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CountyNews

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

VOL. 47, NO. 1 ■ JANUARY 12, 2015

Economic Tracker: progress through adversity

By EMILIA ISTRATE
RESEARCH DIRECTOR

As President Obama prepares to deliver the State of the Union, NACo releases *2014 County Economic Tracker: Progress through Adversity*, an analysis of the recovery patterns across the 3,069 county economies in 2014. The conditions of a county economy can constrain and challenge county governments, residents and businesses, but can also provide opportunities.

The *2014 County Economic Tracker* analyzes the annual changes of four economic performance indicators — economic output, also known as gross domestic product (GDP),

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Photo by Tom Goodman

Fairfax County, Va. Supervisor Penny Gross (l), president, Virginia Association of Counties, participates in a Q & A session with Jerry Abramson, deputy assistant to President Obama and White House director of intergovernmental affairs, Jan. 8. The stop at the White House briefing room was just one event in a jam-packed two-day agenda for the National Council of County Association Executives' (NCCAE) annual presidents and executive directors meeting in Washington, D.C.

Members heard from Capitol Hill staff members on key legislative issues for 2015 as well as from Chris Cilizza, writer of *The Washington Post* weblog, "The Fix," who spoke to the group about the 2016 presidential election and expectations for the 114th Congress.

Kentucky counties chart own right-to-work path

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Kentucky lawmakers have tried, unsuccessfully, for each of the past two legislative sessions to pass a statewide right-to-work law. Twenty-four U.S. states have them: statutes that guarantee employees can't be compelled to join a union as a condition of employment.

Not content to wait for state action, several home rule counties have taken matters into their own hands and passed county right-to-work (RTW) ordinances.

Warren County, whose seat is Bowling Green, was the first in the commonwealth — and in the nation — to enact a local RTW law. The county's Fiscal Court voted 5-1 in favor of the measure Dec. 19. Simpson, Fulton, Hardin,

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Jail programs tackle addiction

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

A spell in the county lockup gives inmates plenty of time to think and some jails give them plenty to think about, as they assess — voluntarily or not — the roles alcohol and drugs have played in their lives with substance abuse treatment programs.

Bureau of Justice Statistics data show that nearly half of jail and prison inmates are clinically addicted to drugs and alcohol, and 60 percent to 80 percent of drug abusers commit a new crime after release from prison. Research by the American Psychological Association indicates a combination of incarceration-based substance abuse treatment programs, paired with post-release aftercare, can

significantly affect recidivism rates among those challenged by alcohol and drug misuse.

New Hampshire

The Strafford County, N.H. Jail's therapeutic communities substance abuse program houses 25 people — 15 men, 10 women — in its gender-specific housing units, segregated from the rest of the jail community.

For 90 days, they go through a rigorous schedule, complete with 5:30 a.m. wakeups, classes, group therapy and substance abuse counseling.

"There's a big focus on clean living and personal responsibility," said Jake Collins, the jail's assistant superintendent. "Your bed has to be made a certain way. You can't be lazy and get through it."

Collins emphasized that the single-sex nature of the rehabilitation was key.

"Men might not want to share feelings in front of women, and women who were abused by men might be afraid of men similar to those who abused them," he said. "It also limits the chance for romantic involvement, which can derail other rehab programs."

Inmates can opt for the substance abuse program while in jail, or they can wind up there as a sanction in the county's drug court.

"We have a fair number of people who are ready to get treatment," Collins said. "But people in the drug court slip up, they can wind up here."

The therapy focuses on the

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'Coal-ash counties' disappointed by new EPA regulations

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

When the EPA issued regulations last month on the disposal of coal ash, two North Carolina counties hoped there'd be good news for them. The agency had been considering whether to label coal ash as a hazardous material.

Lee and Chatham counties in North Carolina have been fighting against state-sanctioned industry plans to store residue from coal-fired electricity generation within their borders. Additionally, Chatham County is home to a shuttered power plant on the Cape Fear River where ash is stored. Coal ash contains toxic chemicals such as arsenic, lead, mercury, selenium, cadmium and chromium.

But the new law — which EPA calls “the first national regulations to provide for the safe disposal of coal combustion... residuals” — stopped short of designating the material as hazardous. Its rules also rely on states and legal action to ensure compliance, not federal enforcement as environmentalists had hoped for. In addition, it does not apply to ash ponds at now-closed power plants, like the one in Chatham.

“Our case was not helped by the EPA, as we see it, abandoning and turning a blind eye to this,” said Jim Crawford, chairman of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners.

Toothless Regulations

Ulla Reeves manages the high-risk energy program for the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE),



Photo by Sam Perkins, Catawba Riverkeeper

Coal-ash slurry from a shuttered Duke Energy generating station in Eden, N.C. flows into the Dan River in February 2014 from a leaking ash basin. The utility estimated the spill at up to 39,000 tons of ash and 24 million gallons of wastewater.

which monitors coal ash issues in the Southeast. “The guidelines laid out are good guidelines; the problem with the federal rule is that it doesn't have any teeth.... There's no federal oversight that's really meaningful in the new rule.”

EPA has been studying the effects of coal-ash disposal since a catastrophic ash pond failure in Tennessee in 2008 that flooded 300 acres and released coal ash into two rivers. A massive leak into the Dan River in North Carolina last year also prompted legislative action in that state, the Coal Ash Management Act, passed in August 2014. But it doesn't make cleanup of lagoons in Chatham County (pop. 66,800) a priority, Crawford said.

“Lee and Chatham counties have some of the worst coal ash lagoons in the state,” said Frank Holleman,

a senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, which has successfully sued utility companies in the Southeast to have ash ponds closed or cleaned up.

But interest in the issue extends far beyond just these two counties. A region that includes Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Florida and Virginia is home to 40 percent of the nation's coal ash impoundments — coal ash ponds and landfills, according to *Southeast Coal Ash.org*.

“It is a critical problem in the Southeast because — due to our historic dependence on coal to generate electricity — we have at least one set of these coal ash lagoons on virtually every major river system in the Southeast, all of which are drinking water sources,” Holleman added. It's also an issue in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions, and to a lesser degree, the West. But he said the biggest impacts are east of the Mississippi.

A Mainly Southeastern U.S. Problem

There are some 450 coal-ash impoundments in the Southeast, most of them unlined and more than 30 years old, according to SACE. They hold more than 118 billion gallons of “toxic waste” — enough to cover 275,000 football fields in ash one foot deep.

For neighboring Lee and Chatham counties, the coal-ash issue is two-pronged. While both are concerned about hosting coal-ash dumps, Chatham is also worried about the safety of the ash ponds that already exist, which are upstream of the drinking water intake for Sanford, the Lee County seat.

Lee County's Board of Commissioners passed a resolution Jan. 5 opposing a plan to bury up to 8 million tons of coal ash from Duke Energy in an empty clay pit over the

EPA coal-ash regulation highlights

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy signed the Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) from Electric Utilities final rule on Dec. 19, 2014, saying it established “safeguards to protect communities from coal ash impoundment failures.” These include, but are not limited to:

- the closure of surface impoundments and landfills that fail to meet engineering and structural standards and will no longer receive coal ash
- reducing the risk of catastrophic failure by requiring regular inspections of the structural safety of surface impoundments
- restrictions on the location of new surface impoundments and landfills so that they cannot be built in sensitive areas such as wetlands and earthquake zones
- protecting groundwater by requiring monitoring, immediate cleanup of contamination, and closure of unlined surface impoundments that are polluting groundwater
- protecting communities using “fugitive dust” controls to reduce windblown coal ash dust, and
- requiring liner barriers for new units and proper closure of surface impoundments and landfills that will no longer receive CCRs.

Source: EPA news release, Dec. 19, 2014

next eight years. Commission Chair Amy Dalrymple says it will be a “coal-ash mountain,” a half mile long and five stories high. “That is not the ‘Welcome to Lee County’ sign we want.”

The county's resolution stated, in part, that “by hosting this type of facility in Lee County, the citizens and businesses who have invested in the community will suffer economic hardships due to the stigma of being the coal ash capital of North Carolina.”

Dalrymple recognizes that the counties' resolutions might not carry much weight. “But we wanted to at least send a message to our citizens that they were being heard,” she said, “and that the majority of our board definitely agrees with the citizens that this is not a good thing for Lee County [pop. 60,000], and it certainly was not done correctly.”

Chatham County's resolution, passed in December, noted shortcomings in the state's Coal Ash

Management Act, highlighting provisions it said failed to adequately protect public health and natural resources, including “a prohibition on any local ordinances related to coal ash, including disposal, storage or transport within their jurisdictions,

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Workforce implementation regs delayed until spring

By DARIA DANIEL
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



The Department of Labor (DOL) has delayed the release of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations until spring 2015, instead of Jan. 18, as stipulated in the act.

The bipartisan WIOA legislation reauthorizes federal employment and workforce training programs. It was signed into law in July 2014.

