

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

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Funding bill slogs through Congress

By MARILINA SANZ
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved the FY12 Labor-HHS-Education spending bill, the largest federal discretionary funding measure.

While House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers (R-Ky.) has not scheduled an official mark-up, he did unveil a draft bill Sept. 29. Overall, the Senate bill would provide \$158 billion in discretionary funding, a little less than FY11

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QuickTakes

States with the Highest New Business Creation

New Business Created in 2010

Washington	8,315
Massachusetts	6,815
Texas	5,658
New York	5,416
Illinois	4,233

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists, using Bureau of Labor Statistics



Photo by Jim Philipps

David Chapman, International Association of Chiefs of Police, participates in a strategic planning session about pre-trial justice legislation Oct. 5 at NACo headquarters. Chapman was among more than 30 representatives from various criminal justice, state and local government associations who attended the Pre-trial Justice Legislative Conference, sponsored by NACo and the Pretrial Justice Institute.

November 2011 ballot measures run gamut, share few themes

By COUNTY NEWS STAFF

With elections less than one month away in many states, County News takes a look at some of the measures voters will be asked to decide — particularly those that impact counties.

Historically, odd-numbered election years have far fewer initiatives and referenda than even-numbered years. Since 1970, off years have had an average of 46 ballot questions nationwide, whereas in even numbered years the measures number in the hundreds. This year is no different. No key themes predominate, either.

Voters in Colorado, Maine, Ohio and Mississippi will face questions ranging from casino gambling to defining “personhood” to collective bargaining rights. While in Colorado, measures affecting taxes face an uphill battle. Washington’s Yakima County will vote on homerule.

Ohio

Ohio is one of several states grappling with collective bargaining, and it’s showing up on the Nov. 8 ballot.

One of the three ballot questions (Issue 2) asks whether an amendment — Senate Bill 5 —

passed earlier this year that repeals many collective bargaining rights should itself be repealed.

Among the amendment’s changes are that public employees would be prohibited from striking, and their employers would be required to dock twice the employee’s pay for each day that employee strikes, and it expands the list of subjects that are inappropriate for collective bargaining.

Another question asks whether to reject the federal Affordable Care Act.

Brad Cole, managing director

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Analysis

In search of fairness on Main Street

By MIKE BELARMINO
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

As state and local governments continue to hold out hope for a path to economic recovery, many could be pinning their hopes on the outcome in the battle for fairness between brick-and-mortar shops on Main Street and businesses operating over the Internet.

Over the last decade, the significant growth in e-commerce demonstrates the reach and speed of evolving technologies. According to a University of Tennessee study in 2009, e-commerce sales have grown from just over \$900 billion in 1999 to more than \$2 trillion in 2006.

This growth however underscores a painful reality for today’s fiscally stressed state and local governments. That reality, stemming from a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1992, finds many state and local governments unable to collect taxes due on those transactions.

In *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota*, the court stated that retailers are

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CountyNews Features

Congress passes Continuing Resolution

By MARILINA SANZ
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

On Oct. 4, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 2608, which funds the federal government through Nov. 18. The bill is based on the funding levels agreed as part of the debt ceiling extension, which would represent a 1.5 percent reduction from FY11 levels, although entitlement programs would still be funded at the 2011 rate.

Congressional leaders had hoped to pass the measure by Sept. 23, but the Senate approved a different version of H.R. 2608 than the House with compromise language on Disaster Relief Funding (DRF).

The House version of H.R. 2608 had \$3.5 billion for the DRF with a portion of the funding offset by spending cuts elsewhere. The first offset would have rescinded \$1.5 billion from an Energy Department program that provides loan guarantees to automakers for the production of fuel-efficient vehicles, and an additional offset would have cut \$100 million

from a loan-guarantee program that the solar-energy company Solyndra was slated to receive.

Senate Democrats strongly objected to any proposal that included an offset for funding the DRF, and at the beginning of the week it appeared that federal funding for disaster assistance would run out for the first time. However, FEMA notified Congress that the DRF would be able to function until the end of the year with less funding. The Senate averted a showdown with the House by removing the \$1.6 billion in offsets that were included in the earlier House-passed version of the bill and approved \$2.65 billion dollars for the nearly depleted account.

Congressional leadership would like to finish the appropriations process by Nov. 18, the day they plan to recess for Thanksgiving. However, the reality is that none of the 12 individual appropriations bills have cleared both chambers, which could lead to another short-term measure.

Countdown to nationwide EAS test: Is your county ready?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will conduct the first-ever, nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) Nov. 9 at 2 p.m. EST. In existence since 1994, the EAS is an alert and warning system designed to transmit emergency alerts and warnings to the public at the national, state and local levels.

EAS participants broadcast alerts and warnings regarding weather alerts, child abductions and other types of emergencies. EAS alerts are transmitted over radio and television broadcast stations, cable television and other media services. The purpose of the test is to assess the reliability and effectiveness of the system as a way to alert the public during nationwide emergencies.

Although local and state components of the EAS are tested on a weekly and monthly basis, there has never been an end-to-end nationwide test or a national activation of the system. It's crucial to know whether the system will work

as intended should public safety officials ever need to send an alert or warning to a large region of the United States. Only a top-down, simultaneous test of all components of the EAS on a nationwide basis can do this.

FEMA will transmit the EAS code for national emergencies to the top tier of radio stations in the EAS distribution network. These stations, called Primary Entry Points, will broadcast the EAS code and alert to the next tier of broadcasters, which will rebroadcast the alert to the remaining broadcasters, cable, and other service providers until it has been distributed throughout the entire country and U.S. territories. FEMA and the FCC are taking a number of steps to prepare for this historic test.

