

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

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'Super Wi-Fi' comes to New Hanover County, N.C.

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

New Hanover County, N.C. again finds itself on the leading edge of technology as the first local government in the U.S. to launch a "super Wi-Fi" network.

The way was paved three years ago, when the county led the nation in the switch from analog to digital TV, making available unlicensed "white space"—unused frequencies

See **WI-FI** page 6

QuickTakes

States with the Best Public Schools

(Based on six areas of educational policy and performance)

- 1 – Maryland
- 2 – Massachusetts
- 3 – New York
- 4 – Virginia
- 5 – Arkansas

Source: Education Week, January 2012

CountyNews Features



(l-r) Bill and Bob Gibson are "mirror-image" identical twins—one's right-handed, the other a leftie. Both took their seats this month as new members of the Board of Supervisors in their respective southwest Virginia counties. To learn more about their similarities, see story on page 4.

Photo courtesy of Bill and Bob Gibson

New proposal threatens eminent domain authority

By JULIE UFNER
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



A bill to limit the use of eminent domain by local governments in economic development efforts passed the House Judiciary Committee Jan. 24 by a vote of 23–5.

Under the proposed Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2011, H.R. 1433, property claimed through eminent domain authority could not be used for economic development purposes for a period of seven years after the taking if the governmental entity had received any federal economic funding.

State or local governments that violate the act's provisions would forfeit federal economic development funds for two years unless they return all "taken" property

or replace any property destroyed as a result of the violation.

Additionally, private property owners would have the right to sue state and local governments up to seven years after the property takings if the property is eventually used for economic development purposes.

That means that even if the original reason for taking the property was not economic development, state or local government could still face the prospect of losing federal funding if an owner believes that within the seven-year window their property was used for economic development purposes.

This bill responds to the 2005 Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. City of New London, Conn.* By a vote of 5–4, the court ruled that states and local governments could use eminent domain authority for economic

development, as long as the land in question is for public use, including development by private interests. In the case of *Kelo*, the city took private property through eminent domain and turned it over to private developers for commercial development.

While H.R. 1433 may easily pass in the House of Representatives, its trajectory in the Senate is uncertain.

NACo has no policy on the specifics of this bill, however the association opposes any federal attempts to preempt state and local planning policies, processes and decisions, including land use authorities.

* Read a CBO analysis of the impact of a similar bill in the online version of *County News*, at www.naco.org/countynews.

Four Florida counties plan for climate change impacts

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



Monroe County — more water than land—is the "canary in the coal mine"

for the effects of climate change in southern Florida, according to County Administrator Roman Gastesi.

Over the past century, the sea level has risen 9 inches at Key West, the county seat. And of Monroe County's 3,700 square miles, about 2,700 square miles are water.

"We are totally vulnerable," Gastesi said. "We can't just move inland; there's very little inland to move into."

So a recently released draft Regional Climate Change Action Plan is important to Monroe, and to its partners in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact: Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

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Sesame Street's Elmo helps teen-inmate parents forge closer ties to their children » **Page 7**

Public safety communication spectrum on the block » **Page 2**

Pennsylvania's counties confront reassessment dilemmas » **Page 2**

Paramedics are easing health care burden in rural Colorado county » **Page 5**

Counties react to cuts in CDBG, HOME programs

By **DARIA DANIEL**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the FY12 allocations for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and other Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) formula programs on Jan. 17. The CDBG program was reduced by 11 percent — to \$2.94

billion from \$3.3 billion — and HOME was cut by 38 percent, going to \$1 billion from \$1.6 billion in the FY12 HUD budget. Due to those cuts and new Census data, many entitlement grantees will receive a significant decrease in the formula funding levels. “There are a number of agencies out in the community that have applied to us, and we’re simply just not going to be able to provide resources to them,” Eric Brown, director of housing and community development for Prince George’s County,

Md., said regarding CDBG funding. In his county, CDBG funding was cut 12 percent (to \$4.9 million from about \$5.5 million), while HOME lost about 34 percent (to \$2 million from \$3 million). “With respect to the HOME program, that has been a huge cut,” he said. “What it means is that we will then have less of an opportunity to put money into the development of affordable housing.” Brown said a range of agencies benefit from the HUD programs: “We fund everything from pantries

to shelters to housing counseling agencies to municipalities....” The allocations announced by HUD reflect the level of funding approved for CPD programs in counties nationwide. The amounts also reflect approved grant reductions and include any reallocated funds for the CDBG and HOME programs. Debra Olson, who retired from the DuPage County, Ill. Board of Commissioners last year to head a housing nonprofit, laments the lost funding but sees a glass half-full. “[U]nderstanding that the po-

tential was that there was going to be little to no funding, we’re very grateful for the restoration of the funds that has been done,” she said, “and we’re very grateful to advocates in Congress both on the House and the Senate sides.” **HUD lists counties’ FY12 allocations on the Web. To view them, see the online version of this story at www.naco.org/countynews. (Additional reporting by Charles Taylor, senior staff writer)*

Conference committee deliberating D-Block allocation

Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.), House Ways and Means Committee chair, has announced that the conferees on the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011 will meet Feb. 1 to continue deliberations on H.R. 3630, legislation that extends payroll tax cuts, among other items. Also in the bill are provisions dealing with the reallocation of the D-Block spectrum, the governing structure of the oversight function

and the return of the 700 megahertz narrowband spectrum: items of significant importance to the public safety community. NACo supports the reallocation of the D-Block to public safety. NACo also opposes any reallocation of 700 MHz narrowband spectrum in the final version of the legislation. The 700 MHz narrowband spectrum is currently in use as a critical part of many state and local efforts to provide mission-critical voice

communications for public safety. Its location next to the D-Block along with spectrum currently allocated to public safety helps ensure the efficient use of spectrum, reduces costs and provides interoperable communications capabilities that cannot be replicated in other spectrum bands. To reallocate the 700 MHz narrowband spectrum would waste billions of taxpayers’ dollars and put the public’s safety at risk, said

Jeff Arnold, NACo deputy legislative director. NACo supports changes to the governing bodies of a national public safety broadband network to require significant state and local government involvement. NACo strongly believes that the national governing body must include more local representation and inclusion in the governing process than is currently proposed in the legislation. “State, local and public safety must

hold the majority of seats of any governing body and play a strong role in policy-setting and oversight functions,” Arnold said. If your representative or senator serves as a conferee, please contact them immediately and express your opinion on the above issues. Other counties are also urged to contact the conferees. Just call 202.224.3121 and ask for your senator or representative.

Pa. counties struggle with assessment woes

By **CHARLIE BAN**
STAFF WRITER



The shock and confusion that swept over Allegheny County, Pa. homeowners when they received their property assessments in December was no surprise to county officials. They fought for years to prevent the assessment, which the state Supreme Court ordered back in 2009. Approximately 300,000 residents in Pittsburgh and a small enclave municipality got their assessment data first because their school district’s budget process starts earliest. Another million-plus suburban residents will get their notices through early March. Even though, as one economist predicted, two out of three will see a lower bill when tax rates are adjusted to keep the assessment revenue-neutral, the reports of homeowners seeing their values shoot up threefold brought property assessment to the forefront of the region’s attention. It also gave fuel to those pushing for statewide re-

form. The judge who ordered the reassessment eventually delayed the use of the new data in tax billing for one year. The struggle illustrated why assessments are a dicey issue in Pennsylvania, one of six states that don’t require periodic assessments. Of the commonwealth’s 67 counties, 22 have not reassessed since the mid-1980s. That includes four of Allegheny County’s five neighbors. “In Pennsylvania, reassessment is a political football,” said Deb Crawford, chief assessor for Tioga County, located in the north-central part of the state. “We haven’t done one (since 2001) because the commissioners haven’t told me to do one. That’s not to say they don’t have an open mind about it, though.” The Allegheny County saga got heated when newly elected County Executive Rich Fitzgerald rejected the court-ordered reassessment and vowed to be jailed in contempt. He backed down when it became apparent his subordinates would be