NACo successfully lobbied to maintain local authority in the federal workforce system (WIOA) and to add enhancements to make the workforce training system more demand-driven to meet the needs of businesses and jobseekers.

The act provides more options for on-the-job training. WIOA also reduces the number of mandatory partners on local workforce boards, which had been an issue for some local board operation and business participation.

Many of the provisions of WIOA go into effect July 1. NACo continues to work with DOL to keep NACo members informed on the WIOA implementation process. NACo will also receive grant funds to assess local government needs related to the workforce reauthorization legislation implementation.

*The DOL Notification, WOLA resource page and NACo WOLA resource page can be accessed online at www.countynews.org.

CountyNews

President | Riki Hokama
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Senior Staff Writer | Charles Taylor
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Graphic Artist | Jack Hernandez

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) ■ (ISSN: 0744-9798)
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Research Foundation, Inc.



Quick Takes

U.S. Cities with Most Snowfall 2013-2014
population 100,000+

Erie, Pa. (Erie County)	138.4
Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)	132.0
Buffalo, N.Y. (Erie County)	129.9
Grand Rapids, Mich. (Kent County)	116.0
Rochester, N.Y. (Monroe County)	112.7

Source: National Weather Service

Most county economies remain below pre-recession levels

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employment, unemployment rates and home prices — between 2013 and 2014 across county economies. In addition, it explores 2012–2013 wage dynamics, taking into account the effect of local cost-of-living and inflation of average annual wages in county economies.

The focus of the report is on the county economy, not the county government. County economies are the building blocks of regional economies (metropolitan areas and micropolitan areas), states and the nation. County governments ensure the functionality of these fundamental units by building and maintaining basic infrastructure assets, keeping communities healthy and safe, and providing the social safety net for those in need.

2014 was a year of growth, but recovery from the recession remains sluggish. By 2014, the GDP in 55 percent of all county economies recovered or did not decline as measured over the last decade. Home

prices were in a similar situation. Job growth accelerated and 63 percent of county economies witnessed faster job gains than in 2013.

This job growth helped unemployment decline in almost all county economies during the past year, but it was not sufficient to bring most county economies to levels seen before the recession. Nearly three-quarters of county economies are still below their pre-recession employment levels and unemployment is not back to pre-recession rates in 95 percent of county economies.

Economic Recovery Spreads But Remains Uneven across the Country

However, by 2014, almost three-quarters of county economies had recovered to pre-recession levels on at least one of the indicators analyzed (GDP, employment, unemployment rates and home prices). For the first time, one large county economy (Kent County, Mich.) out of the 124 large county economies reached its unemployment rate seen before the

downturn.

Yet, none of the large county economies — counties with more than 500,000 residents — recovered on all four indicators.

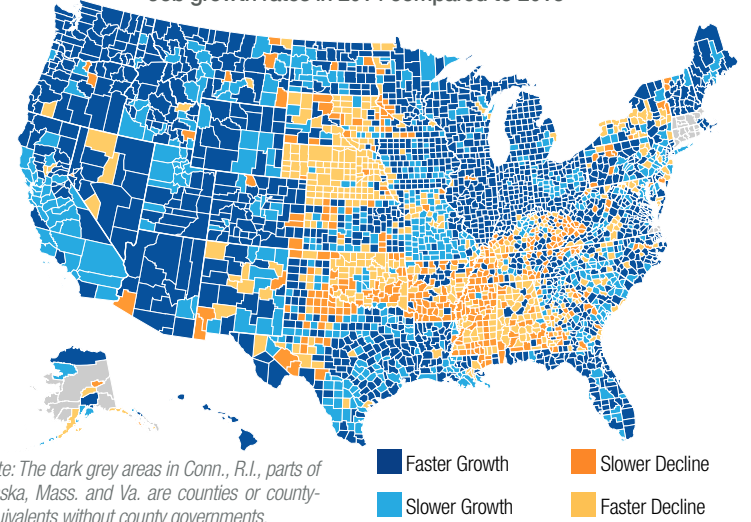
Smaller county economies have fared better. Sixty-five county economies recovered on all four indicators by 2014. Most are small, counties with fewer than 50,000 people. Most of them have booming energy and agriculture sectors (in states such as Alaska, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota and Texas).

County economies are where Americans feel the national economy. While the 2014 national economic numbers are strong, Americans do not see them in their paychecks. For example, only 40 percent of the new jobs in 2014 were in industries paying more than the average wage in the county where the job resides. Large county economies continued to generate a disproportionate share of the new jobs in 2014, but only 38 percent of the net jobs created in the 124 large county economies were in industries paying above the 2013 average wage in their residing county.

Between 2012 and 2013, average wages declined in half of county economies, when taking into consideration the cost of living and inflation. In states such as Pennsylvania, New Mexico and Maryland, only a third of county economies saw growth in their cost of living and inflation-adjusted wages.

JOB GROWTH IMPROVED IN ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF COUNTY ECONOMIES

Job growth rates in 2014 compared to 2013



Source: NACo Analysis of Moody's Analytics 2014 Data

This sluggish and uneven recovery across county economies adds to the obstacles that challenge counties. Counties face a triple threat from the uncertainty around major federal policy changes, from tax reform, entitlement reform and appropriation cuts, absent any reductions in unfunded mandates or federal regulations.

Counties are doing their part, investing in economic development, transportation and providing core social services. In creating economic development initiatives, counties leverage networks of public, nonprofit and private partners necessary for successful local economic development.

“The County Economic Tracker is a reminder that that the U.S. economy happens on the ground, in the 3,069 county economies that provide the basis for county governments,” said Matt Chase, NACo executive director.

“Economic growth is spreading, but most county economies have not recovered to levels seen before the recession on a number of indicators. This progress through adversity indicates the success of county economic development efforts, but also the continued need for a strong local-state-federal partnership in securing a strong economy.”

Tracking the Tracker

You can find the analysis at www.naco.org/countyeconomies. To access the companion interactive maps and the individualized county profiles, go to NACo's County Explorer interactive map www.naco.org/countyexplorer.

The January update of NACo's interactive tool will feature the economic data from the County Economic Tracker analysis.

Counties unite to fight coal-ash disposal plan

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and limitations on local land use or zoning ordinance provisions that might apply to coal ash facilities....”

South Carolina as 'Poster Child'

Holleman said one needs look no farther than south of the border, in South Carolina — albeit as a result of litigation and negotiations — for an example of what EPA could have required. Every electric utility with coal ash ponds in the Palmetto State has agreed to excavate all of their water-filled coal ash lagoons in the state and move the ash to safe, lined storage or recycle it for beneficial uses, such as a component of concrete, he said.

While county resolutions may be “just words on paper,” as Dalrymple says, focusing a community's attention and energies on a problem can be effective, according to Holleman.

“I think it's important to point out that in these efforts the local

governments — whether they have direct legal control — they can have great impact on getting these sites cleaned up.” He cited an example from Horry County, S.C. in which local government-focused opposition helped influence the utility Santee Cooper to clean up a site in Horry County.


“South Carolina has become kind of the poster child in the Southeast for good solutions to the coal ash problem,” SACE's Reeves said.

Utilities can be influenced by the local counties, or local governments “expressing strong views about cleanups,” Holleman said.

That's what Lee and Chatham counties are committed to doing.

“Jim and I are very hard-headed people,” Dalrymple said of Crawford, “much like our citizens in our county, and they want us to fight this.”



Added Crawford, “We've talked to Lee County, and they're comparable to us in terms of population size; we're looking at possible legal actions.”



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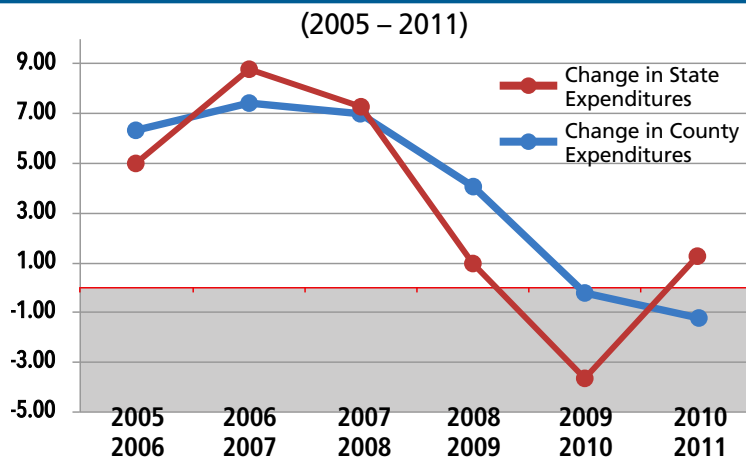



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Changes in state sentencing law impact counties

By NATALIE ORTIZ
SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST

Figure 1. Year-to-year percent change in county and state corrections expenditures



Notes: Expenditures include all cash paid out, including capital outlay costs, other than for retirement of debt, investment in securities, or extension of credit. County corrections expenditures include some municipality spending, but county spending accounts for 84 to 90 percent of county expenditures reported, depending on the year.