Both agencies are conducting various outreach activities to educate public safety and other government agencies about the test. In addition, the FCC has established a website dedicated to the Nov. 9 test which can be found on the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security

Bureau (PSHSB) website at www.fcc.gov/pshs. Moreover, both agencies plan to work with EAS stakeholders to educate the public in advance of the test.

What can state, tribal and local government agencies do to help? The FCC suggests a number of steps to prepare for the test. These include:

- getting the word out about the test to state, tribal and local government agencies, as appropriate
- working with EAS participants in your state to ensure that your state's EAS Plan is up-to-date, and
- participating in monthly tests of your state's EAS by getting to know and work with your local broadcasters and cable providers.

The FCC notes that although the EAS test will be initiated by FEMA, local governments can use the test as an opportunity to work with local broadcasters and cable providers to educate appropriate government officials and staff about the EAS, how it works and when it should be activated.

Finally, the FCC asks state, tribal and local government officials to help inform residents within their jurisdictions in advance of the test, so that they will know what to expect. Although the nationwide test will be similar to the monthly and weekly tests that the public is used to, there will be some differences. For example, the Nov. 9 test will be longer — approximately three minutes — compared to the usual two-minute monthly test. Also, the national test will occur almost simultaneously on nearly all TV and radio stations, unlike the monthly test, which may occur at different times on different stations.

Additional information can be found at the PSHSB website at www.fcc.gov/pshs. The Nationwide EAS Test Countdown has begun. Are you ready?

California legislature tries online sales tax fix

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not required to collect sales taxes in jurisdictions where they have no physical presence, generally referred to as nexus. So while the law has remained intact for more than a decade, sales transactions via the Internet have increased exponentially, leaving state and local governments helplessly watching revenues go uncollected. That same University of Tennessee study estimated revenue loss for state and local governments to the tune of \$10.1 billion to \$11.3 billion in sales taxes in 2011 alone.

Recent developments, however, demonstrate that the battle could shift in favor of state and local governments. Since 2008, at least 10 states have passed laws intended to make companies like online retail giant Amazon collect sales taxes. Even though Congress has yet to legislatively overturn *Quill*, various state laws have broadened the definition of nexus so that specific activities of online retailers would subject them to sales tax collection. One such state is California, where a recent and somewhat surprising development occurred.

On Sept. 23, California Gov. Jerry Brown (D), in a compromise with Amazon.com, signed a bill that essentially delays the state's requirement for Amazon to collect sales taxes for a year. In return, Amazon will end efforts to repeal the bill and will begin collecting taxes on California transactions beginning September 2012 unless a national standard is in place by then. Amazon also agreed to work with the state towards that national standard for taxing online sales. The chance to establish such a standard could rest on legislation introduced in Congress this summer.

Just before the August recess, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Peter Welch (D-Vt.) introduced the Main Street

Fairness Act (S. 1452 and H.R. 2701, respectively). The bill seeks to even the playing field between traditional brick-and-mortar businesses and those primarily doing business via the Internet, by requiring online retailers to collect the same sales tax that traditional retailers already do at the point of sale.

Collecting taxes that would be due in a traditional sales transaction is an important aspect of this bill since opponents try to paint it as a tax increase, even though it is not. The bill would also relieve consumers of the current responsibility to report to state tax departments the sales taxes owed on online purchases. NACo, along with other state and local government representatives, have supported this effort in the past and will continue to do so. Several online retailers have expressed support for the bill, including Amazon.com and Sears Roebuck.

The bill's prospects in the 112th Congress are uncertain, however, especially since it currently does not enjoy bipartisan support. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) has backed the proposal in the past but was not ready to sign on as an original co-sponsor when the bill was introduced. Enzi plans to continue working with other Republican colleagues to build greater support for the initiative.

Unfortunately, the inability to collect sales taxes on e-commerce transactions is only one of many thorns in the fiscal thicket that state and local governments currently find themselves in. Others include declining property variations, attacks on federal discretionary spending and efforts to curtail state and local taxing authority.

To be certain, state and local governments will press on and must continue to make difficult decisions. The search for fairness on Main Street however, if found, may certainly prove to be a defining point on the road to economic recovery.

In Case You Missed It ...

News to Use from Past County News

► Counties Work, an online game for students and teachers

Counties Work, an online game to educate students about county government is getting rave reviews from county officials, students and teachers. More than 10,000 individuals have played the game in the past two months and interest is growing in the new school year.

Positive comments are flowing in. Yuma County, Ariz. Communications Director Kevin Tunell, said, "It's a great tool and hopefully teachers and students will take advantage of it! My 10-year-old daughter played it for two hours last night... she loved it, and I enjoyed the lesson she learned."

To learn more, visit www.icivics.com/games/counties-work.



Share your point of view ...

Letters to the Editor

Please include a phone number with your letter. Mail, fax or e-mail to:

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Grant to help northern Calif. counties fight child porn

Santa Clara County, Calif.'s "Year of the Child" just got a shot in the arm to the tune of nearly half a million dollars, and 11 other counties will benefit from the financial injection.

The Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff recently received \$499,250 in Child Sexual Predator Program (CSPP) grant funding from the Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office. The county wrote the grant to also help 11 other northern California counties to combat the sexual abuse of children.

"This funding will assist in the fight against the very real problem of child sexual abuse and exploitation," said Board of Supervisors' President Dave Cortese, who declared 2011 the Year of the Child in Santa Clara County at the beginning of his presidency in January.