See **ASSESSMENT** page 7

List of Conferees for H.R. 3630

House

Republican

Dave Camp (R-MI), House Ways and Means Chairman
Kevin Brady (R-TX), House Ways and Means
Renee Ellmers (R-NC), House Small Business Subcommittee on Healthcare & Technology chairman
Nan Hayworth (R-NY), House Financial Services
Tom Price (R-GA), House Ways and Means and House Budget
Tom Reed (R-NY), House Ways and Means
Fred Upton (R-MI), House Energy and Commerce chairman
Greg Walden (R-OR), House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology chairman

Democrat

Sandy Levin (D-MI), House Ways and Means Committee ranking member
Xavier Becerra (D-CA), Democratic Caucus vice chairman
Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), House Budget Committee ranking member
Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Budget Committee
Henry Waxman (D-CA), House Energy & Commerce Committee Ranking Member

Senate

Democrat

Max Baucus (D-MT), Senate Finance chair
Ben Cardin (D-MD), Senate Finance and Senate Budget
Jack Reed (D-RI), Senate Appropriations
Bob Casey (D-PA), Joint Economic Committee chair

Republican

John Kyl (R-AZ), Senate Minority Whip
John Barrasso (R-WY), Republican Conference vice chairman
Mike Crapo (R-ID), Senate Budget and Senate Finance

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Climate change adaptation — not just a coastal issue

CLIMATE from page 1

The plan makes 100 recommendations to mitigate or adapt to the effects of climate change in the following six categories:

- Sustainable Community and Transportation Planning
- Water Supply, Management and Infrastructure
- Risk Reduction and Emergency Management
- Energy and Fuel
- Natural Systems and Agriculture, and
- Outreach and Public Policy.

Recommendations address such issues as how water supplies might be affected by salt-water intrusion from rising seas and how building codes might need to change to protect areas at risk of flooding.

A recent study showed that of the 20 most at-risk cities for sea-level rise globally, the Miami-Dade metro area was number one in value of assets at risk and number seven in terms of population, said Broward County Vice Mayor Kristin Jacobs, a founding member of the compact. The four-county region, with 5.6 million residents, is more populous than 30 U.S. states.

The counties have been working on the plan for two years and unveiled a draft for public comment at a Regional Climate Leadership Summit last month at Key Largo in Monroe County. In addition to county commissioners and staff, collaborators included biologists, emergency managers, transportation planners, climate scientists and water management experts, as well as other professionals from the public and private sectors. The public has 60 days from the plan's Dec. 9, 2011 release to comment.

"After that, it goes before the four county commissions to adopt, either in whole or in part," Jacobs said. That doesn't mean the counties will have the funds available to implement the plan nor that the time line would be strictly adhered to, she added. And even if adopted, the plan will continue to evolve. The plan has an initial five-year horizon for implementing recommendations.

"One cannot think of an adaptation plan as a kind of once-and-done endeavor," said Steve Adams, senior program advisor for climate adaptation for of the Institute for Sustainable Communities in Eugene, Ore. "The science progresses. The land form that you're concerned about changes over time, and so your vulnerability changes. These processes have to be dynamic in that every so often you have to come back and revisit what your current vulnerability is."



Photo courtesy of Monroe County, Fla.

Mayor David Rice (r), Monroe County, Fla., listens to Doug Gregory (l), county extension director, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, during a break in the Regional Climate Leadership Summit at Key Largo last month. Also pictured are Heather Carruthers, county commissioner; Tina Boan, budget director; and County Administrator Roman Gastesi.

In addition to newly proposed strategies, the plan draws from efforts already underway in individual counties and shared priorities. Jacobs called it notable for bringing Republicans, Democrats, tea party members and independents together to agree on common regional goals. Monroe County is already planning to raise the base elevation a new fire station near Key West "prob-

ably a foot or two" higher, Gastesi said, to compensate for expected sea-level rise.

Monroe County's participation in the compact is especially important because of its size compared to its partners — a population of 73,000, versus 2.5 million for Miami-Dade, 1.7 million in Broward and 1.3 million in Palm Beach.

"It increases our power in

Tallahassee and in Washington," Gastesi said.

The region's efforts are moving from mitigation, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions — still an important pre-emptive strategy — to adaptation.

"This kind of integrated climate planning that deals with both issues, I think it's becoming increasingly common around the country at

the local government level," Adams said. The southeast Florida approach is also scalable to larger geographies and populations. "In terms of what they've accomplished down there, I think it's fantastic," he said.

By working regionally, Adams said, the counties have made it easier for state and federal agencies work with them more efficiently, rather than on a piecemeal basis. "It creates a really efficient way for federal agencies to be able to come in and provide technical assistance."

Jacobs pointed to a federal grant that will expand the compact's planning scope to include three more southeast Florida counties — Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River. The Southeast Florida Regional Planning Council received a \$4.25 million Sustainable Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2010 which helped the compact expand its work.

Southeast Florida is not alone nationally in planning for climate change effects, which may not fully manifest themselves for decades. It's also happening in areas such as San Francisco, the Pacific Northwest and the northeastern U.S.

Adams said other especially vulnerable areas include the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, New Orleans and the Texas Gulf Coast. And climate change adaptation planning isn't just a coastal phenomenon. The intermountain West and desert Southwest are looking at water supply issues, he said. "Chicago is looking at flooding and extreme heat."

For other counties interested in planning for climate change impacts, Adams said there is a host of model plans from other parts of the country.

"Through creative grantsmanship there are ways in which local governments can secure FEMA funding and funding from other sources — depending upon their location — that would enable them to begin to assess vulnerabilities and to begin to integrate efforts to make themselves more resilient," he said.

Jacobs extolled the value of working cooperatively. She said: "Each time we take a step, we're taking them together, and the kind of national attention that we're getting — as well as funding and a bump in grant applications, and so forth — it's proving that it's worth it to partner."

Climate Change Action Plan Highlights

The Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact's draft Regional Climate Change Action Plan makes 100 "actionable" recommendations in six categories to be accomplished over the next five years. Annual reports will monitor progress towards meeting plan goals. The recommendations include:

- revising building codes and land development regulations to discourage new development or post-disaster redevelopment in vulnerable areas and requiring vulnerability-reduction measures for new construction and redevelopment
- developing policies to address new transportation infrastructure development in light of anticipated future climate impacts, such as consideration of future floodplain conditions and vulnerable areas that could require the rerouting of roads because of potential flood damage
- developing a salt-water intrusion baseline, using inundation mapping, salt-water intrusion models and stormwater management models to identify areas and infrastructure at risk
- compiling species information for rare plant species in threatened natural communities and developing adaptation plans that include, at a minimum, seed-bank repository collection and

assisted propagation

- identifying and reducing obstacles for permitting agricultural practices (including growing and selling produce) in urban areas, in order to encourage urban farming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to the transport of farm produce
- identifying transportation infrastructure at risk from climate change in the region; determining whether, when, where and to whom projected impacts from climate change might be significant, and
- initiating a regional public education campaign to educate residents, business owners, policy makers on the merits of preserving open land as an "insurance policy" for adaptation to sea-level rise in south Florida.

The policy recommendations will be implemented through several approaches including development of policy and operational guiding documents by local and regional governing bodies, and the development of consistent goals and measures throughout the governments in the region.

(Source: Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Counties — Draft Regional Climate Change Action Plan)

*For a link to the Draft Regional Climate Change Action Plan, see the online version of this story at www.naco.org/countynews.

Virginia supervisors share 'identical' political views

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Bill and Bob Gibson have always done things together — from playing tennis in high school and college to enlisting in the Marines at age 29 in 1991, inspired by the onset of Operation Desert Storm. Today, both are state probation and parole officers who share the same southwest Virginia office.

Last fall, they took another step together. The identical twin brothers ran for the Board of Supervisors in their respective, neighboring counties — and won.

Washington County, Va. Supervisor Bob Gibson and Russell County, Va. Supervisor Bill Gibson took office earlier this month.

It was the first race for “big brother” Bob — 4 minutes older than his twin — who does most of the talking to a reporter. He won by 204 votes. It was Bill’s second run; four years ago, he lost by 75 votes. This time, he won by more than 700.