Source: NACo analysis of 2005-2011 U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts data

Several states addressed justice policy at the polls last year, with many of the propositions that passed having a direct impact on county justice systems.

For example, California voted to reduce some nonviolent offenses — such as drug possession and property crimes valued at less than \$950 — from felonies to misdemeanors, making them punishable by not more than one year in county jail. Voters in New Jersey decided to tackle jail overcrowding by voting to reform the bail system and allow low-risk defendants to be released before trial without bail.

These proposals follow at least two recent stories that highlight the problems confronting the county justice system. A former state lawmaker from California was sentenced to three months in Los Angeles County Jail following his conviction on perjury and fraud charges. In November 2014, he was released from jail after serving only a few hours of his sentence because of jail crowding.

That same month, a federal judge ordered Lucas County, Ohio to reduce its jail population. After the county prosecutor argued that nonviolent misdemeanor defendants cannot be released prior to trial because they would not show up for court, the federal judge suggested implementing a system that would remind defendants of court dates.

The proposals on the November 2014 election ballot and these stories speak to how justice policy at the state level has affected the local corrections system.

Prison Populations Drive Policy Changes

Based on Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data, the state prison population has increased by more

than 500 percent between 1973 and 2013. Growth of this magnitude is not without consequence for the states, from increasing spending on the corrections system to overcrowded prison facilities. State lawmakers have tried to address the size of the prison population through changes to the existing policies and practices that have contributed to an overuse of the criminal justice system.

Even though the state prison system is the primary target of these changes, many of the new laws have impacted or will impact county jails and probation departments. Since 2011 for example, counties in California have absorbed the impact of Assembly Bill (AB) 190, because the law shifted, from states to counties, the responsibility of supervising lower-level offenders and diverting to county jails parolees who violate technical conditions of release.

In 2013, South Dakota passed legislation that changed the punish-

ment for certain types of crimes from time in prison to a sentence to county jail and asked the state to structure funding for counties that would be affected by new sentencing policies. Also in 2013, Virginia passed a law that required all counties in the state to establish drug courts, while Colorado added a new law that allows probation and community-based sentencing for certain drug convictions.

State Justice Reform Sparks New Issues for Local Jails

County corrections may confront a number of issues in the wake of state movement toward justice policy reform. The impact of an increase in the number of convicted inmates in county jails is one of them.

According to the BJS, counties already operate jails with an average daily population that exceeds 83 percent of capacity. The situation is even more critical in counties with

Prison vs. Jails

The corrections system includes state prisons and county jails. “Prison” and “jail,” however, are not interchangeable terms. Prisons are state-operated correctional facilities that house only individuals convicted of felonies and receive a sentence of at least one year. Jails are locally operated facilities, most often by counties, that hold individuals who are awaiting trial and confine individuals convicted of crimes and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than one year (However, some county jails in Pennsylvania are called county prisons). According to U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics data, more than 60 percent of jail inmates in the U.S. were awaiting trial on June 30, 2013.

1,000 inmates or more, where the jail occupancy rises to 88 percent. If a change in state law allows offenders convicted of certain crimes — for example, drug offenses — to be sentenced to county jail rather than state prison, then county jail populations will increase.

Further, it might put some county jails in an unfamiliar situation as they house types of offenders they have not previously had to incarcerate. While the current BJS data suggest that county spending on corrections has kept pace with state corrections expenses between 2005 and 2011, the current attempts to reduce state spending on the prison system could result in a shift of costs to counties.

Counties may also need to reassess their programs and services for jail inmates and to address the risks related to reoffending in their changing jail population. Several new state laws redirect nonviolent drug offenders to jail instead of prison; therefore, county jails may see an increase in the population with substance abuse issues. These changes may challenge the capacity of counties to adequately provide treatment and related services to inmates with drug problems.

Additionally, counties may need to examine the availability

of resources for addressing the needs of the jail population after release, during a period of time known as reentry. The reentry period is a vulnerable time for recently released inmates, and the likelihood of reoffending is higher if they are not receiving treatment for mental health or drug problems, not working or do not have a reliable housing situation.

Sentencing law changes can affect county probation and community corrections services. Counties in 16 states provide at least some funding for probation, whether in the form of office space, operating costs or specific services or programs.

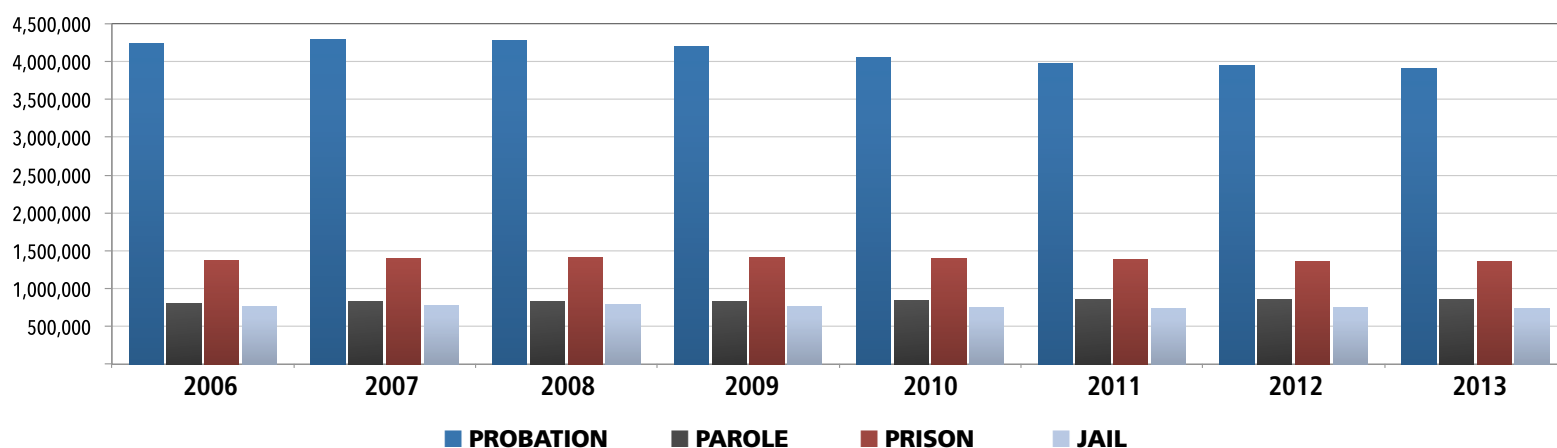
If any of these states enact changes to sentencing laws that place offenders on probation instead of jail or prison, their counties may have to increase their spending for community corrections. The impact on counties may also be greater in states that explicitly focus on community corrections as a solution to reduce the prison population.

Counties have long had an integral role in the administration of justice and the corrections system. Despite the challenges that counties may face from state sentencing changes, the entire U.S. correctional system can benefit from critically assessing and planning for the needs of the jail population and those that come into contact with the county justice system. Counties are in a strong position to continue leading the way in developing strategies and leveraging resources that not only assist in managing the county corrections population but also improve public safety.

NACo's Criminal Justice Programs provide technical assistance to counties on a range of issues addressing local corrections systems from pre-trial services to local reentry initiatives. These programs are dedicated to assisting counties with exploring opportunities for efficient and effective use of public dollars. Visit www.naco.org/justice

Figure 2. The U.S. Correctional Population

(2006 – 2013)



Note: Population counts as of December 31 of each year.

Source: NACo analysis of 2013 U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics data on prisoners and probation and parole

Counties tackle 'backwater' broadband

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



Rural county living typically means taking a little longer to get from place to place. Unfortunately for many, that includes their data via the Internet. Distance and low population

density make broadband expensive, so creative thinking is necessary for expanding service.

"We're what I call a 'broadband backwater,'" said Martin County, Fla. CIO Kevin Kryzda. "Our population density gives us the least favorable rates from service providers. We're either paying a lot or getting bad service."

With less favorable rates compared to the denser nearby Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, Martin County was facing a rate hike in 2009, and Kryzda explored the county's options. Their previous provider would increase its rates by 10 times over the next five years, ending up at \$1.4 million a year. Another quote came in at \$2 million a year.

Kryzda weighed leasing space on a broadband network or building one specifically for the county government.

"I determined that building our own network would be less expensive than continuing to use someone else's," he said, "The \$7.4 million investment would become a 25-year asset, and we'd have a return on our investment in seven years. I had to convince everyone and their brother that it was the right thing to do, but in the end, everyone I pitched it to — the chamber of commerce, economic council, taxpayers commission — all supported it."

The county school system got on board, contributing 30 percent upfront. Then the good news came.

With the Florida housing market depressed, construction costs were down. The economic downturn forced a lot of cancelled projects, so materials were more abundant. The cost of capital for municipal projects was low. All told, the total



Commissioner Mike Smith
Sherman County, Ore.



Commissioner Joe Briggs
Cascade County, Mont.

cost for the project dropped to \$4.15 million from the initial \$7.1 million estimate.