There are almost 9,500 registered sex offenders in the 12-county region, 40 percent of whom were convicted of committing crimes against children, according to Michelle Sandoval, a grants and development manager for the

Sheriff's Office. About 4,000 of them reside in Santa Clara County, a Silicon Valley county with a population of approximately 1.8 million.

Nationwide, more than \$9.3 million in CSPP grants were announced in August "aimed at preventing child endangerment and protecting communities from child sexual predators." Participating state and local law enforcement agencies will use the money to develop initiatives to locate, arrest and prosecute child sexual predators and enforce state sex offender registration laws.

The 11 counties that will benefit from Santa Clara's grant are: Del Norte, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, Santa Cruz and Solano.

Similarly in Idaho, several counties will be helped by a \$494,410 CSPP grant received by Kootenai County, population 138,000 (see sidebar). County law enforcement or criminal justice agencies in eight states, from Florida to Washington also received grants — most of more than \$400,000.

"The amount of child pornography that's being shared out there is absolutely ridiculous," said Det. Doug Kubik, a Santa Clara County sheriff's investigator and computer forensics expert. "It would take a department the size of ours full-time just to even put a dent in it."

Santa Clara County will use about \$250,000 of its grant to add a detective to its Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement (SAFE) team for two years, Sandoval said. Approximately \$136,000 will be divided evenly among the 11 counties to use for overtime and enforcement sweeps of registered sex offenders known to have committed crimes against children. The remainder will be used to buy equipment needed to sniff out child pornographers who use peer-to-peer computer networks to exchange images and videos.

The county was well positioned to compete successfully for the CSPP grant; since 1994, the Sheriff's Office has had a Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement (SAFE) team. In 2007, it won a grant from the state of California that enabled it expand into the other 11 upstate counties and become a multi-county SAFE Task Force.

Kubik's SAFE team has seen the effects of child sexual abuse firsthand. In July, members played a supporting role with police in San Jose, the county seat, to bust



Photo courtesy of DeKalb County, Ga.

William O'Brien, DeKalb County, Ga. police chief (center), speaks at the announcement of \$9.3 million in nationwide Child Sexual Predator Program grant awards, held in DeKalb Aug. 30. The county received \$496,793. Also pictured are (l-r) Bernard Melekian, U.S. Department of Justice, COPS program director; John Horn, first assistant U.S. attorney, northern district of Georgia; and Vernon Keenan, director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Idaho also takes a multi-county approach

Among the other counties that received Child Sexual Predator Program grants this year are Kootenai County, Idaho and Alachua County, Fla.

Like Santa Clara County, Kootenai County took a regional approach. Four other counties — Bonner, Boundary, Shoshone and Benewah — will also benefit from Kootenai's \$494,410 CSPP grant.

Kootenai County will use the two-year grant to create a task force that will enable multiple law enforcement agencies to "cooperate seamlessly," said Barry McHugh, Kootenai County's prosecuting attorney.

"We've seen that in Idaho, like many places, that there is conduct that is ongoing, some of which is beyond the wherewithal of counties to investigate," he said — "activity that falls between investigations that have a federal nexus and a federal interest, and those that small counties with limited budgets have the expertise and capacity to investigate."

"And that's the need that we see the task force will be able to fill," he added.

In addition to funding investigator positions, the grant will provide computers for the smaller counties, which range in population from 9,300 (Benewah) to 41,000 (Bonner). "A big part of the program is to get tracking software up and available to each of the counties," McHugh said.

Though relatively small in population, the other four counties are large in land area — ranging from 1,269 square miles for Boundary to 2,636 square miles for Shoshone.

"In these difficult economic times, I think that the task force will serve a need that is a challenge for counties in Idaho," McHugh said. Citing the extent of public lands in the state, he said large portions of Idaho counties are Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land.

"That's just the way it is, but it does affect tax base. And some of the counties with small budgets and large areas to take responsibility for, this kind of opportunity will, I'm hoping and I anticipate, provide their citizens with a little bit of additional comfort regarding [sex offenders]," he said.

In Alachua County, its \$490,147 grant will largely pay for salaries for additional "chatters," according to Capt. Keith Vermillion of the Sheriff's Office. These are people trained to seek out child sexual predators online.

"The sheriff really wanted to start a new unit within Alachua County to address all the cyber tips that we get about people who are transmitting child pornography through the Internet," he said. "My goal was you can't do investigations unless you have people. You can buy all of the equipment you want, but if you don't have anybody there to do the work, it's really meaningless."

The need exists. Vermillion said the local Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) unit is hard-pressed to handle 25 percent of the cyber tips that come in on a quarterly basis.

"This is one of the subjects — child pornography — that nobody ever wants to talk about and nobody every wants to see, but it's happening," he said.

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Sobriety pilot program leads to statewide expansion

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Montana has long had a reputation as a place where you could crack open a cold one while driving down the interstate as fast as you like.

Until the federal government put pressure on lawmakers in 2005, it was legal to drink and drive with an open container and even speed on major highways or rural roads without worrying about a speed limit. But now, Montana's old drinking and driving culture is changing starting in Lewis and Clark County.

In March 2010, the county

In South Dakota

The 24/7 Sobriety Program began in South Dakota as a pilot in 2005. Since then, it's been implemented in all 66 of the state's counties and has administered more than 2.9 million tests to nearly 12,000 offenders with a 99.6 pass rate.

was named the first in Montana to run the 24/7 Sobriety Pilot Program by Attorney General Steve Bullock, Lewis and Clark County Sheriff Leo Dutton and Col. Mike Tooley, Montana Highway Patrol. They decided on Lewis and Clark County after state trooper and resident Mike Haynes was killed in a head-on

collision with a drunk driver in March 2009.