“We just wanted to bring common-sense conservative values to our boards,” said Bob Gibson. “And when you talk to one of us, you’re basically talking to both of us.” The brothers, 49, are Republicans — Bob, the only GOP elected official in a “very Democratic” county. Bill is one of five Republicans on his County Board, which has one Democrat and one open seat.

The Gibson brothers say they also ran for office out of concern for the economy in their counties, to spur job creation and cut “wasteful spending.” Russell County has lost three major employers in the past two years, they said.

“Both of us want to be proactive with our boards to try to recruit businesses into this area,” Bob Gibson added.

Agriculture is a major employer in both counties. Washington is larger with about 55,000 residents; Russell’s population is almost 29,000. In the latter, there’s also coal mining and gas production. Washington County is perhaps better known as home of the nationally renowned Barter Theatre in Abingdon, the county seat.

The brothers were born in Washington County and have three other siblings — two brothers and a sister; no other twins — all raised by a school-librarian mom and a dad who was variously a U.S. Marine, traveling salesman and later postal worker. It was their “politically inclined” parents who gave them their conservative values, they said.

Jennifer Helbert has worked in the same office with the Gibsons for



Photo courtesy of Bill and Bob Gibson

Identical twins (l-r) Bill Gibson and Bob Gibson also have two identical jobs: By day, they’re both probation and parole officers in southwest Virginia. They “moonlight” as first-term county supervisors in neighboring Russell and Washington counties, respectively.

almost five years; Bill sits on her left, Bob on her right. Politically, however, both are to the right of many of the residents Russell County, where they were raised.

“What I’ve always admired about them is that although the people around us have different perspectives, they’ve always respected

that,” Helbert said. “They’ve always respected different points of view.”

Years before joining the Marines themselves — they served from 1991 to 1995 — the Gibson twins attended East Tennessee State University, where both majored in sociology and minored in business, graduating in 1984.

NACIO opens Awards of Excellence competition

The National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO) is seeking entries for the 2012 Awards of Excellence. These awards recognize the outstanding public information work being done in counties across the nation to increase understanding and strengthen trust in county government.

The 2012 awards recognize the public information, public education, public engagement and transparency in government initiatives between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2011. Awards for excellence are given in nine categories: annual reports, brochures and multiple-page booklets, publications, writing, graphic design, photography, audiovisual productions, special projects and computer media with subcategories in several of the larger initiatives.

Entries will be evaluated on originality, effort and effectiveness, strength of impression, difficulty and overall quality. Each entry may earn “Superior,” “Excellent” or “Meritorious” distinction. Up to two “Superior” awards may be given in a single category at the discretion of the judges.

The Awards of Excellence are open to any county staff member eligible to join the National Association of Counties (NACo), or any staff of an eligible state association of counties. Entrants are not required to be current members of either NACo or NACIO. Entries in Spanish will also be accepted in all categories, and will be assessed by a panel of fluent Spanish speakers.

Entry fees are \$35 for members and \$50 for non-members for each submission (multiple submissions are permitted). Entries should be sent to Awards Coordinator Dave Rose, El Paso County Public Information, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903.

All entries must be postmarked no later than 5 p.m. April 1 in order to be eligible for standard entry rates. Entries received after April 1 but prior to April 15 will be accepted but subject to a late fee of \$15 dollars for members, \$25 for non-members.

For any additional information or for any questions please contact Dave Rose at DaveRose@elpasoco.com or 719.520.6540.

That education, combined with their identical looks, would mark them as targets when they joined the Corps seven years later.

“As far as boot camp goes, we stuck out like a sore thumb due to being 29 years old, twins and college graduates,” Bob Gibson said, “and you can imagine the drill instructors had fun with that.” The brothers needed waivers to enlist, since the there was an age limit of 28 at the time. Both were lance corporals in the infantry.

The ‘Eyes’ Have It

So close are they, you might be tempted to conflate their names to “Bill-Bob,” and people mistake them for each other “daily,” Bill Gibson said.

“We’re what you call mirror-image twins. I’m left-handed and Bob is right-handed. Our families even get us confused at times,” he said. “Always have.”

Helbert has no trouble telling her coworkers apart: There’s their opposite-handedness, and “Bill’s eyes are a little smaller,” she said. And they wear their hair differently.

But on the phone, it’s harder to tell. “If I call into the office, unless I know who was there when I left, one or the other,” she said, “sometimes I can’t tell their voices apart.”

This leads one to wonder: Have the brothers ever intentionally

“pranked” someone by switching identities?

“We’re not at liberty to say,” said one, speaking for both. “We used to when we were younger, but not in a long time. I can’t even remember the last time.”

When pressed, Bob Gibson would admit to some mischief-making with his brother: playing “some jokes on our kids, just pretending to be each other.”

For all their similarities, the brothers do have differences.

They live about 25 miles apart. While each is married, Bob and his wife, Jennifer, have three boys ages 3, 5 and 6, and Bill and Paige Gibson are the parents of an 11-year-old daughter and a son, 4. Helbert says those kids partly motivate the brothers’ foray into politics — to “make sure that their children are going to have every opportunity afforded to them and that they live in a good, prosperous, stable environment.”

The Gibson twins also diverge in their football fandom: Bill roots for the Minnesota Vikings, while Bob is a St. Louis Rams fan. “So neither one of us had much to cheer for this year,” Bob Gibson said.

While their teams’ performance was nothing to crow about, the brothers are identically ready to prove their mettle on the political field.

Profiles in Service



» Jerrie Tipton
NACo Board of Directors
Commissioner
Mineral County, Nev.

Number of years active in NACo: 5

Years in public service: 5

Education: B.S. degree in architectural design with an extended major in interior design, and continuing education in natural resources

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner: I would invite more than three or have more than one dinner. I would invite both sets of great-grandparents and grandparents, and my mom and dad. More for filling in the gaps on the history of their lives, family history, etc.

You’d be surprised to learn that I: can ride a unicycle.

My favorite way to relax is: I read — a lot!

I’m most proud of: the straw bale house my husband and I are building ourselves, and raising two happy, healthy, productive kids.

My pet peeve is: trashy people.

My motto is: “I don’t care who gets credit as long as it gets done.”

The last book I read was: *The Help*.

Community paramedics expand health safety net

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



Eagle County, Colo. paramedics have expanded their role in providing health care in an effort to cope with fewer doctors and an aging and growing population.

Last summer, the West Eagle County Ambulance District (WECAD) launched the Community Paramedic Pilot Program to allow Emergency Medical Service workers to provide health services to rural areas where access to physicians, clinics and hospitals is difficult, and in some cases, does not exist. It's a new idea for the 41,659 residents and could save

the county money during tough economic times.

"The purpose of the program is to improve health outcomes among medically vulnerable populations and to save health care dollars by preventing unnecessary ambulance transports, emergency department visits and hospital readmissions," WECAD Chief Chris Montera said.

WECAD's daily experience with emergency calls ranging from medication issues to individuals postponing medical attention prompted it to explore ways that paramedics could be more proactive. In 2009, WECAD along with the Eagle County Public Health Agency, local physicians and the International Roundtable on Community Paramedicine met to

plan and implement Colorado's first Community Paramedic program.

The program model uses paramedics — already trained in basic health monitoring — to perform home checks on patients after receiving doctor referrals. The goal is preventative care. Tasks include taking vital signs, drawing blood, giving shots, changing bandages and — perhaps most importantly — keeping tabs on how patients are caring for themselves at home. They also collaborate with home care companies and hospice care to ensure proper care is provided.

A \$1.5 million investment in grants for the pilot project — mostly for labor, including a traditional paramedic — is expected to produce about \$10 million in medical cost savings over five years in an area of about 15,000 people, Montera

added. So far, the program has attracted \$800,000 in grants from interested parties.

Another key component of the program is the standardized curriculum, developed by the Community Healthcare and Emergency Cooperative that colleges in any state, province or nation can customize for their own certification program.