"What had been a seven-year ROI became five years when the school district joined us, then three years when this confluence of economic conditions came about," Kryzda said. "After June of this month, we'll have recovered our investment."

The county that was once served by a single suspended wire now has an underground ring with seven redundancies.

"We've been able to move our public safety system onto broadband, and now we've been able to save \$73,000 that we had to spend to interconnect our four towers before. This showed us that doing


something well can facilitate other things being done well."

Florida is one of 20 states with laws preventing governments from marketing utility services, so the Martin County Community Broadband only serves government buildings, including administrative offices and the public hospital.

"The providers fought like crazy because they were losing huge clients," Kryzda said. "If they offered better rates, they wouldn't have had that problem."

NACo doesn't take a position on whether counties should become Internet providers, but does advocate for the option to be available. Joe Briggs, chairman of

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Profiles in Service

Ernest Martin

NACo Board of Directors
Council of the City and County of Honolulu, Hawai'i
Chair and Presiding Officer

Number of years active in NACo: Four years

Years in public service: I joined the city and county of Honolulu as a public servant in 1987, and after having served in the executive branch for 23 years, transitioned to the legislative branch upon election to the Honolulu City Council in 2011.

Occupation: chair and presiding officer, Honolulu City Council; attorney-at-law in private practice.

Education: A.A. with Honors, Honolulu Community College; B.A. with distinction in Sociology, University of Hawai'i at Manoa; M.A. in Sociology, University of Hawai'i at Manoa; juris doctorate, William S. Richardson School of Law

The hardest thing I've ever done: see my mom suffer from Alzheimer's

People (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Big Jim Alana (deceased) and my wife, Melanie — my best friends for life

A dream I have is to: go to culinary school after I retire from politics.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: don't eat red meat.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: attend law school full-time while working full-time and raising my family — I owe it all to my wife.

My favorite way to relax is: to chill at home with my wife and two dogs, Vienna and Willie Wonka.

I'm most proud of: my wife and three children, all of whom have accomplished far more than I did at similar life stages.

Every morning I read: *The Honolulu Star Advertiser*.

My favorite meal is: I am a breakfast guy — egg whites, turkey bacon or sausage, mahi mahi fish filets and crispy hash browns or brown rice.

My pet peeve is: people who are disrespectful.

My motto is: "Never ask anyone to do anything (that) you wouldn't do, yourself."

The last book I read was: *Lessons Learned on Bishop Street*; *Lessons Learned on the Corner of Kalihi*. Both were written by my good friend Wes Park.

My favorite movie is: *The Haumanas* because my son, Buddy, is one of the featured stars in that movie.

My favorite music is: jazz and old school R&B

My favorite president is: Hawai'i's own Barack Obama.

My county is a NACo member because: given our distance from Washington D.C., NACo provides counties such as Honolulu with a powerful platform to advance our interests and concerns on vital policy issues at the federal level.

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COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Gwinnett County, Ga.

Volunteering Cures Malaise and Backlog

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Tom Davison was becoming unmoored.

After a failed business left him with a lot of time on his hands, he took a federal job that had him driving 45 miles each way from his Gwinnett County, Ga. home. When budget sequestration in 2013 cut him down to two days a week, he needed something to do.

"I was getting on my own nerves," he said. "I had to do something. That's when my wife told me to volunteer. It wasn't a matter of needing money, I needed something for myself."

Davidson's wife, who works in Gwinnett County's human resources department, steered him toward Volunteer Gwinnett, a sophisticated database of opportunities to help out in county government launched in 2012. The program serves as a

volunteer position clearinghouse for the county, tying together what were disparate volunteer programs across several departments. Davidson found a perfect project — helping out in the real estate division.

"I didn't have enough to do at home, working two days a week," Davidson said. "Volunteering was an opportunity to make a contribution and feel good."

The real estate division was sitting on hundreds of sets of paper records waiting to be digitized, each of them containing hundreds of different real estate forms. Although the division staff was charged with adding those records to a database, the daily demands to process new business meant scant progress was being made.

"When I got there, they said the project had just sort of lingered for a long time," Davidson said. "Everyone had good intentions, they planned to get to this, but there just wasn't time."

Davidson's work history with residential real estate sales and commercial development left him with a wealth of knowledge of the system that gave him an advantage starting the project.

"I was familiar with deeds, closing statements, appraisals, surveys... pretty much everything the county would keep records on, and I knew how to organize them," he said. "It wasn't too technical. It was just a volunteer job so they didn't need a technical expert, but I definitely felt like it was a way I could use what I knew in a productive way."

Kay Sibetta, the program coordinator for Volunteer Gwinnett, said it isn't hard to recruit volunteers to do this kind of work because like Davidson, they often have a desire to give back.

"When you go to the mall, you have something specific you want to buy; you zero in where you'll buy it," she said. "People who volunteer with

the county have specific interests, whether it's sports and recreation, animals, technology or helping other people. We've been able to communicate the county's needs to the public and let them know we have a place for them, whether they want to volunteer for a few hours once, or over a long-term period."

Starting in February 2013, Davidson worked 16 hours a week for a few weeks, while maintaining his part-time job.

"It was like eating an elephant," he said of the task. "I just chipped away at it. I think, in the end, it was more efficient to have one person in charge of the project and focus on it, rather than having everyone in the office have to learn it and work on it when they could."

By August 2013, he saw an opening for a full-time job with the county and was hired for a full-time real estate specialist position. He still maintains the database, but now spends most of his days researching

property issues the county faces, like obtaining easements for water and sewer lines and acquiring property for county use.

"I wasn't auditioning for a full-time job when I volunteered, but it turned out that way," Davidson said. "I love this job, I really do. It's diverse, interesting and rewarding."

Sibetta said several participants in Volunteer Gwinnett have parlayed those opportunities into full-time jobs.

One morning, Davidson and his colleague spent time assembling agenda materials for the county commissioners.

"What we're doing will be used by the county government," he said. "That's pretty cool."

County Innovations and Solutions features award-winning programs. Property Tracking with Volunteer Help was named Best in Category for volunteer programs in the 2014 NACo Achievement Awards.

Population density a major broadband obstacle

BROADBAND from page 5

NACo's Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee, serves as a commissioner in Cascade County, Mont., one of the states that forbids counties from getting into that business.

"The best we can do is offer tax incentives to Internet service providers," he said.

Sherman County, Ore., on the banks of the Columbia River, worked to make high-speed Internet available to its residents, a step further than Martin County, but by taking a different path. As it turned out, the hardest part of getting broadband Internet to its widely-scattered residents was already taken care of.

With 1,800 residents spread over 830 square miles, most away from towns on what Commissioner Michael Smith called the "frontier," running fiber wires to homes was unlikely.

"No private company could do it in a cost effective way," he said. "It just wasn't an option."

But the county was already covered. Schools and county government buildings were already hooked up to broadband through

the county's 911 system, which had plenty of bandwidth to spare. The system could reach 900 square miles via its towers, and the county pitched that infrastructure to providers. A \$40,000 upgrade sweetened the deal.

"We didn't want to be in the Internet service provider business; we don't want to hire anyone to do that for us, but as a county we could provide the infrastructure to let a private business go to work," Smith said. "For a provider looking to do business in Sherman County, the time and money necessary to lease land for and build a tower is an obstacle. That's already done."

About 14 percent of Sherman County's residents use the broadband system, half in the towns, half on the frontier, with monthly rates ranging from \$29 – \$49.

"It's symmetrical, which is huge," Smith said, referring to equal download and upload speeds. "My upload was slower on DSL, and I need to be online for my job, so the improvement there was welcomed."

Co-ops are also an option.

A Sibley County, Minn. industrial park sought to improve its Internet connectivity and the county explored creating a co-op. The local school district crossed county lines in to

Renville County, which got Commissioner Bob Fox involved.

"When we worked out the infrastructure, we had this footprint and then there were four towns within a mile or two of the footprint, so it made sense to get them in on it," he said.

Eventually, the county governments themselves withdrew from the co-op, citing the risk, but 16 townships in Sibley County and four in Renville County formed the RS (Renville-Sibley) Co-op, and much like Martin County, the project costs have dropped.

"When we first started this five years ago, they estimated costs at \$70 million," Fox said. "Now the total cost looks like it's under \$50 million."

The main fiber-optic cables will be in by late spring 2015, with plans to get access to more rural areas in 2016.

CORRECTION

► For want of a decimal point, the headline on page 16 of the Dec. 15, 2014 issue incorrectly identified the amount the Franklin County, Ohio infrastructure bank adds annually. The correct figure is \$3.5 million.

What's in a Seal?

► Bedford County, Pa.



The seal of Bedford County is a variation of the seal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Bedford County played a major part in the history of the state, particularly around the time of the Revolutionary War. It has a central image of a shield containing a ship under full sail, a plow and three sheaves of wheat. These symbols represent the importance of commerce, labor and agriculture to the county's economy. A stalk of Indian corn and an olive branch flank either side of the shield. They represent the county and state's recognition of their past and hopes for the future. Atop the shield, an eagle symbolizes protection, freedom and vision. Around the seal are the words that designate it as the seal of Bedford County and the year the county was created, 1771. Bedford County was created from Cumberland County and at its creation comprised most of the western portion of Pennsylvania.