"After Trooper Haynes died, I asked his wife Tawny how we could honor his memory," Tooley said. "She asked that we find a way to stop repeat DUI offenders so that other families wouldn't have to go through what she and her two young children are still going through."

The program works by requiring repeat offenders to take a Breathalyzer test measuring their alcohol blood content each morning and night as a condition of their bond or sentence. The offenders — not the taxpayers — pay \$2 for each test, which are administered at a pre-release center. Those who live too far away to reasonably commute for two breath tests per day can wear an ankle bracelet for \$6 per day that measures the alcohol content in their sweat. If an offender fails a breath test or does not show up for a test, the offender's bond is immediately revoked, and he or she is taken directly to jail where a judge will decide how long they will stay there.

Since being implemented in May 2010, the pilot program has seen nearly 20,000 breath tests administered to approximately 100 repeat DUI offenders with a pass rate of 98.9 percent. Repeat offenders in Montana account for 72 percent of DUI accidents in the state. Of those accidents, 37.4 percent involve drivers under the age of 21. In 2010, alcohol was a factor in crashes that killed 93 of the 221 people who died in road accidents statewide.

As of Oct. 1, the 24/7 Sobriety Program became state law in all Montana counties. Attorney General Bullock said the program will be rolled out slowly to counties to ensure they will be ready to handle the workload.

"The 24/7 Sobriety Program gives communities an enforcement mechanism to keep repeat drunk drivers off the road," Bullock said. "The success of this program in Lewis and Clark shows we can implement this in all counties in Montana."

Profiles in Service



» Arlanda J. Williams

NACo Board of Directors
Councilwoman
Terrebonne Parish, La.

Number of years active in NACo: 5

Years in public service: 5

Occupation: Health claims administrator

Education: B.A. in political science; M.A. in criminal justice

The hardest thing I've ever done: tell my son goodbye when I left him at his dorm for the first time.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Martin Luther King

A dream I have is to: one day run for Congress.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: have a fear of the dark.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: run for public office.

My favorite way to relax: is to listen to jazz music and watch Lifetime Movie Network.

I'm most proud of: taking a dream and making it a reality, by sponsoring a jazz social every year to raise funds for the prevention and cure of breast cancer.

Every morning I read: the newspaper.

My favorite meal is: Cajun gumbo with potato salad.

My pet peeve is: someone who allows their current situation to determine their future destination.

My Motto is: "Lead with Excellence, Serve with Grace."

The Last Book I read was: *The Help*

My Favorite Movie is: *Cooley High*

My Favorite music is: jazz.

My Favorite president is: Barack Obama.

Keep up with NACo online ...

www.naco.org



Noted: Reports and Studies You Can Use

► NACCHO releases 2010 National Profile of Local Health Departments Report

Did you know that, on average, 36 percent of local health departments receive a quarter or more of their revenues from county sources? The proportion of local funding varies from a high of 56 percent in Oklahoma counties to 2 percent in South Carolina. Local health departments are also mostly county-based. Sixty-eight percent of local health departments serve county or combined city-county jurisdictions.

These are just a smattering of statistics collected in the "2010 National Profile of Local Health Departments" report, recently released by NACCHO, the National Association of County & City Health Officials, a NACo affiliate. With a response rate of 82 percent, NACCHO's profile study provides a comprehensive picture of local health departments (LHD) in the United States.

Topics include LHD finances, workforce, services and activities, emergency preparedness, and other local public health infrastructure and practice topics. Profile data is useful to practitioners and policymakers at the local, state and federal levels; researchers; the media and the public.

For more information on the study, visit www.naccho.org/2010profile to view the report or order a printed copy.

► Study compares public, private sector compensation

The Center for State and Local Government Excellence's new pension and wage study, "Comparing Compensation: State-Local Versus Private Sector Workers," shows the difference between public and private sector compensation is "modest."

Nationwide, public sector employees' total compensation package averages 4 percent more than the private sector, the study found.

The research examines whether public employees benefit packages, especially

pension benefits, significantly outstripped those in the private sector. The 15-page report can be accessed at www.slge.org in the "Publications and Opinion Survey" section.

Also from the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, "Strengthening State and Local Government Finances: Lessons for Negotiating Public Pension Plan Reforms" covers the reforms of five governments (three states, one county and one city): Iowa, Oregon, Vermont, Gwinnett County, Ga. and Houston. It offers lessons on plan funding, the importance of using good data from experts, communication, governance and financial education.

Read the full report at www.slge.org.

► Confidence in local government remains high

Americans remain more confident in state and local government than in Congress to handle local problems, according to findings from the Sept. 8-11 update of Gallup's annual Governance Poll.

Two-thirds of Americans have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in their local governments to handle local problems, and a solid majority feel the same way about their state government.

Currently, less than a third of Americans have solid confidence in Congress, with just 5 percent saying they have a great deal of confidence in it. Less than a majority, 47 percent, expressed confidence in the executive branch.

Local government has fared particularly well over time, being the only governmental entity not to have lost Americans' trust since 1997. Trust in state government is now 11 percentage points lower than in 1997, while trust in the executive and legislative branches is down by 15 points or more.

Poll results are based on telephone interviews of a random sample of 1,017 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

Budget cuts force elections departments to get creative

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

SpeedRead » » »

» Suggestions for saving money on elections:

- Hold early voting in county offices using county staff to work polls
- Consolidate polling places so more than once precinct can use machines
- Consider postal voting — Same price, generally larger turnout

As counties continue to cut budgets, elections departments are often on the list. Their workers find themselves forced to keep what is perhaps the primary government service working with fewer resources.