Through this curriculum, colleges and universities, such as Colorado Mountain College, train first responders at the appropriate level to serve communities more broadly in the areas of primary care, public health, disease management, prevention and wellness, mental health and dental care.

The program exists for the sole purpose of serving the health care needs of residents. Its success relies on the people who live and travel in medically underserved communities,

elected officials who maintain the fiscal health of a community and the health department officials who assess needs and manage resources in order to provide the range of services to meet those needs.

To date, WECAD Community Paramedics have seen 65 patients since they started in June 2011. The success of the program has generated interest from other counties and media across the country.

"I recommend counties that want to start a program like this find a physician who will champion this program and have a good EMS system in place," Montera said. "Those two things are critical if they want the program to succeed."

**For links to additional information including the Community Paramedic Program workbook, visit www.naco.org/countynews.*

Prescription drug card program changes outlined

At its December meeting, NACo's Board of Directors approved a modification to the association's popular Prescription Discount Card Program that adds a new transaction revenue sharing fee option. Participating counties now may choose to keep the present program in its current form or may choose to receive \$1 per-prescription-filled when the card is used.

Participating counties that wish to maintain the current program do not need to take any action. Participating counties that wish to adopt the transaction revenue sharing fee model must sign and submit additional paperwork. Regardless of a county's decision, there will be no disruption to plan participants using the program.

The NACo Prescription Discount Program continues to grow, offering average savings of 24 percent on thousands of medications and access to more than 60,000 pharmacies nationwide.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If my county has already signed a contract, do we need to sign the new one?

A: If you want to continue participating in the current program without change, the answer is "No." If, however, you wish to initiate the transaction revenue sharing fee model, you need to sign and submit to NACo, Exhibit B, Rider 1 and your county's W-9 form. The documents are available on NACo's website at www.naco.org/drugcard.

Q: We would like to have a new, signed agreement for our files. What should we do?

A: If you choose to continue with the current program, sign Exhibit B and return it to NACo. A fully executed copy will be returned to you once it has been signed by all parties. If you choose the transaction revenue sharing fee model, sign both Rider 1 and Exhibit B and your county's W-9 and return them to NACo. A fully executed copy will be returned to you once it has been signed by all parties.

Q: What does this new contract mean for our residents?

A: The renewed agreement continues the excellent program that has produced 24 percent average prescription savings for your residents. Residents in counties that choose not to participate in the transaction revenue sharing fee model will receive a slightly greater savings percentage.

Q: Can our residents still go to the same pharmacies under this agreement?

A: Yes. This agreement does not affect the size of the pharmacy network. More than 60,000 pharmacies participate in the NACo Prescription Discount Card Network.

For more information, contact Andrew Goldschmidt at agoldsch@naco.org, 202.942.4221, or Ilene Manster at imanster@naco.org, 202.942.4291.

Applications Open for Five Star Restoration Grants



The Five Star Restoration Grant Program provides \$10,000 to \$40,000 grants on a competitive basis to support community-based wetland, riparian and coastal habitat restoration projects. These projects build diverse partnerships and foster local natural resource stewardship through restoration, education, outreach and training.

Project sites may be public land like parks, streams, school campuses or private land such as corporate facilities that are accessible to the community. Winning proposals demonstrate active restoration of stream, river or wetland habitat and bring together a diverse partnership to engage in community support and education.

Applicants can submit proposals until Feb. 15.

Please visit www.naco.org/fivestar or contact Carrie Clingan at cclingan@naco.org for more information and application instructions.



County websites highlight sustainability efforts

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER



The somewhat-abstract idea of “green” is getting some illustration on county websites.

Sacramento County, Calif. recently debuted Green Sacramento County, which highlights sustainable projects and smart environmental practices taking place in the county.

Brenda Bongiorno said County Executive Brad Hudson insisted that the county promote its sustainable projects, following the compilation of a comprehensive climate action plan.

“He told us, ‘We have all this green stuff — let’s get it all in one place,’ so we figured out a way to showcase the projects,” she said.

As it turns out, the county is do-

ing more that isn’t featured on the website, editorial decisions on what is displayed are made by Dave Defanti, Sacramento County Climate Action Plan project manager.

“We judge projects on a case-by-case basis, whether we can release enough information to make it worth the time a user would spend reading about it,” he said. “Once we have enough to make a good story, we will publish information about it. We want to have a representative sample of the various sustainable projects the county and private sector are pursuing, because it’s varied.”

Defanti is particularly fond of the Green Sac County Map, which overlays the locations of LEED-certified buildings, green businesses and solar-powered projects, plus a substantial selection of transportation options.

Users can highlight a series of bicycle trails, but also locate charging stations for electric cars, ethanol fueling stations and light rail routes.

“We want to stress programs that combine saving money and an environmental benefit,” Defanti said. “Those are our coequal goals for what we do.”

The production was all done in-house, a collaboration among Defanti, the geographic information systems staff that created the map and the information technology staff that tied it all together.

Visitors can register for e-mail alerts to notify them of new projects that are added to Green Sacramento County.

Other counties are also showcasing their green accomplishments.

Sustainable Sonoma County

focuses on educating users about sustainable concepts, including via a reading list.

Nearby, Sustainable Napa County highlights case studies, including one as far away as Virginia.

To the north, Snohomish County, Wash. uses its sustainability website to promote services to residents, including home energy assessments and incentive programs.

Bexar County, Texas’ sustainability website offers a performance validation function that allows users to compare resource consumption and production between different buildings, compare different resources for the same building and compare resource consumption production for different days on graphs and charts.

Demonstrating that environmental sensitivity is not exclusive to the

west coast, Miami-Dade County uses Miami-Dade Green much to the same effect as others, but features its artificial reef program and Get Your Green On, a contest challenging high school students to post videos to YouTube conveying their messages of sustainable living. The winning commercial will air in movie theaters throughout the county.

North Carolina State University in Raleigh hosts a website for the Wake County Environmental Sustainability Task Force, which includes all documents relating to the task force’s environmental stewardship agenda, including the group’s final report and all documents.

**For links to additional information, visit this story on www.naco.org/countynews.*

Super Wi-Fi shows promise in providing broadband to rural communities

WI-FI from page 1

between analog UHF and VHF channels.

The county is working with the city of Wilmington, the county seat, to deploy super Wi-Fi in three public parks that will provide free public Wi-Fi and video security monitoring.

“We at the FCC are really most pleased to see this new service potential being made available to the American public,” Allen Stillwell, deputy chief, FCC Office of Engineering and Technology, said at the launch of the initiative Jan. 26. “This is in fact ... the first commercial deployment of white space technology in the world.”

New Hanover County, population 202,670, is the only local government the FCC thus far has certified to deploy a super Wi-Fi network, and other nations lag in the technology.

Super Wi-Fi provides broadband speeds using lower frequencies in the white space than the conventional Wi-Fi available in homes and businesses. Lower frequencies can travel farther — one to two miles versus perhaps 100 feet — penetrate obstacles like buildings and trees,

just like TV signals, and don’t need a clear “line of sight.”

“For me as an elected official, I’m looking at it as an economic development tool — job production, those kinds of things,” New Hanover County Commissioner Jason Thompson said in an interview. “And anything we can do to facilitate that, that’s what I’m going to do.” He’s been one of his County Board’s leading advocates of the technology.

Because there are no consumer devices commercially available that can receive super Wi-Fi signals, according to Leslie Chaney, the county’s IT director, super Wi-Fi is serving as a “wireless extension cord,” as one of the county’s partners has described it, “between two or more Wi-Fi base stations to provide ‘backhaul’ capability.

“So you can’t get an iPad with a white-space chip in it now,” Chaney said. “That’s some of the future development that we think will come as the rules settle out, as more people get into the market of developing for this space.”

New Hanover County also hopes to use the technology for other applications, such as remote



A pole-mounted “super Wi-Fi” radio transmits security-camera images from a New Hanover County, N.C. park.

monitoring and sensing, Thompson said. Currently, it’s a labor-intensive task to monitor water quality in the coastal county’s “miles and miles” of wetlands: A tester in a canoe must paddle around creeks, estuaries and waterways looking for contamination, he said. Any given location might be sampled and tested every three to four months.