Kirt Morris, Bedford County commissioner, contributed.

NACo JOBS ONLINE

Good employees are crucial to getting the job done!

www.naco.org/programs/jobsonline



Jail substance abuse programs involve high expectations, offer rewards

ADDICTION from page 1

origins of the offenders' substance abuse problems.

"We don't spend much time on the 'this is your brain on drugs' lessons," Collins said. "New England has a puritanical ethos about crime and punishment, and that drives a lot of people's drive to eliminate what caused their problems."

The Strafford County Jail is a holding facility for the U.S. Marshals Service and houses some federal detainees, all of whom may participate. Collins sees a lot of the value in shortening some inmates' stays.

"If they complete the therapeutic

communities program, we typically move them to community-based programs," he said. "We tend to feel like they've gotten what we can give to them in jail, plus if you can do something positive in 90 (days) instead of keeping them for 365, it saves a lot of money."

Collins said most of the inmates who go through the program are battling alcohol or heroin addictions. Methamphetamine's prevalence has decreased following state restrictions on pseudoephedrine sales.

North Carolina

Below the Mason-Dixon Line, Mecklenburg County, N.C. operates

an indigent, social-setting detox facility.

"When the police pick someone up and don't think he needs to go to jail, it's a place for them to take him and let him 'sleep it off,'" said Yvonne Ward, program administrator for the county's substance abuse services. "While they're here, we encourage them to look into our longer-term treatment options."

It's not a place to kick back and relax, though. While it isn't a medical facility, it has nurses and a medical director on hand. For some patients dealing with alcohol withdrawal, the process can require medical attention.

"You'll see a lot of seizures with alcohol, and that's what the substance people are most commonly dealing with here," Ward said. "Alcohol can be one of the most dangerous drugs and most fatal when they're coming off of it."

"We practice what medicine we can in our treatment scope, but we do a thorough medical screening to see if they need more involved care. A lot of times, especially with the homeless population, they're dealing with mental health issues and serious medical issues that have gone untreated for a long time."

The facility also has staff embedded in the county's homeless shelters.

A medium-term detox could last five days, depending on the substance. The jail population can mix in here.

"While they're here, they're expected to be participating in the activities, work with our case managers and start to plan a course for where they'll go," Ward said. "Where they'll stay, where they'll get food. We're always planning ahead."

They'll learn strategies for managing triggers and cravings and learning skills to be successful when they leave.

"We focus on long-term independence, but also the support they

can look for in the community," she added.

The 76-bed facility serves between 2,500 – 3,000 people a year. The detox beds run the county \$118 per day, and \$140 for the 28-day residential program. The state reimburses much of the costs that aren't supported by Medicaid or disability.

Utah

Davis County, Utah sees a lot of meth and heroin users in its Jail Substance Abuse Treatment (JSAT) program.

"Meth is dirt cheap in the West," said Deputy Scott Manfull. "And you'll get a lot of people who transitioned from pills to heroin."

The JSAT program is voluntary. Groups of 10 meet five days a week and receive individual attention from two in-house counselors. They receive screening from the county's behavioral health department to look for co-occurring mental health issues.

After six months, they transition to a work center until they secure a job on the outside, then report back to a judge every other week. They're subject to two random drug tests per week. Six months clean will reduce their charges.

It's after that, Manfull imagines the challenge grows.

"I think a lot of people do well under supervision because someone's watching," he said. "When you have to make your own decisions, things get tougher."

Colorado

Substance abuse treatment programs are typically led by trained counselors, but Denver County, Colo. is finding success with peer-led groups in its Recovery in a Secured Environment (RISE) program.

"It lends some credibility that some of these peer leaders are people inmates have known from the outside," said Sheriff Elias Diggins.

RISE also offers peer-to-peer

and counselor-led program options in jail pods separated from the rest of the jail population, one each for men and women. Eight rooms in the pod could contain eight people each, though Diggins said the jail makes an effort to limit the RISE pod populations. The men's population tops out in the 40s and the women's population in the 20s.

"If the groups get too big, the conversations aren't as productive," he said. "We give people a little more elbow room."

That elbow room in the pods is one of the benefits that come with RISE participation—no lockdowns, exemption from the state's work requirement for inmates — in part to reward inmates for taking on what Diggins describes as a rigorous curriculum.

"It's structured every single day, and sometimes that's too much to handle; we get dropouts," Diggins said. "It's a voluntary program, but you have to be up for hard work. Everything they do is geared toward addressing their addictions and getting closer to recovery. It's not for the faint of heart."

Not participating — in group sessions or discussions — is grounds for removal.

Diggins said the RISE program, now in its fourth year, shows recidivism rates in the low 40 percents, compared to a 67 percent rate for the general population.

"When they graduate from the program, they sign their name to a wall," Diggins said. "A lot of them haven't had the opportunity to graduate from things, so it's a point of pride."

It's an approach Diggins sees as the future of local incarceration.

"As our industry evolves, we'll find ways to address these root problems that cause people to act out," he said. "It might not solve everything, but sometimes we can help people save themselves."

WORD SEARCH

Bedford, Pa. Facts

Learn more about this featured county in 'What's in a Seal?'

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

- ALLEGHENY (mountain range that runs through Bedford)
- ANDERSON HOUSE (site of the first bank between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh)
- BEDFORD SPRINGS (historic hotel, site of first Olympic-sized swimming pool in America)
- BLUE KNOB (Allegheny mountain summit, state park)
- THE COFFEE POT (a roadside landmark shaped like a giant coffee pot)
- CORAL CAVERNS (the only fossilized coral reef in a cave open to the public in the world)
- COVERED BRIDGES (Bedford County is known for its 16 covered bridges)
- DEFIANCE (census-designated area)
- ESPY HOUSE (George Washington's headquarters during Whiskey Rebellion)
- HUNTINGDON (adjacent county to the north)
- HYNDMAN (borough in Bedford County)

- JEAN BONNET TAVERN (aka Old Forks Inn and Bonnet's Tavern; historic inn and restaurant)
- LONDON DERRY (township in Bedford County)
- LOST COX CHILDREN (old mountain memorial to two children who were lost to the wilderness)
- MONONGAHELA (Native American tribe that occupied what's now Old Bedford Village)
- RAYSTOWN (1750 trading post established by Robert MacRay, later renamed Bedford)
- SEDIMENTARY (the only kind of rocks in the county)
- SPRINGS (Bedford is known for its "healing springs")
- SUSQUEHANNA RIVER (a tributary branch runs through the center of Bedford)
- TUSSEY MOUNTAIN (ridge of the Appalachian Ridge-and-Valley region)



Photo courtesy of the Davis County, Utah Jail

Davis County, Utah Jail Inmates participate in a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program.

State, local governments win pay case

LISA SORONEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

In a significant victory for state and local government employers, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously held in *Integrity Staffing Solutions v. Busk* that the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not require hourly employees to be paid for the time they spend waiting to undergo and undergoing security screenings.

State and local government employees who work in courthouses, correctional institutions and warehouses routinely go through security screening at the

beginning and end of the workday. Jesse Busk and Laurie Castro worked at warehouses filling Amazon.com orders. They claimed they should have been paid for the time they spent waiting and going through security screenings to prevent theft at the end of each shift.

Under the FLSA, employers only have to pay “non-exempt” employees for activities that are “integral and indispensable” to a principal activity. According to the court, an activity is “integral and indispensable” to a principal activity “if it is an intrinsic element of those activities and one with which the employee cannot

dispense if he is to perform his principal activities.”

The court concluded that security screenings were not intrinsic to retrieving and packing products and that Integrity Staffing Solutions could have eliminated the screenings altogether without impairing employees’ ability to complete their work.

The State and Local Center (SLLC) *amicus* brief made similar arguments to those the court adopted.

James Ho, Ashley Johnson and Andrew LeGrand, of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, Dallas, Texas, wrote the SLLC’s brief which was joined by NACo, the National League of Cities, the International City-County Management Association, the U.S. Conference

of Mayors, the International Municipal Lawyers Association, the Government Finance Officers Association, the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association and the International Public Management Association for Human Resources.

In other Supreme Court news: The court ruled in *Heien v. North Carolina*, that a reasonable mistake about the law can provide reasonable suspicion to uphold a traffic stop under the Fourth Amendment. At issue was a Fourth Amendment challenge to a traffic stop for a mistaken infraction of a law regarding brake lights.

A police officer had pulled over a car that had only one working brake light because he believed that North Carolina law required both brake

lights to work. The North Carolina Court of Appeals, interpreting a statute more than 50 years old, concluded only one working brake light is required.

When the vehicle’s occupants behaved suspiciously, the officer asked to search the car. They consented, and the officer found cocaine. The owner of the car argued that the stop violated the Fourth Amendment because driving with one working brake light doesn’t violate North Carolina law.