"It's kind of something you have to pay for," said Tooele County, Utah Clerk Marilyn Gillette, who serves as chairwoman for the National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks. "You need to have elections to fulfill basic the basic government function — picking representation."

National Association of Elections Officials (NAEO) Director Doug Lewis warned against cutbacks for the 2012 General Election.

"You can reduce budgets in anything but a presidential year, you have so many people coming out of the woodwork to vote, a situation where polling places don't have enough resources to keep lines manageable is going wind up with egg on the face of the officials who cut the election budget," he said, referring to voter frustration with having to endure significant waits

to cast their ballots. "Of all the budgets we see cut, I think we'll see budgets go up for elections in 2012 because of the stakes involved."

A NAEO survey of 1,300 members found 40 percent had experienced budget cuts of at least 10 percent, though Lewis said some were as high as 60 percent.

"A 60 percent cut is debilitating," he said. "2011 won't have a turnout like we saw in 2008 or even 2004, but 2012 will likely be somewhat between the last two presidential elections, maybe higher if we have a real horse race."

He said equipment maintenance and software updates were two crucial expenditures, both necessary to keep existing voting machines in the lineup.

"Good elections are costly, but

bad elections you wish you had spent the money on a good election," he said. "When the blame is over, you wish you had never cut a budget at all."

Sacramento County, Calif. cut its election budget three years in a row, with a 50 percent cut in 2009.

Its registrar of voters, Jill Lavine, said the key to dealing with such dramatic cuts was getting her staff to find cost savings in their areas of expertise. When she told her staff of 38 they were looking at cutting positions, she said just about everyone had their code book on their desk.

"I learned, as we looked at solutions, not to ask if I could do something, but instead I'd ask our counsel 'could you defend me if I...?'" she said. "We haven't had any problems doing things like not advertising precinct locations in a legal journal when we were already publishing them online."

Sacramento County's voting operation became a lot more efficient and mechanized, though it did not necessitate any layoffs.

A ballot-sorter machine now does the work it had taken 20 people two weeks to complete. The county also moved to a print-on-demand system for ballots.

"It's scary to open election

day with no ballots," she said. "Not only did the on-demand system save us money, it saved us the time planning, ordering and organizing the fresh ballots and destroying the unused ones. It took the guesswork out."

Another lifeline, she said was ultimately cyclical.

"The best thing is having your supervisors up for election, because if you put the cuts in terms that will affect their races, they'll understand very quickly," she said.

Gillette suggested that counties in states with early voting use their county offices to house the voting machines and have county employees serve as poll workers.

"It costs us about \$1,000 a day to have early voting, that way you save a few thousand dollars and

our employees have enjoyed the change of pace," she said.

Consolidating precincts presents an opportunity to take advantage of economies of scale. Where Tooele County once had 19 polling places, it now consolidates 12 into an armory.

"It's the same number of poll workers, but more machines for them to use," she said.

Postal voting, favored in western states, including Washington, Oregon and Colorado, tends to be no less expensive than holding physical elections.

"What you save in machinery and personnel you spend on postage," she said. "The turnout is much higher, though, so it's a more efficient way to solicit more total votes."

COPS grants help child porn detectives hire, train more investigators, personnel

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a child porn ring that resulted in 11 arrests. "We're talking about a sadistic, demeaning, violent type of photography," San Jose Police Chief Rob Davis told a local television station.

Aiding in such busts, Kubik said, are mobile labs in vans that can be dispatched to a crime scene.

A suspect's computers can be analyzed in the van, rather than be seized and taken back to an offsite crime lab.

"We're able to get a lot more information," he said. "Generally, our confession rate has gone up to 98 percent because of the fact that these people know what's on their computers. They see us taking their computers apart and

viewing them, they now we know what's on their computers...."

The added detective will enable more of this type of onsite computer analysis to be performed, Kubik said.

During the two-year period of the grant, Sandoval said, the SAFE team has established several goals, including increasing surveillance of violent and high-risk sex offenders by 5 percent, and reducing the number of sexual offenders at large and the number of transient registered sex offenders by the same percentage.

"The SAFE team and the SAFE task force have a huge public awareness campaign, and what we've also committed to do with the COPS grant is conducting public awareness campaigns in all 12 counties during the two years," Sandoval said.

"I just can't tell you how thrilled the Sheriff's Office is to have gotten this award. Our team is really excited to be able to augment that team by one other detective to go out and do more of this kind of work."

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Emergency Communications Plan deadline approaching

By TIMOTHY LOEWENSTEIN
SAFEKOM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

September 11, 2001 proved to be an important date for more than the obvious reason. That infamous day also exposed the public safety communications failure at the World Trade Center that hampered an effective response and cost lives, due to a lack of communications interoperability.

This led to the creation of several national programs to improve interoperable communications, including SAFEKOM, which works to improve multi-jurisdictional and intergovernmental communications interoperability. As a result, the nation has made critical strides over the last decade in strengthening emergency communications capabilities through enhanced coordination, planning, training and equipment.

Oct. 31, 2011 is also an important date; it's the deadline for Goal 2 of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP), the first-ever strategic plan for emergency communications. Goal 2 states: "By 2011, 75 percent of non-UASI (Urban Areas Security Initiative) jurisdictions are able to demonstrate

response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies."

Ten years after September 11, it's extremely important to know how far the nation has come and where the gaps remain to ensure that first responders have the tools they need. The measurement of NECP Goal 2 provides each state with an opportunity to strengthen its coordination and understanding of emergency communications at the county or county-equivalent level. The results will help to better direct emergency communications resources and assistance to areas of greatest need.