“With the white space initiative, we’ll actually be able to put in these little monitoring systems, and in real time, check the contaminant levels in our waterways ‘live,’” Thompson added. The county has already successfully tested super Wi-Fi for this purpose, Chaney said.

“We have a landfill that is in pretty much a no man’s land as far as high-

speed connectivity,” Chaney added, citing another possible use, “so getting service there with a commercial provider is very expensive. If we can put in radios and get even better service than what we’re currently getting, and the capital investment pays for itself back in say six months, then we will have saved the county dollars over the long term.”

Speaking of costs, she said so far the only expense has been “in-kind” services provided to its partners in the project. The county is working with Spectrum Bridge and KTS Wireless, which the FCC certified last year to provide equipment for the county and city. “Now that we’re going to roll this out in a live environment, what do we pay?” she said. Currently, super Wi-Fi radios (which is essentially what all Wi-Fi base stations are) are not in mass production. “We’re working out with our partners, what do we pay for those first-generation devices, and how do we ensure the county that we don’t pay a large premium for being an early adopter?” she said. “We’re buying endpoint devices, and we’re still working out the radios and what those costs will be.”

As with parks, wetlands and landfills, it’s in areas where long distances must be bridged that super Wi-Fi shows great potential, experts say. And rural areas fit the bill ideally.

William Reed is president and CEO of Technology for All (TFA) in Houston. The nonprofit has been working with Rice University using National Science Foundation funding to provide Wi-Fi to an urban, low-income area of 19,000 residents in Harris County, Texas’ largest city.

“I think the biggest potential,

frankly, is in rural areas,” he said. “There’s more white space available in rural areas, in addition to the fact that you can send the signal over longer distances and through trees and around buildings and all kinds of things.” More white space is available in rural areas because historically they were served by fewer television stations, so the spectrum isn’t as crowded. TFA is currently “in conversation” with a central-Texas county about possibly doing a white space network in one of its small towns, he said.

To ensure that white space networks don’t interfere with licensed television broadcasts and other permitted uses, Spectrum Bridge manages a database that assigns non-interfering frequencies to white space devices on-the-fly, and adapts to new TV broadcasts, licensed wireless microphone users and other TV band users operating in the area, the company said. The database keeps track in real time of who’s using which frequencies and where there is unused space. Super Wi-Fi devices query the database to establish what’s available.

“Every county will have different available white space,” Chaney said. “In New Hanover County here, we have a very small number of broadcast channels, so we have lots of white space. If you went to a New York City for instance, you would find very little white space because they have so many broadcast channels.”

**To view a video of New Hanover County’s Jan. 26 launch event, see the online version of this story at www.naco.org/countynews.*

WIR Conference Registration Open

Santa Fe County, N.M. will host NACo’s 2012 Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference May 16–18. The conference focuses on public lands and other issues critical to the western region of the United States. It provides county leaders with the opportunity to hear speakers, discuss legislation and network with other officials to exchange information on those issues.

Register today at www.naco.org ► meetings ► participate ► WIR Conference. If you have questions please call the NACo Meetings Call Center, 202.942.4292.

'Elmo' program helps teen-offender parents with their kids

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



Elmo, the furry puppet from *Sesame Street*, has helped children learn everything from counting to fire safety. In Santa Barbara County, Calif., he's bringing incarcerated teen parents and their children closer together.

Two of Santa Barbara County's juvenile detention facilities, Saint Maria Juvenile Hall (SMJH) and Los Prietos Boys Camp and Academy, have recently started implementing the "Baby Elmo" program, a 10-week course of training exercises and videos designed by child-development specialists to foster relationships between incarcerated teens and their children.

"The hope is that the detainees become engaged with their kids, want to take responsibility and want to do better," said Laurie



Photo courtesy of Santa Barbara County, Calif. Probation Department

An inmate at the Los Prietos Boys Camp feeds his son while cradling him as a part of the Baby Elmo Program. This program teaches incarcerated teens how to play and interact with their babies.

Holbrook, assistant director at Los Prietos. "A program like this makes them think about their

future and how it will affect their children."

The program is part of a

research study being conducted by Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and is implemented through its Youth Law Center. It is currently active in five California counties: Sacramento, Fresno, Orange, San Bernardino and Santa Barbara.

Detainees are taught how to praise, play and interact with their children through the use of videos provided by the Children's Television Workshop and a curriculum presented by facility personnel.

After a weekly group session with the facilitators, the detainees participate in weekly visits with their children where they can practice what they've learned. Rooms in both facilities have been converted into fun, bright, playful environments and were inspired by juvenile institutions officers and fathers at SMJH, Holbrook and participants.

The visitation room at Santa Maria Juvenile Hall offers a warm welcome for parents and children with brightly colored toys, a floor

mat of alphabet letters and a floor-to-ceiling wall painting of Elmo.

Holbrook added that although some of the youth are incarcerated for serious offenses, the interactions with their children as observed by facilitators have been positive, enlightening and heartwarming. It has also reduced inappropriate behavior among the fathers and strengthened the bond with their children.

The Santa Barbara County Probation Department has been funding the program with a discretionary account, and includes monies that come from the wood-splitting business run by Los Prietos. Churches and residents around the county also make donations. The money has helped these facilities with purchasing DVDs and televisions for the rooms, and other accessories.

*For links to additional information on the program, find the story on County News Online at www.naco.org/countynews.

Some Pa. counties have not assessed since mid-'80s

ASSESSMENT from page 2

the ones at risk. All county personnel handling the assessment effectively report to Common Pleas Judge Stanton Wettick, county spokeswoman Amie Downs said.

The state Supreme Court ordered the reassessment, after ruling that the county's use of 2002 base numbers for property tax was unconstitutional, due to its unfairness to property owners whose lots had lost value or not changed. Fitzgerald argues that the court-ordered assessment puts Allegheny County at a disadvantage because other counties have gone decades without one. From here, he will push for a statewide reassessment system, starting with a lobbying trip to Harrisburg.

Doug Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), said Fitzgerald's brash strategy has not tainted the issue for the State Legislature.

"As messy as it has been, he's moving it forward without the stigma of property tax increase," he said. "It's framed as an equity matter, not a revenue matter, and the state will be more receptive to that."

Hill said though many counties recognize they should do a reassessment, they're waiting for the right time, when property values stabilize, to do one.

"Instability in the housing mar-



Photo by Charlie Ban

Some Allegheny County, Pa. neighborhoods saw their property assessments triple.

ket makes timing a delicate issue," he said. "Several counties that started in the process in 2007 halted because the recession was going to throw off results too much."

That is supported by the findings of the joint Legislative Budget and Finance Committee that studied property valuation and assessment and released a report in 2010.

Hill added that most counties support a statewide reassessment process, pending resolution of the confusing set of laws that place some counties in contradictory situations for conducting their reassessments.

CCAP is participating in two state House of Representatives'

work groups studying property valuation and reassessment. One deals with the actual assessment process, including uniformity, detail in the process and creating a single statute for reassessments. The second looks at the statistics that trigger assessments and how they figure into state budgeting formulas.

CCAP's key issue is that reassessments should be triggered not by time, but rather when inequity reaches a certain point. Hill estimates that would end up being every seven years, "probably at the far end of where you see inequities develop," he said. "The longer you wait, though, the costlier it gets anyway."

Pa. County Assessments

Allegheny County's prior assessment, in 2002, seems downright fresh compared to its neighboring counties' last assessments:

Armstrong, 1997
Beaver, 1982
Butler, 1969
Washington, 1981
Westmoreland, 1972

For a lot of counties that haven't reassessed in a while, he said, a chunk of the cost will go to updating the records. Allegheny's 2001 assessment cost \$23.9 million and the 2010 assessment cost \$12.4 million.

One of those counties that will likely bear the cost of a records upgrade is Centre County. It has not reassessed since 1995, and Chief Assessor Jerry Dann said no plans for another are in the works.