The court concluded that the officer’s mistaken understanding of North Carolina law in this case was objectively reasonable. As Justice Elena Kagan pointed out in her concurring opinion, the officer’s mistaken interpretation “had much to recommend it.”

NACo loses longest serving Board member

Oscar Soliz, the longest serving NACo Board member, died Dec. 15, 2014 in Corpus Christi, Texas, his hometown, after a lengthy illness. He was 80.

Soliz who served as Nueces County, Texas district clerk for 32 years was appointed to NACo’s Board by then-NACo President Javier Gonzales. He served on the Board for 26 years.

“One of NACo’s compelling strengths is the loyalty of our members. Oscar was one of those insightful county leaders who saw the value in supporting NACo’s mission. He served the association well with his outgoing and generous spirit. He will be missed by many,” said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase.

Over his long career in public service, Soliz served as president of the National Association of Regional Councils, the National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks, which named him Public Official of the year in 1977, and the National Association of Hispanic County Officials.

“The NACo family was greatly saddened by the passing of a great NACo supporter. Oscar was also one of the finest gentlemen in county government. His contributions and dedication to his county, state, country and NACo will not soon be forgotten,” said Larry Naake, former NACo executive director during Soliz’s term on the Board.

Soliz was frequently called upon to serve on statewide committees and task forces such as his appointments to the state’s Criminal Justice Council and Criminal Justice Board.

When elected to office in the 1970s, he was one of the first His-



Oscar Soliz
1934 – 2014

panics to win countywide office. His leadership and activism in the community soon brought him to the attention of the Democratic Party. He subsequently served for many years on the Democratic National Committee.

Texas State Rep. Todd Hunter, quoted in a local obituary, said Soliz was always a good resource when any clerk issues with the state of Texas came about.

“He was a good friend, he was humble, kindhearted and always community oriented,” Hunter said. “He had a good perspective, not only for Corpus Christi but for the state of Texas as well.”

Soliz is survived by his wife of 60 years, Ola Mae Soliz; two sons, Joseph and Jesse Soliz; two daughters, Jackie Soliz-Chapa and Jennifer Soliz; and two grandchildren, Lauren Michelle Soliz and Michael Joseph Soliz.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Ola Mae Soliz and family at 7005 Brandon Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78413-5321.

Momentum builds for local right-to-work ordinances in Kentucky

KENTUCKY from page 1

Todd and Cumberland counties have passed or in the process of enacting similar laws.

Kentucky law allows home rule counties to regulate matters pertaining to the “promotion of economic development and commerce.” Officials say it’s the same justification that Louisville-Jefferson County used earlier this year to pass a minimum wage law, a first in the South.

Warren County Judge Executive Mike Buchanon says the county’s RTW law isn’t an anti-union move but rather an economic development necessity, particularly in the Blue Grass State, the last state in the south that isn’t right to work. And some bordering states to the west and north, such as Indiana, also have RTW laws.

“Our site selectors tell us on a regular basis, ‘You didn’t get a shot at that particular project because they didn’t include you on the beginning list, much less the short list,’ he said. Buchanon added that he expects counties along the border with Tennessee — a right-to-work state — “at least one or two counties deep will pass right to work.” Some far-northern counties bordering Ohio might also take the plunge.

The AFL-CIO blames “extremist groups, right-wing politicians and their corporate backers” for pushing the issue. A Heritage Foundation paper dated Aug. 26,

U.S. right-to-work states		
Alabama	Iowa	Oklahoma
Arizona	Louisiana	South Carolina
Arkansas	Michigan	South Dakota
Kansas	Mississippi	Tennessee
Florida	Nebraska	Texas
Georgia	Nevada	Utah
Idaho	North Carolina	Virginia
Indiana	North Dakota	Wyoming

2014 was titled *Local Governments Can Increase Job Growth and Choices by Passing Right-to-Work Laws*.

And a new organization, the American City County Exchange (ACCE), an offshoot of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), recently drafted a model local RTW ordinance.

The Heritage background paper notes, “There is a good argument to be made that cities, counties, and other political subdivisions of states can pass their own RTW ordinances. In states where RTW laws are unlikely to pass the legislature, counties and cities can and should experiment with their own laws.”

Simpson County Judge Executive Jim Henderson said his county’s interest in right to work predates these developments. “We’ve talked about this issue for the entirety of my term in office; I’ve been in office for 16 years.

“Several of us who’ve watched this issue got interested, started talking about being able to do this and began promoting the idea with

our respective (fiscal) courts over the last few months,” he added.

Kentucky’s attorney general has issued an opinion advising “that a local government may not enact a right-to-work ordinance.” But supporters of the measures disagree.

John Russell, ACCE’s national director, called the opinion “nonsensical” because it relies on an outdated court case that pertained to a city, not counties.

The judge executives interviewed say the courts may end up deciding. Buchanon said that Warren County passed its ordinance under the same state authority that Louisville-Jefferson County used to pass its minimum wage law. “If we don’t have the authority to do this, then Louisville doesn’t. But I think we both do.”

Whether at the courthouse or State House, Russell sees momentum building. “I think the end result is upward pressure on the state legislature to act and implement right to work in Kentucky.

“It wouldn’t surprise me if it does pop up in other states,” he said.



#COUNTIESINNOVATE



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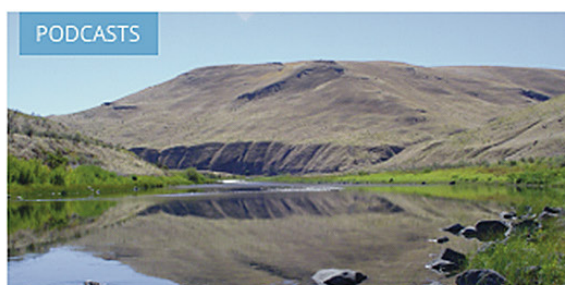
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DECEMBER 11, 2014

Creating Trauma-Informed Counties

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DECEMBER 4, 2014

Innovations in Rural Broadband Delivery

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NOVEMBER 24, 2014

Health Coverage in Jails: Provisions that Can Save Counties Money

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Health Coverage in Jails: Why Should it Matter to Counties?

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NEW! Creating Trauma-Informed Counties

Of children aged 12 to 17, almost one in three have had two or more traumatic events. Counties across the country are not only addressing childhood trauma, but are creating trauma-informed communities. Wilson County, N.C and San Diego County, Calif. describe why and how they are creating a trauma-informed culture in their counties.

NACOPODCASTS.ORG



News From the Nation's Counties

► DELAWARE

After **four recounts**, there was still no winner in the race for **KENT COUNTY** Recorder of Deeds. A recent court-ordered hand tally of absentee votes left incumbent Betty Lou McKenna and challenger La Mar Gunn in a dead heat: 19,248 votes each.

Gunn has mounted a legal challenge over one absentee ballot on which he contends the voter's intent was unclear.

In the meantime, Gov. Jack Markell (D) has appointed McKenna to the position, until the state Supreme Court rules on Gunn's appeal.

► FLORIDA

• **MANATEE COUNTY** officials are reconsidering whether to build a satellite facility for the county tax collector's office now that a business property owner says he has a better deal.

County officials said it would cost \$3 million to build the 8,500-square-foot adjunct facility. The owner of a **solar-powered building** near where the county wants to build is offering his 23,500-square-foot professional building for \$2.65 million, according to the *Bradenton Herald*.

"We've been looking at it," said Ken Burton Jr., county tax collector. "We can make this building work."

County Administrator Ed Hunzeker said the county has been working with the tax collector to "jointly explore" acquiring the building.

• Several county clerk's offices are now issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples but say they're getting out of the business of performing ceremonies — for any couples, gay or straight.

Those counties, mostly in northern Florida and its conservative Panhandle area, have cited various reasons for **discontinuing officiating weddings** — from inadequate staffing and budgets to ideological grounds, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported. Among the counties that will not perform marriages are **SANTA ROSA, OKALOOSA, HOLMES, WASHINGTON, JACKSON, CALHOUN, LIBERTY, FRANKLIN, WAKULLA, BAKER, CLAY, DUVAL and PASCO**.

"I do not want to have members of our team put in a situation which presents a conflict between their personal religious beliefs and the implementation of a contentious societal philosophy change," Oka-

loosa County Clerk J.D. Peacock II wrote in a memo to his staff.

Several northern counties — **ESCAMBIA, LEON, JEFFERSON and MADISON** — will perform weddings.

► ILLINOIS

More than 25,000 cell phones have been collected for a program that gives **COOK COUNTY** senior citizens a lifeline in case of an emergency.

Phones donated to the **Sheriff's Cell Phones for Seniors Program** are sent to a company in Florida that strips them of personal information. The phones aren't activated, but when charged they are capable of calling 911, Sheriff Thomas Dart's office said.

Recipients have used these phones to help themselves in emergencies. However, they have also used them to report vehicle accidents and medical emergencies they have witnessed.