A National Strategy: The National Emergency Communications Plan

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) developed the NECP in coordination with more than 150 stakeholders from all levels of government, including SAFEKOM and NACo representatives. The NECP established priorities and goals for improving public safety

communications and identifies key priorities to enhance governance, planning, technology, training and exercises, as well as disaster communications capabilities across the nation.

OEC is working closely with statewide interoperability coordinators to implement Goal 2. Statewide interoperability coordinators can provide guidance on reporting requirements for counties in their states, including the avail-

ability and usage of a Web-based tool (Response-Level Emergency Communications Tool, www.public-safetytools.info) developed by OEC to make the Goal 2 assessment and reporting processes easier.

The NECP aims to establish a baseline level of response for interoperable emergency communications across all jurisdictions nationwide. This initiative offers a unique opportunity for counties to assess their emergency commu-

nications capabilities and measure performance during incidents, events, or exercises involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

For more information, contact your statewide interoperability coordinator directly or the OEC Goal 2 Help Desk at: NECPGoals@hq.dhs.gov, or 202.630.NECP (6327).

(Tim Loewenstein represents NACo on the SAFEKOM Executive Committee.)

House bill would rescind funding for the Affordable Care Act

BILL from page 1

funding, while the House draft provides \$153.4 billion.

Here's how the two bills stack up.

Department of Labor

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) would receive \$10.4 billion in discretionary budget authority in the House draft bill, which is \$2.6 billion, or 20 percent, below the FY11 level of \$13 billion, and \$2.29 billion below the Senate bill.

The House draft reforms the funding structure of several DOL programs by eliminating advance funding for future years and transitioning agency budgets to correspond with the regular fiscal year.

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) would receive discretionary funding of \$7.5 billion, a \$2.2 billion cut from the FY11 enacted level. A large part of this reduction is due to the elimination of \$2.4 billion in advance appropriations for FY13.

The Senate bill does not make the same program changes and allocates \$2.6 billion for Title I Workforce Investment Act funding, and would maintain the \$771 million FY11 funding level for Adult Employment and Training activities, \$1 billion for Dislocated Worker and \$825 million for Youth formula funding streams.

The bill also includes \$59.9 million to conduct re-employment and eligibility assessments and unemployment insurance (UI)

improper payment reviews.

The House draft also requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct two studies: one that evaluates the cost-effectiveness of job training programs; and a second that evaluates the "skills-mismatch" problem within these programs to ensure that the training provided is adequate.

The Workforce Innovation Fund would receive \$100 million in the Senate bill to continue the reform in the nation's workforce investment system and improve the delivery of training programs to workers. The Workforce Innovation Fund would support innovative, systemic and evidence-based reforms, and help determine which strategies are cost-effective and have the greatest impact.

Health Programs

There are significant differences in Senate and House health funding levels, primarily because the House would rescind funds from the Affordable Care Act. The most significant rescission for county governments is the House draft's \$1 billion reduction in the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which basically wipes out the program.

In that same vein, the House rescinds the \$1.2 billion in mandatory funding from Affordable Care Act for Community Health Centers, but adds to the discretionary funds and comes up with \$2.6 billion, which is the same as FY11. The Senate

keeps the mandatory spending and puts in \$1.6 billion in discretionary funding for a total of \$2.8 billion.

Human Services and Education

In a surprise move, both the House and Senate protect the Community Services Block Grant program, which the president proposed to cut by 50 percent. In fact, the House, which at one point was also proposing to gut the program in FY11, put in \$704 million, compared to the Senate's current level funding of \$678 million.

On the other hand, the House cuts the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) \$200 million more than the Senate, funding it at \$3.4 billion. LIHEAP had received a significant boost in the last appropriations cycle to \$4.7 billion. Both chambers would, however, fund LIHEAP at a significantly higher level than the administration's request of \$2.5 billion.

Both the House and Senate also increase Head Start funding, with the House providing a higher level of \$8 billion, compared to the Senate's \$7.8 billion. FY11 funding was \$7.5 billion.

Nutrition services for the elderly would receive \$819 million in both bills, which is the same as FY11. This amount includes group site (congregate) meals and home-delivered meals, and has remained at the same funding level for years.

On the education side, the House also provides higher levels for Title I grants to elementary education at \$15.5 billion and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act grants to states at \$12.7 billion. The Senate provides the same funding as FY11 at \$14.5 billion and \$11.5 billion respectively. The House eliminates more than 30 education programs, including the Race to the Top competitive grants.

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Created by: Christopher Johnson



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Mississippi voters to decide 'personhood' status of unborns

BALLOT from page 1

for research at the County Commissioners' Association of Ohio, said it would be a pointless question, because the Ohio constitution couldn't trump the federal law.

"It lets people express anger at the law, and try to embarrass Congress and the president, but it's just there to get turnout for Issue 2," he said.

SpeedRead » » »

- » Ohio voters to decide on collective bargaining ban repeal
- » Denver City and County electorate to weigh in on mandatory sick-leave measure
- » Mississippi ballot question would define "personhood" for unborns

Colorado

Colorado voters will go to the polls Nov. 1 to decide Proposition 103, whether to raise taxes for five years to generate \$3 billion for education.

If approved, the state's income tax would increase from 4.63 percent to 5 percent for five years. It would also raise the state's sales tax from 2.9 percent to 3 percent for five years.

Opponents call the measure a "job killer," saying it would cost 119,000 jobs over the period and chase away \$218 million in potentially taxable income, according to media reports.

"I think that there's a large segment of our commissioner population that thinks, much like the governor does as well, this is not the time to increase taxes," said John "Chip" Taylor, executive director of the Colorado Counties Inc. "The polling numbers I've seen on that show it about evenly split, so it's still anybody's guess at this point."