"We're waiting to see what happens in the State Legislature," he said. "I don't think anyone's excited to start anything like that until we know how we'll have to do things."

*Links to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report and discussion of the Allegheny County assessment can be found at County News online, www.naco.org/countynews.

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"Contact Us" provides members with information and answers!

Just use the "Contact Us" feature on the NACo website to e-mail your question to us. It's in the upper right corner of the NACo website ...

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Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Dakota County, Minn.

Network Connects Parks, Jurisdictions

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER



Getting its incorporated cities and towns on board with a plan has helped Dakota County, Minn. jump-start development of multi-use parks across the county.

In 2008, county residents expressed interest in a variety of issues that could be addressed with a stronger parks system, chief among them trail-based recreation, protection of natural areas, improvement of water quality and more options for non-motorized transportation.

What became the county's park system plan couldn't be done alone, however, said Senior Planner John Mertens. It needed to be anchored in a comprehensive land-use plan that addressed the unique agendas of the almost three dozen jurisdictions within the county's borders.

By bringing in planning and parks staff members from the 34 municipalities, state and federal agencies, school authorities and watershed districts, Dakota County



Photo courtesy of Dakota County, Minn.

The Dakota County Greenway Collaborative seeks to link parks and trails in the county, like one pictured here, into a comprehensive web of greenspace.

was able to develop plans for 200 miles of greenways that could fit in any of the areas of the county. The greenways would be interconnected, geographically and conceptually.

"We can get ahead of development in vacant areas, or shoehorn in parks in urban areas," Mertens said. "By engaging the communities in a shared vision of what the greenways can be, we define 'greenway' as something unique to Dakota County."

That definition includes land that uses open space, protects the water supply, can be used by the public in several ways for recreation and has a transportation element.

"We had a regional trail system, but now we want to make those areas more park-like," Mertens said.

The greenway collaborative approach has decentralized greenspace development. Because the municipal jurisdictions share involvement with

the county in terms of development, any of the stakeholders can initiate a project.

"It's like a shotgun shell spreading all over the map," Mertens said. "The county can be a partner to the development, but doesn't need to be in the lead every time. One way or another, the work is going ahead to fulfill the vision we all put together."

A new sales tax in Minnesota also offers more funding for open greenspace, and Mertens said multi-use land is prioritized in granting of that money. He said many of the projects can also be eligible for federal transportation funding.

The most comprehensive effort for outreach has been the "Greenway Guidebook," which summarizes the collaborative and defines stakeholders' roles and responsibilities. It contains processes for designing greenway plans, securing funding and coordinating among various jurisdictions.

Leveraging county development

resources against federal and municipal sources will help fund a lot of the projects. In the next 10 years, \$6.7 million from the county and \$13.6 million from other governments will go to complete 51 miles of greenway trails.

As various cities and municipalities in Dakota County start contacting the county about park planning, Mertens sees the greenway plan's success.

"We're still working haphazardly, but under a consistent vision," Mertens said. "Before, we wouldn't have heard from a city that was interested in their parks integrating into our system. Now we get calls about developers wanting to capitalize on a trail when planning a subdivision. That kind of coordination is invaluable."

*(Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights Award-winning programs. *To access a copy of the Greenway Guidebook, go to Model Programs at www.naco.org/countynews.)*

The H.R. Doctor Is In

You Only Hurt the Ones You Love

The HR Doctor has spent a great deal of time with law enforcement officers and members of their families. This includes county sheriff's deputies, city police officers, marshals, custodial officers, prosecutor's investigators and others with badges and guns.

I have worked with them as their chief administrative officer, their HR director and chief negotiator on behalf of the agencies in bargaining with their unions. I have seen them as colleagues in the investigation of wrongdoing, during periods of natural disaster, as they plan ahead for retirement, manage personal tragedies and work for the general good of their families.

With four decades of such experience, when dangerous trends emerge it is time for me, and I hope others, to stop and take note. Such a trend has come into focus in the past year. I have repeatedly seen strong, brave law enforcement officers of a variety of ages and backgrounds,

more afraid for their own futures than I have ever seen.

The kind of fear has nothing to do with responding to an armed robbery in progress, a home invasion or being on patrol at night alone. The fear trend also has nothing to do with the general decline of respect for authority in the society or the rise in the juvenile gang problems.

The fear is about whether the officers will have the pensions promised to them when they signed on. Whether their benefits or pay will be cut at the very time when their personal options are reduced as they reach mid-career points.

It is a fear about all of the rhetoric coming from a dysfunctional Congress, about cutting everything — including the number of brain cells present in the minds of their own members, as well as local government elected and appointed officials. These officers worry that it is hard enough — and getting harder — to do the job which they have

chosen. Now the very bonds of trust and confidence in their government agencies and in the commitments of government leaders are being called into question.

I know a married couple, for example, who are great mid-career cops, who are planning to leave the profession early as a result of this fear. They are building the psychological and career equivalent of a 1950's bomb shelter. They have just sold their house to reduce long-term financial commitments and will be renting until they can retire at the earliest possible moment. This, they hope, will legally secure the benefits that remain available in their 20-year careers, despite the efforts of some leaders in their city.

If they remained in the agency, they would both be spectacular law enforcement top leaders and role models for many new officers. However, they are shaken by a fear

See H.R. DOC page 12

NACo on the Move

» NACo Officers and Elected Officials

• **Lenny Eliason**, NACo president, spoke about NACo and his presidential initiatives, including Healthy Counties, at the Delaware Association of Counties annual meeting in Kent County (Dover) Jan. 19.

» NACo Staff

• **Edwin Rosado**, legislative director, spoke as a panelist in the session "What Do Federal Cuts Mean for Your County?" at the Maryland Association of Counties winter meeting in Dorchester County (Cambridge) Jan. 5.



Edwin Rosado

» Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director of membership marketing, will be exhibiting on behalf of membership recruitment and retention at the New York State Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Albany County Jan. 30–Feb. 1.

On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson.

Stay updated on NACo's Facebook ...



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News From the Nation's Counties

► ALABAMA

• Officials in **JEFFERSON COUNTY** say they **risk violating federal and state laws** if they cut an additional \$40 million from the FY12 budget.

County departments perform federal, state or locally required functions such as elections and road maintenance that could be jeopardized by continued reductions to the general fund budget, County Manager Tony Petelos said. Those violations could lead to fines and costly lawsuits, he said.

The director of the county's general services department told the *Birmingham Times* more cutbacks could affect the March 13 primary elections.

Demetrui Taylor, director of the county's Human Resources Department, said she fears continued reductions to her departmental budget could render it unable to meet employee, organizational and legal obligations, resulting in delayed claims and liability for interfering with such mandates as the Family and Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act and Equal Employment Opportunity requirements.

► CALIFORNIA

Protesting a 9 percent pay cut, **FRESNO COUNTY** correctional officers, social workers and employees of libraries and administration **offices went on strike** Jan. 23.

Supervisor Phil Larson told NBC 47 all the departments took their cuts, with the exception of Service Employees International Union members. He said what they were asking for wasn't feasible so their contract expired Dec. 12, 2011, and a 9 percent pay cut was implemented.

The union filed a complaint against the county, saying it broke the law and failed to negotiate in good faith.

► KENTUCKY

PIKE COUNTY government has gone "Hollywood" in an effort to increase the adoptions and fostering of animals from its limited-intake shelter. The county's local access channel has premiered an **"Adopt-A-Pet" TV program**, showcasing animals currently housed at the county shelter.

The monthly show began airing Jan. 11 and is shown at various times. The inaugural taping features 20 animals available for adoption. Volunteers from the local Humane Society assist in getting the animals ready for their closeups, and the shelter's acting director showcases the four-legged "celebrities."

► MARYLAND

Gov. Martin O'Malley's (D) budget proposal includes shifting responsibility for nearly \$450 million in **teacher pensions onto counties**.

The recommendation to shift pensions came from O'Malley's state-appointed pension commission, though the governor rejected it last year, the *Washington Examiner* reported.

