sure it doesn’t fade into memory.

OCEAN COUNTY plans to spend \$2.2 million to develop

a historic site in Barnegat where New Jersey militiamen were ambushed by a British loyalist in 1782.

A caretaker’s cottage and outdoor classroom facility would be built with the funds, in addition to the purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment for the site, according to the *Asbury Park Press*. The tavern where the militiamen had stopped is now part of the county’s parks system. Every December, Revolutionary War re-enactors gather to recreate the skirmish.

(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.)

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IMPORTANT DATES:

Submissions Close:
April 1, 2016, at 11:59 p.m. EDT
Notifications of Decisions:
First week in June 2016