In the City and County of Denver, voters will decide Initiative 300, requiring employers to provide sick time for all employees,

full-time, part-time and temporary, employed within Denver's geographic boundaries. It would grant one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked — up to 72 hours per year — for businesses with at least 10 employees, and up to 40 hours for employers of fewer than 10 people.

The rub for some, Taylor said, is vagueness in the measure's language: The leave can be used to care for a family member related by blood, marriage, legal adoption or "affinity."

"There's been a bunch of folks who say how far does that go? Do I get that to take time off for my second cousin's hernia operation and get to charge it to sick time?" he said.

Larimer County voters will consider Issue 1A, which replaces two sales taxes set to sunset in 2012 with a single tax (0.35 percent) "devoted primarily to the operations costs of public safety programs." The expiring taxes, approved by voters in 1997, are 0.2 percent for courthouse renovation and other county building construction, and 0.2 percent for county jail operation and infrastructure.

Some see it as a tax cut — 0.35 percent versus a combined 0.4 percent; others label it a tax increase over the zeroed-out sunseting taxes.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Supreme Court has cleared the way for voters to decide on a "personhood" ballot initiative Nov. 8 that would formally add unborn fetuses to the list of civil rights-bearers, thereby making abortion illegal in the state.

Initiative 26 asks should the term "person" be defined to include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning or the equivalent thereof? This would amend the Mississippi Constitution to define the word "person" or "persons," as those terms are used in Article III of the constitution.

Passage of the Mississippi personhood amendment could

lead other states to join a national challenge of *Roe v. Wade*.

Two other constitutional initiatives will also appear on the ballot: the integrity of a person's vote and the government's right to seize private property for non-public use.

Initiative 27 asks whether the Mississippi Constitution should be amended to require a person to submit government-issued photo identification in order to vote. It lets any voter lacking government photo ID obtain one without charge from the Mississippi Department of Public Safety; and exempts certain residents of state-licensed care facilities and religious objectors from being required to show photo identification in order to vote.

On Initiative 31, voters are asked to decide if government should be prohibited from tak-

ing private property by eminent domain and then transferring it to other persons. This would amend the state constitution to bar state and local governments from taking private property and then conveying it to other persons or private businesses for a period of 10 years after acquisition.

Exceptions from the prohibition include drainage and levee facilities, roads, bridges, ports, airports, common carriers and utilities. The prohibition would not apply in certain situations, including public nuisance, structures unfit for human habitation or abandoned property.

Maine

Maine voters will consider a constitutional amendment to change the years of redistricting the state legislature, congressional districts and county commissioner

districts, after 2013, from 2023 and every 10th year thereafter to 2021 and every 10th year after that.

Regarding gaming, this is the seventh time since 2000 that Mainers are being asked to approve referenda related to casinos and racinos at race tracks. The electorate will get to weigh in on whether to allow a casino with table games or racinos in three localities.

Two counties, Cumberland and Somerset, will, as a result of charter changes approved last year, expand their county commission from three members to five. Two new county commissioner districts in each county become effective Jan. 1, 2012.

(Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, staff writers, and Christopher Johnson, editorial assistant, contributed to this story.)



Registration Now Open ...

Join NACo for a one and a half day health-focused forum to learn how your county can advance community wellness initiatives and demonstrate the positive return on local investments in county health projects.

The forum will include information about strategies counties can implement that have the potential to both contain health care costs and improve coordination of county health promotion efforts.

Space is limited ... registration deadline is November 1.

For more information, visit

www.naco.org/healthycountiesforum



NACo Public Health Toolkit now available online

NACo has a new online toolkit intended to serve as a resource for counties about some of the key aspects of the Affordable Care Act. The toolkit offers information about the increased support the ACA offers to national, state and local prevention and public health activities.

Visit www.naco.org/healthreformimplement to access the toolkit and additional resources. Email healthreforminfo@naco.org to sign up for health reform implementation updates or submit questions.

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Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Precinct Atlas Eases Voter Registration Worries

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

West Virginia has its mountains and Minnesota is the land of a thousand lakes, but with all respect to its cornfields, Iowa is best known for its elections.

At the head of the line for presidential nominating contests, Iowa elections have a media-generated cachet unrivaled by other states' primaries. But with that renown comes an expectation that Iowa's elections be run with an efficiency that makes them the gold standard for representative democracy.

A state mandate in 2008 allowed voters to register onsite on Election Day, which compounded the demands on election officials when record turnout brought new voters to the polls. Officials were forced to make eligibility decisions on-the-fly for the first time. That meant integrating the new Election Day registration regulations with a litany of existing voter registration laws, the complexities of which left many people relegated to casting provisional ballots for fear of inaccuracies. The Election Day registration system was in place for the primaries, but few new voters took advantage of it, leaving the true test of the new system for the

general election.

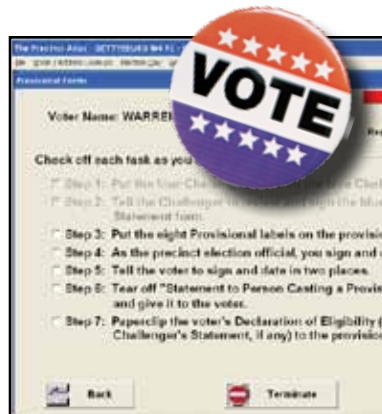
Cerro Gordo County Auditor Ken Kline stopped into a precinct during the afternoon of the general election to help poll workers process new voter registrations. After two hours of working, he walked away, shaking his head at the inadequacies of the materials he helped develop to assist poll workers.