Maryland is one of three states that pay entirely for teacher pensions. To balance the pension shift, O'Malley will also propose that the state pay for the teachers' Social Security costs, which is currently about \$450 million. The budget proposal also includes more than \$360 million in school construction funding.

► MICHIGAN

• Convicted felons will not have to disclose their **criminal history** on a written job application for **MUSKEGON COUNTY** government, a change designed to level the playing field for formerly convicted offenders.

The change moves the disclosure of felony conviction later in the hiring process. The 24 communities and five states that have similar policies typically require most public employers to wait until the interview stage to question qualified applicants about their criminal background, according to the *Muskegon Chronicle*.

County staff already has been working on the change, and the county's online job application has been altered with the removal of the felony conviction box.

Commissioner Alan Jager proposed the change and hopes the private sector will follow suit.

"We should lead by example," Jager said. "If they can get jobs right away after they get out of jail, they're fine. If they can't get jobs, they're going back."

► NEBRASKA

Counties have reacted swiftly, vocally and negatively to the governor's stated desire to **do away with inheritance taxes** the counties receive.

"From the county's perspective, it's a horrible idea," Joe Lorenz, director of budget and finance for **DOUGLAS COUNTY**, told the *Omaha World-Herald*. "I think the governor is doing this so he can say he cut taxes without having to cut services for the state."

The state's 93 counties received nearly \$42 million in proceeds from the tax in 2007-08, the latest figures



Photo courtesy of Fairfax County, Va.

► VIRGINIA

The **FAIRFAX COUNTY** Board of Supervisors and **National War Dogs Monument Inc.** gathered Jan. 17 to dedicate a monument to honor military working dogs at the county Government Center, its temporary home. The monument will be relocated to the county's Animal Shelter when construction at the facility is complete.

available, according to the Nebraska Association of County Officials. In most cases, the money goes into the counties' general funds.

Douglas County collects \$7 million to \$9 million per year from the tax, and without it would need to raise property taxes to make up for the loss, Lorenz said.

"It's devastating," **LANCASTER COUNTY** Board Member Deb Schorr said. "If this goes through, there will be layoffs."

► OREGON

Sending a police officer to respond to a **mental health crisis** often can ramp up the situation. **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** is addressing that issue by having 911 dispatchers screen calls for possible referral to the county's Mental Health Call Center.

"Sometimes just showing up in uniform can exacerbate things," Portland Police Chief Mike Reese said, and lead to the caller's being taken into custody unnecessarily.

Representatives of the mental health community, Portland police and Multnomah County officials brainstormed solutions over the past year. The group studied why people in mental health crisis often end up in police custody. They found that crucial information wasn't being shared among law enforcement, mental health and emergency dispatch systems.



► GEORGIA

The first inductee into **CLAYTON COUNTY**'s Centenarian Club recently celebrated her 107th birthday, and county Commissioner Gail B. Hambrick was there to wish her well. Maggie Brown Kidd was born Dec. 7, 1904 and is believed to be the **county's oldest resident**.

"Our seniors serve as an important reminder of our history and as an empowering link to our future," Hambrick said.

The club is a new initiative of the county. Senior Services will oversee the program and inductees will receive a free Clayton County Senior Center membership with no expiration and have their photos placed on what has been named the Centenarian Wall of Honor to be located in various Senior Services facilities.

Financial Services News

NACo's Financial Services Center looks to 2012

The National Association of Counties Financial Services Center (FSC) is ready and focused for the New Year. NACo members are encouraged to take a look at all of our programs for their benefits to their counties and also to be aware of the support these programs provide to NACo's mission, benefitting all counties.

NACo FSC and Financial Services Corporation take responsibility for four major areas of effort. These areas, and their 2012 priority activities are as follows:

Savings and Retirement Sector

Best known for our 457 plan with Nationwide Retirement Services, 2012 will be a big year for retirement. Led by Lisa Cole, our chief priorities are to complete a new contract with NRS, continue to build the NACo Registered Municipal Advisor, LLC, (NACo RMA) and embark on intensive research and design in the new world of public employee retirement services.

NACo RMA is the new regulated entity under which we must conduct our solicitation activities for the deferred compensation program. This vehicle, owned by NACo and the state associations who endorse the program was necessitated by the Dodd-Frank Act. Our 457 program, and our efforts in this area don't change. However, we will be operating in a regulated environment.

NACo desires to continue its leadership in the retirement world for the benefit of members and their employees. New retirement plan models are going to be authorized and mandated in the majority of states, and counties, in most cases, will be affected. We will survey and study these trends and provide county officials with the information they need to keep up with the trends. In addition, new products and services will emerge that may be an opportunity for NACo.

U.S. Communities Cooperative Purchasing Alliance

U.S. Communities is the leading purchasing cooperative for local government in the U.S. Local governments have saved more than a billion dollars using U.S. Communities contracts as a key purchasing tool. This innovative group will continue to lead the industry in opportunities for NACo members and all local governments to streamline



purchasing and governing while stretching their budgets.

NACo FSC will work closely with the U.S. Communities field team in strengthening relationships with our national and state sponsors. The success of this program can be leveraged further by making sure that relationships are built and used to extend the potential savings to more and more NACo members and other local government units. Better

communications, joint marketing efforts and information flow will allow this revolutionary program to better serve all.

FSC Programs and Services

Several areas of focus will be included in this effort in 2012. 1) Network of Care (NOC) is a three-year NACo effort to provide a powerful outreach and service tool for counties to serve their citizens. Whether your citizens are in need of health care, social services, veterans services or other assistance, a Network of Care site can be a key link between the county and the needed service. Used by more than 200 counties nationwide, the NOC tool represents a great leap forward in citizen outreach.

2) Public Finance Authority is a unique issuer of bonds created

in partnership with the Wisconsin Counties Association and U.S. Communities. PFA focuses on private activity issues where there is no alternative issuer. In 2011, its first year, PFA issued more than \$400 million in bonds over 15 transactions. PFA is a valuable economic development tool that can move quickly with skill to provide timely financing to key projects. FSC will play the marketing and oversight role in insuring that this valuable program becomes a well-known financing tool.

3) NACo is fortunate to be the destination for a number of great ideas that can benefit counties and local government. We have a network of relationships that can get those ideas to the right parties for evaluation and, if indicated, implementation. In 2012, FSC intends to institutionalize this pipeline so that

all good ideas are processed quickly and consistently.

First, the FSC Advisory Committee will look at more ideas and continue to make recommendations on new programs. Second, FSC will work closely with NACo's Research Division and our state association staffs to create and maintain a database of programs and services conducted at the state association level. This database will be an open resource for our associations to compare and contrast opportunities.

Premier Corporate Member and Corporate Fundraising Program

More than ever, the private sector is seeking efficient ways to learn about and market to government entities. NACo has built relationships with some of the most recognizable names in corporate America as they seek to tailor their offerings to our members. Their support allows NACo to conduct everything from our core legislative mission to targeted member services and research.

We take our obligations to these sponsors very seriously and will continue to make every effort to trumpet the value of NACo in their government relations and marketing efforts. Our efforts in 2012 will reflect our desire to broaden the industry spectrum, increase levels of support and institutionalize the relationships between NACo and sponsoring organizations.

The programs above contribute a significant portion of the operating budget of NACo. Managing them strategically is our priority. The FSC team is ready to answer any questions from our members. Please call or email anytime.

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Sewage sludge sparks controversy in Washington state county

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

"We're definitely breaking some new ground here," said Heeseung Kang, the call center's supervisor. "This is why we're here. Our mission is to try to catch these people."

► SOUTH CAROLINA

Amazon Global Customer Fulfillment is coming to **SPARTANBURG COUNTY**, creating a second center in the state after opening one in **LEXINGTON COUNTY** last year.

Amazon.com, Inc. said the 1-million-square-foot order fulfillment facility will invest \$50 million in the state and create "hundreds" of new full time jobs.

"Spartanburg County is pleased to welcome Amazon as it represents another investment by a global company that realizes we are a pro-business community," said David Britt, chairman, Economic Recruitment Committee of Spartanburg County.

► VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY isn't a city, but that didn't stop *Bloomberg Businessweek* from ranking it second on its list of **America's Best Cities**. The list considered factors such as school performance, greenspace and cultural amenities.

Bloomberg also cited that Ar-

lington is home to many corporate headquarters and government agencies, and that the community "is highly educated, with more than two-thirds of the population holding a college degree." Raleigh, N.C. was number one on the list.

► WASHINGTON

It comes down to this: Who gets to say whether septic sludge can be spread on a western **WAHKIAKUM COUNTY** farm?

Last year, Wahkiakum County commissioners banned agricultural use of so-called biosolids, in defiance of the state Department of Ecology (DOE). County officials are worried about the potential for environmental contamination. DOE says the county's ban is unconstitutional and went to court to overturn it, *The Daily News* reported. The matter is still in litigation.

"The argument isn't about whether or not this is dangerous. This is an argument about who gets to respond to that danger, and how much," said Dan Bigelow, Wahkiakum County prosecuting attorney.

DOE officials are confident they will prevail. "We think the Legislature very clearly said, let's have a statewide program rather than a county program," said Ted Sturdevant, DOE director. He said biosolids can be applied

safely in compliance with permit requirements.

Bigelow disagrees, saying: "People here feel very strongly about the enjoyment of the outdoors, and they enjoy it a lot less if they know that there's human poop being sprayed everywhere."

► WISCONSIN

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recognized **DANE COUNTY** and its partners with a 2011 Project of the Year Award for its first-in-the-state efforts to fuel county vehicles with cheaper, cleaner-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) produced from landfill gas.

The county and its collaborators accepted the award for the Rodefild Landfill BioCNG Vehicle Fuel Project as part of EPA's Landfill Methane Outreach Program (LMOP).

Last April, the county partnered with several private companies that specialize in turning **landfill gas into CNG**. Together they implemented the BioCNG system, enabling the county to fuel converted parks and public works trucks with CNG that costs 20 cents per gallon.

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

Research News

Child Care for County Employees

With a large number of county employees retiring or set to retire in the next few years, counties are looking for ways to attract and retain a younger workforce.

One employee benefit that counties are exploring is providing on-site child care for county employees. Several counties already have robust programs, and many more are exploring the cost and benefits of implementing such a program.

Los Angeles County has one of the largest programs in the country. The county has 11 child care centers and one more that is a community-based program that offers priority enrollment to county employees. The centers vary in size, but have an average enrollment of approximately 60 children per site. The program provides care for children 6 weeks to 6 years of age. L.A. County employees are able to take advantage of a benefit in which the county contributes money to the employee's Dependant Care Spending Account to help pay for eligible dependent care expenses.

In Fairfax County, Va., the Employees' Child Care Center (ECCC) provides care for children 6 weeks to 5 years of age who have



one parent who is working at least 20 hours per week with the Fairfax County government. In two-parent households, the non-county employee must also be working or in school a minimum of 20 hours per week. Monthly child care fees can range from \$52–\$1,306 per month depending on the age of the child and if another child from the family is already enrolled and are determined based on adjusted family income.

A slightly different approach has been taken in San Mateo County, Calif. where the county has one on-site child care center at the County Government Center, but has also developed a partnership with two additional child care centers in the county. Tuition assistance and flexible spending accounts are provided

by the county for employees who choose any of the three child care facilities. Tuition assistance may range from 10 percent to 60 percent of the total tuition cost and is based on family income and size.

"Kids at Work" has been a long running on-site child care facility in Contra Costa County, Calif. In 1992, a small committee was set up to look into the financial feasibility of a center as well as a facility location. After determining the idea was viable, a contractor was hired to remodel an existing office at the public works department. The center opened in 1995 and accepts children 8 weeks to 5 years of age. Kids at Work offers a competitive tuition, but the real benefit is for parents to have their child's care facility conveniently located near their office.

Counties considering providing this added benefit must consider the cost and whether there is enough demand for a child care facility

in order for them to break even financially.

In 2009, Clackamas County, Ore. formed a committee to explore the idea of creating an on-site child care facility that would be contracted out to a private provider. They surveyed county employees, discussed converting an existing county building into a child care facility, and found that about 60 employees would have to pay for their children to be cared for at the center for the facility to break even. Ultimately, the County Board decided to divert funding to other projects, but Clackamas County serves as an example of a process a county should take before making such a decision.

Some counties have determined that providing on-site child care may be too expensive or impractical. In such cases, counties may explore the idea of partnering with a local, certified child care center and providing a discount to county employees who enroll their

children. Arlington County, Va. has done this with Arlington Children's Center, which has two locations in the county. County employees who choose this facility get a discounted rate as an employee benefit.

Additionally, there are counties that have not invested in permanent child care for county employees, but are willing to fill a void when there is a need. An example is counties that provide child care when local schools are closed due to weather conditions, but county offices remain open. In Pinellas County, Fla., there is a program to care for the children of first-responder county employees during an emergency. This is only used when schools are closed and normal child care establishments are not functioning.

(Research News was written by Sarah Sunderman, research associate.)

What's in a Seal?

» Prince George's County, Md.

www.princegeorgescountymd.gov



Prince George's County emerged from the blending of land within Calvert and Charles counties in 1695. However, it wasn't officially deemed a county until April 23, 1696, by an act of the General Assembly. Its name was adapted from Prince George of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne of England.

The county surrounds the north, south and east of Washington, D.C. with just over 485 square miles of land, and a growing population of more than 863,000.

The Prince George's county seal, designed in 1696 by Charles Beckwith of Patuxent, incorporates England's Imperial Crown, St. Edwards Crown. In the four corners of the seal, is the coat of arms symbolizing Queen Anne, France and England in quarters one and four of the seal, with Scotland in the second quarter, and Ireland in the third. *Semper Eadem*, the county's motto, translates to *Ever the Same*.

Wording on the seal was changed in 1971 to read "Prince George's County, Maryland."

(If you would like your county's seal featured, please contact Christopher Johnson at 202.942.4256 or cjohnson@naco.org.)

Incivility, dysfunction becoming the new American way?

H.R. DOC from page 9

that American leadership is so lacking in civility that our core ability is decaying: that is the ability to sit down with those with whom we might disagree to craft common visions and solutions for the common and long-term good.

When those who represent the government, which is what the officers' badges represent, are so increasingly worried, how should the rest of us feel?

It is not simply a matter of whether pensions are out of control, or budgets need to be leaner. It is a matter of whether Republicans and Democrats have gotten so out of control that their behavior actually works against the long-term best interests of the community. Whatever each of us may think about the wars we are currently fighting, it is clear that our infrastructure is in very poor condition, and that education (including science, art and even civics courses) is suffering as we cut programs.

While the rhetoric and actions of slashing and burning are occurring, so are the announcements at the next

day's service club luncheons that education is the top priority. It is not enough to bemoan the absence of jobs and blame the other party, when whatever is proposed by whichever party is suddenly pounced upon in carnivorous attacks which can become so personal that the subject matter itself is clouded.

Take note of the fear rising among law enforcement officers as well as top administrators — the ones charged with keeping a city, county or school board on track to solve today's problems as well as tomorrow's. Being a prisoner of fear rather than a master of confidence and optimism is not good for the country or its millions of families and hundreds of millions of citizens. It was not that way when World War II began. It was not that way when strong leadership challenged our minds and energies to put a human on the moon. It need not be this way now. It must not become a new definition of the American Way.

Phil Rosenberg

Phil Rosenberg
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Job Market & Classifieds

► HEALTH CARE TRUST ADMINISTRATOR – MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Salary: DOQ.

The Montana Association of Counties (MACo) is seeking an Administrator for the Health Care Trust. This position performs and directs the marketing, financial, supervisory and administrative duties for the Trust. For a detailed job description and application instructions, please visit our website at: www.mtcounties.org. Position open until filled by qualified candidate. Applications received by Feb. 1 will receive preference on screening. Contact Harold Blattie, MACo Executive Director at 406.449.4360 or hblattie@mtcounties.org if you have questions.

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