The phones have been collected at various sites throughout the county since 2006.

► IOWA

The **JOHNSON COUNTY** Board of Supervisors says it will approach neighboring local governments about forming a commission to address **climate change at the local level**.

This comes in response to calls by local environmental activists for the county to develop a climate mitigation and adaptation plan, the *Iowa City Press Citizen* reported.

In a five-page letter to environmentalists, board members said that any such plan should include input from county leaders, elected officials, employees and citizens from the five cities that comprise the Iowa City metro area and the University of Iowa.

► MAINE

Commissioners in **SOMERSET COUNTY** have approved the creation of a **tax increment financing** (TIF) district in the county's unorganized territory surrounding a proposed wind farm.

TIF agreements, established through the state Department of Economic and Community Development, capture tax revenues from new development to benefit town or county economic development, according to centralmaine.com.

First Wind, the company proposing the wind farm, is expected to generate between \$100 million and \$128 million in new assessed value in Mayfield Township, which would



Photo courtesy of Mirror Dog Productions

Macomb County, Mich. County Executive Mark Hackel has makeup applied during the filming of an independent movie.

► MICHIGAN

Former **MACOMB COUNTY** sheriff — now county executive — Mark Hackel has been back in uniform lately. This time, he's **portraying a sheriff** in an independent film, *Urban Myths*. It's being produced by a former Macomb Township resident and shot in Michigan.

While Hackel has no previous acting experience, he said he's been "very engaged" with the media since his Sheriff's Office days "way back when." So it was easy to say "yes" when he was asked to participate. "I just needed to know what the script was and make sure it wasn't something that was over the top," he said, "meaning something that would conflict with my own personal views of what a police officer should or should not be doing in a movie or in real life."

The movie is about a group of high school seniors on a spring break camping trip to check out a series of myths. They happen upon a haunted Indian burial ground when eerie, paranormal events start to occur.

The film could be released by the end of this year or in early 2016.

allow the county to keep about \$11 million in new tax dollars.

The company would also benefit, saving about \$10 million over the next 30 years that would otherwise be collected as tax.

► MINNESOTA

It's official. The human services departments of **WASECA, STEELE and DODGE counties** are now consolidated, effective Jan. 1. The three-county collaboration is called **Minnesota Prairie County Alliance**, or MNPrairie, the *Waseca County News* reported.

"The goal is to become more efficient and effective in what we do," said Charity Floen, director of Steele and Waseca County Human Services. Clients will still be served at the same local sites, with most of the efficiencies being realized on the back end.

For example, Steele County will be the IT and human relations host for MNPrairie. Dodge County will be the fiscal host, responsible for payroll and providing support to accounting staff. Waseca isn't currently slated to

host any operational areas, owing to its lack of capacity to do so, according to an MNPrairie official.

► NEVADA

The **CLARK COUNTY** Commission's denial of 58 applications to open **medical marijuana dispensaries** signaled that the county isn't backing down from a tug of war with the state over which entity gets the final say on dispensary licensing.

The commission chose its 18 preferred dispensary operators in June, the maximum allowed in unincorporated parts of the county under state law. But when the state conducted its own separate licensing process last fall, it agreed with only 10 of the county's picks.

The discrepancy has created a legal gray area in which eight applicants have county approval but lack a state license while eight other applicants have approval from the state but not the county.

Without approval from both the state and the county, the dispensaries can't open, which prompted a lawsuit and has led to the likelihood

that nearly half of the county's dispensaries won't open for the foreseeable future.

The County Commission is attempting to force the state to reopen its licensing process and reconsider the county-backed applicants, the *Las Vegas Sun* reported.

► NEW JERSEY

• **ATLANTIC COUNTY** officials want to be sure any state **tax aid for their casinos** also helps their taxpayers.

The Board of Freeholders passed a resolution calling on the Legislature to give taxpayers equal consideration in relief bills.

The Associated Press reported a series of proposed bills would let casinos make reduced payments in lieu of taxes, but the county tax board predicts that plan would raise taxes on the county's home and business owners.

• **BERGEN COUNTY**'s 103-member **police department** may become a bureau of the sheriff's office, bringing the total capacity to 255 officers.

An agreement to that end was one of new County Executive James Tedesco's first acts, and will be voted on by the Board of Freeholders, *The Record* reported.

► NEW YORK

• Counties in New York that operate or operated nursing homes are getting a late Christmas present worth millions of dollars, courtesy of a settlement with the state over reimbursement, according to *Post-Star.com*. **WARREN COUNTY** is among those that will receive a portion of the estimated \$850 million settlement.

Since the 1990s, counties have filed more than 5,000 appeals questioning the state's reimbursement rate for Medicaid-eligible patients.

► OHIO

Private investors could benefit from efficient social service work in **CUYAHOGA COUNTY**'s new plan to **help homeless families**.

The "Pay for Success" program aims to reunite homeless parents with their children who have been in foster care more quickly by providing them with temporary housing and social services. The county solicits private investors to underwrite its efforts, and if the program succeeds in saving money on foster care, the investors can get their money back, plus up to a 2 percent profit.

Financial Services News

\$2,500 NACo-Nationwide scholarship announced

High-school seniors whose parents, grandparents or legal guardians actively contribute to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation program are eligible to apply for a college scholarship of \$2,500. Four \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded in spring 2015, a per-scholarship increase of \$500 for a total of \$10,000 in honor of the scholarship program's 10th year in existence. The NACo-Nationwide Scholarship Essay Contest is an educational opportunity for high-school students about to move into a new stage of their lives, according to Lisa Cole, senior director of the NACo Financial Services Center.

"Over the years, we've seen entries that display impressive thinking from young people who may be a half-century away from that time in their lives," she said. "Often, their submissions offer a list of actions and strategies that show creativity, attention to detail and a focus on the future. In our 10th year, we are pleased to be able to increase

the amount of each scholarship to \$2,500 to help these seniors advance to their next phase of education."

The application period for this year's awards opened Jan. 5.

To help prospective applicants consider and write about what risks there may be to saving or not saving for retirement, and why saving early and consistently may be important, Cole shared key points from last year's scholarship winners, who answered the question, "What should public employees do to prepare for their retirement?"

Sarah Cutler of Hillsborough County, Fla. observed, "Teachers like my mom consider teaching to be not just a job, but a calling. Workers like my dad consider it a privilege to serve the public. However, they both say their job is not a 'get rich quick' scheme. Public employees need to use the 'get rich slow' plan by saving, and investing consistently."

Ashton Tacey of Bay City, Mich. wrote, "I feel fortunate that over the years my parents have taken



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advantage of investing in the 457 plans that were offered through their employer. Knowing they will be able to live comfortably is reassuring to me."

Theo Stewart of Fredericksburg, Va. noted, "It is very important to

have a good retirement plan so that when you grow old and can no longer work, you will have the finances you need to live in comfort."

Jordan Velarde in the county of Riverside, Calif., says SECURITY means Save Early, Commit, Understand, Responsible Investing, Time = Yields. "There is nothing more important than having the time needed for the magic of compounding interest to take effect — money growing on top of money. Time is your best friend when saving for retirement."

Cole encourages parents, grandparents or legal guardians to talk to their eligible high school seniors about applying right away. The application can be completed online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship.

Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply. Additional qualifications include:

- Applicant's parent, grandparent or legal guardian must be enrolled in and actively contribute

to a 457(b) plan offered through the NACo Deferred Compensation program.

- Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2015–2016 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

- Immediate family members of NACo employees, or members of the NACo Defined Contribution and Retirement Advisory Committee, or its governing board of directors, or staff of individual states' associations of counties that are members of the LLC, or Nationwide employees are not eligible to apply. This program is not offered outside the United States.

- Application and entry must be submitted online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship by March 8, 2015.

Nationwide sponsors the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship to recognize its 35-year partnership with NACo and its member counties. The NACo-Nationwide Scholarship is just one of the services that has arisen from this partnership.

Texas counties lack mineral rights beneath their own roads

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

► TEXAS

- **DALLAS COUNTY** may soon change its family medical leave rules to allow gay employees and others with nontraditional families to **take time off** to care for a sick loved one.

The proposed change would sidestep Texas' ban on gay marriage by allowing any worker — gay or straight — to designate one nonrelative as a designated care recipient. If that person gets sick, the employee could take an unpaid leave of absence to provide care.

- Counties in the southern part of the state are having **trouble funding repairs** to their roads damaged by heavy oil equipment trucks because of a 54-year-old legal opinion.

A 1960 opinion by then-Attorney General Will Wilson gives leasing rights to the ground under county-owned roads and the resulting oil revenue, to the state. Counties can already negotiate leases for mineral rights under buildings they own, such as courthouses.

The 30 counties atop the Eagle Ford Shale are missing out on, potentially, millions of dollars, and **DEWITT COUNTY** Judge Daryl Fowler and representatives from other counties will ask the next Legislature to allow counties to negotiate leases, or at least receive

some of the money the state gets from leasing mineral rights around roads.

"We still have to maintain the roads, and in many cases we're rebuilding the roads," Fowler said. "The state is actually benefiting from the revenue stream. We're paying for the maintenance, but we're not getting any benefit from the production. Somebody is eating a free lunch."

It would cost more than \$400 million to repair and upgrade more than 300 miles of roads in DeWitt County, according to a 2012 report by an engineering firm hired by the county, the *Texas Tribune* reported.

- A woman pleaded guilty to helping her husband plot and carry out the **assassinations** of the **KAUFMAN COUNTY** district attorney, his wife and a top assistant in 2014.

Kim Williams, 48, testified against her husband in December at his capital murder trial, saying that she was in the car during the slayings — and served as the getaway driver at one of the crime scenes.

Eric Lyle Williams, 47, was sentenced to death Dec. 17 in connection with killing Kaufman County District Attorney Mike

McLelland, 63; his wife, Cynthia McLelland, 65; and a top prosecutor, Mark Hasse, 57.

Williams' now-estranged wife's testimony helped prosecutors send him to death row in Livingston.

► WASHINGTON

YAKIMA COUNTY commissioners are considering creating a county business license system to **keep marijuana businesses from opening** in unincorporated parts of the county.

The state attorney general said that the initiative that legalized recreational marijuana use doesn't prevent local governments from banning marijuana operations, the *Yakima Herald* reported. The proposed measure would also alert the county to other authorized businesses that begin operating in violation of zoning ordinances.

State law specifies some businesses that counties can require licenses for, such as dog kennels, massage parlors, liquor stores and trading stamp businesses, but then goes on to say "there may be others."

(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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NRM-9556AO-NX.2 (10/2014)

► OREGON

The number of **homeless people camping illegally** on **DESCHUTES COUNTY** property is driving county officials to consider a new ordinance.

It would allow the county to clear sites with 24-hours notice, *The Bulletin* reported. Under current regulations, the county has to go through a longer process of declaring an illegal encampment a health hazard, said County Administrator Tom Anderson.

The goal is not to shut down all homeless camps on county land but rather to create tools for use when an encampment causes problems, he added.

For additional information about the NACo Deferred Compensation program, please contact Lisa Cole by email at lc@naco.org or phone at 202.942.4270, or contact your Nationwide representative by calling 877.677.3678.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

An Icelandic Lesson

Imagine you are the president of the United States and have agreed to meet with the leader of the Communist world to discuss the monumental subject of nuclear disarmament and easing of Cold War tensions.

Since the subject of the meeting has the word “cold” in it, the choice of a venue for this momentous meeting is obvious — Reykjavik, Iceland, the northernmost national capital in the world at 66 degrees north latitude.

Indeed, that was the place Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev selected for a meeting in 1986, which preceded the dissolution of the Soviet Union and signaled the end of the Cold War.

The small seaside house where the meeting took place is regarded today with great pride by people in Iceland as a place of great significance in the country’s history.

The HR Doctor and family just

returned from a vacation in Iceland and achieved one of our primary goals—getting a glimpse, albeit quite brief, of the Northern Lights. We also visited extraordinary glaciers, geothermal energy resources, mountains and a large hydroponic farm. We communed with amazingly beautiful, gentle and strong Icelandic horses.

Standing on the bridge spanning the rift valley where the North American tectonic plate collides with the Eurasian plate was also cause for wonder and understanding of why volcanoes are nearly synonymous with Iceland.

The rather small house in which the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting took place is not the country’s only world history-making political venue. Arguably, the first parliamentary assembly of citizens or *Althingi* (Icelandic for “all things”) to make laws in the Western world also took place in Iceland in the year 940.

The landowners, overwhelmingly

... creating a national consensus to even create a mechanism for national consensus-building seems a remote possibility.

Viking settlers and invaders who first entered Iceland in the year 874, met to resolve disputes, make laws and select the person who would be considered head of state—the Law Speaker. Since there was no written alphabet or literacy to speak of, the assembled citizens chose someone who would serve as the reciter of the laws and the provider of guidance on interpreting the laws. This predates the English Magna Carta of 1215 by more than 200 years.

Both great works helped define a civic culture and national identity as well as concepts we take too much

for granted, such as the ability to seek resolution of grievances and speak out against wrongs.

The Icelandic tradition of annual *Althingi* meetings provided a way for people to directly present their concerns to the community and resolve controversies. It not only served the people over 1,000 years ago extremely well, but it also points the way, in the HR Doctor’s opinion, to a concept which could well become the democratic model for the future in our own time.

In effect, the ancient Icelandic approach could be a rerun of “Back to the Future.” Certainly the technology exists, computer hackers and viruses notwithstanding, to have a secure community assembly regularly to select leaders, conduct referenda, discuss public issues of importance and resolve disputes.

This is too big a challenge for a nation as huge and diverse as the U. S. In fact, it would be unlikely — not to mention too complex and too expensive — and would

attract too many lawyers for it to be a successful federal endeavor. In our current national political environment (which does somewhat resemble Viking warfare), creating a national consensus to even create a mechanism for national consensus-building seems a remote possibility.

However, a page from Icelandic history could apply today to citizens in local governments. Imagine county leaders organizing regular community-wide meetings in which everyone has the chance to participate electronically, if not in person, and everyone has the opportunity to provide input to guide decision-makers. This is well within our capabilities and would set the stage for a new and more direct form of citizen input.

It is time to consider how each of us can pretend to become a 10th-century Viking lawmaker in order to improve our 21st-century communities.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor

NACo on the Move

► NACo Officers and County Officials

• Second NACo Vice President **Bryan Desloge** was in Dorchester County, Md. for the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference Jan. 7–8. He spoke about NACo during the Opening Welcome Session and participated on a panel about infrastructure during the Opening General Session.

► NACo Staff

• **Lisa Cole**, senior director of NACo FSC, and **Sarah Lindsay**, marketing specialist for FSC, attended the 2015 Midwest Association Staff Retreat in Cook County (Chicago) Jan. 5–6 to discuss NACo FSC programs. The retreat included staff members from several Midwest state associations.



Natalie Laroche

• **Natalie Laroche** has joined NACo as a County Solutions and Innovation associate. Previously, Laroche was a contract attorney with LDiscovery, where she reviewed documents issued by the Department of Justice. Prior to that, she worked as a certified legal intern with the Children and Families Clinic and Children’s Legal Services at the Department of Children and Families in Florida. She also worked as a research assistant at the Barry University School of Law, where she interpreted legislation pertaining to juvenile delinquency.

• **Nastassia Walsh** has joined NACo as program manager with the County Solutions and Innovation Department working on justice issues. Before joining NACo, Walsh was a senior policy analyst at the Council of State Governments Justice Center, where she provided training and



Nastassia Walsh

technical assistance to state and local criminal and juvenile justice agencies on re-entry and evidence-based practices. Prior to that, she was the research manager at the Justice Policy Institute, where she managed research and publications focused on a variety of criminal and juvenile justice reform topics. Walsh has a master’s degree in forensic psychology from Marymount University and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Arizona State University.



Jacob Terrell

• **Jacob Terrell** has joined NACo as a legislative assistant. He holds a B.S. in criminal justice from Virginia State University. Before joining NACo, Terrell worked from 2008–2012 as a caseworker and legislative correspondent for then-Sen. Jim

Webb (D-Va.), and from 2013–2014 as a legislative correspondent for Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

• **Caitlin Myers** has joined NACo as a membership services associate. Previously, Myers served as the program coordinator for Fusion Meetings and Events. Before that, she was a government contractor with Computing Technologies. She is currently attending Northern Virginia Community College.



Caitlin Myers

On the Move is compiled by Sarah Foote, editorial assistant.

Job Market & Classifieds

■ Administrator — Cheshire County, N.H.

Salary: DOQ

Cheshire County, N.H. is seeking a county administrator as a result of the announced retirement of our longtime administrator. The county administrator will be the administrative head of all departments of the county and is responsible for the efficient administration thereof, except those with elected officials. He or she will have general supervision of the property and business affairs of the county departments, except those with elected officials, and of the expenditure of moneys appropriated by the County Delegation for County purposes.

Acting as agent for the commissioners, he or she shall be responsible for the coordination of the operations of the various county departments. He or she shall provide technical support and guidance to the commissioners, the assistant

county administrator(s) and department heads, including elected department officials, in the areas of policy development, program evaluation, public communications, budgetary process, personnel management and data processing.

The county employs approximately 450 individuals and has an operating budget of nearly \$42 million. Knowledge, training or experience in county government functions is preferred.

For a copy of the job description, please visit the Employment Opportunities page on the Cheshire County website at: www.co.cheshire.nh.us. Please contact Wendy Hurley, HR Manager at 603.399.7317 or by email: whurley@co.cheshire.nh.us, or mail or fax your resume and cover letter to HR Dept., 201 River Road, Westmoreland, NH, 03467, Fax 603.399.7369. www.co.cheshire.nh.us. Cheshire County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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