"We're asking officials to remember 500 rules, 100 exceptions and a handful of exceptions to the exceptions," he said. "I don't think there are a dozen auditors who can do that all day without making mistakes."

The problem, he said, was not with ill-prepared workers but the complexities of the state's voting laws.

"Iowa has a lot of complex laws, and they're good laws, but that doesn't make my job easy, and they definitely aren't easy for someone who has to recall them one day a year," he said.

Sifting through the electoral wreckage afterward, Kline and Management Information Systems Director Scott Tepner decided to develop an electronic pollbook suited for Iowa's specific regulations, rather than use an existing program suited for another state, like Minnesota, which has a similar



This screenshot from the Precinct Atlas program shows a series of questions poll workers ask voting registrants.

Election Day registration law but various exemptions that didn't apply to Iowa.

What emerged — the Precinct Atlas — downloads voter registration information from the state records to create a decentralized program in each precinct. Creating compartmentalized voter registration pools that do not transmit information back to the state protects the state database from hackers.

Poll workers use a series of prompts, phrased in simple sentences, to determine whether a new registrant is eligible within minutes; the system prompts for the requisite identification forms and issues a full-fledged ballot, rather than a provisional ballot. It also confirms whether the voter is at the correct polling place, and eases the process for basic changes to the voter's registration, for example, an address change.

The Precinct Atlas debuted during a special election in 2009, and after officials reached an agreement with the secretary of state's office, Cerro Gordo County's brainchild is in use in 51 of Iowa's 99 counties, all at no cost.

The program has been a success, Kline said, because in 2010 his precincts issued far fewer provisional ballots than in 2008.

"Voters are treated consistently," he said. "Poll workers can better protect each voter's right to vote and secure integrity of the process."

It has also been, he said, much easier to train new poll workers.

"I've heard more than one person say to 'just trust the screen,' which actually gives new workers an advantage over seasoned ones, who still instinctively want to rely

on their experience," he said. "Literally all they have to do is operate a computer with a mouse and ask the questions on the screen to apply the rules correctly."

The county also debuted, during the 2010 general election, a function to speed result delivery to candidates. At 17 of the 26 Cerro Gordo precincts, the master computer had a cell phone card attached to a USB port, which sent a list of voters who had cast ballots, which were updated into the county database. Candidates could then log in and see turnout statistics current to within three minutes.

"We're not trying to get rid of poll watchers, but this is a much more sophisticated way of performing get-out-the-vote drives," he said.

"Poll watchers used to do their work with a chair in the polling place, now they can do it from the office and get almost-instant results."

By copyrighting the software, Cerro Gordo County could recover development costs and keep the program in the public domain. The county invested \$264,000 in development, which includes various staff members' time, and recouped \$30,000 from the state when it sold a license-to-distribute.

Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights award-winning programs. For more information on this NACo Achievement Award winner, visit NACo's Web site, www.naco.org ► Research & Publications ► Find Solutions.

NACo on the Move

» NACo Officers and Elected Officials

• **Lenny Eliason**, NACo president, spoke about his presidential initiatives, including Healthy Counties, at the Wisconsin Association of Counties Annual Meeting in Columbia County Sept. 25.

• **Chris Rodgers**, NACo first vice president, spoke about NACo and its priorities for counties at the Montana Association of Counties Annual Meeting in Rosebud County Sept. 25.



Lenny Eliason

» NACo Staff



Paul Beddoe

• **Paul Beddoe**, associate legislative director, spoke about NACo steering committees and the policy development and advocacy process, and participated in a panel discussion on federal health policy and the future of health care in Idaho counties, at the Idaho Association of Counties Annual meeting in Latah County Sept. 21.

• **Erik Johnston**, associate legislative director, spoke about NACo's Farm Bill priorities at the American Planning Association's Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. Sept. 19.

On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson, editorial assistant.

The Legislative Bulletin

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News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

• **Road closure proposals** for the Plumas National Forest have spurred **BUTTE COUNTY** to sue the Forest Service.

Last year, a Forest Service plan established what sort of vehicles can drive on which roads. Off-highway vehicle drivers immediately protested the rules, claiming they banned access to routes that had been used for recreational driving for decades.

Plumas Forest officials said areas were closed mostly because of threats to endangered plants and animals, and for public safety, according to the *Chico Enterprise-Record*.

• Children who attend **SAN DIEGO COUNTY**'s Monarch School for homeless students will now be **eligible for library cards** despite their lack of a permanent address.

The proposal gives Monarch students the ability to check out books in library branches and from the book mobile that makes regular stops near the downtown campus.

"Libraries are a good tool to help break the cycle of poverty," County Board Chairman Greg Cox told the *Union-Tribune*. "Students from the Monarch School already have had some hard knocks in life and providing them with a library card can boost their chances for a better education and give them some independence."

More than 13,000 students countywide experienced homelessness in the 2009-'10 school year, according to the San Diego County Office of Education.

► FLORIDA

• **LAKE COUNTY** commissioners are trying to more than double the distance **registered sex offenders** can live relative to schools, playgrounds and daycare centers.

The Board of County Commissioners began drawing up an ordinance that would prohibit registered sex offenders from living within 2,500 feet of areas where children are known to gather, an increase from the current state statute requirement of 1,000 feet.

This was in reaction to a still-unofficial plan by a for-profit venture to develop a remote neighborhood populated exclusively by convicted sex offenders, the *Orlando Sentinel* reported.

• Though they are not yet sure of the details, **POLK COUNTY** commissioners have decided to restrict **farm animals in residential areas**.

The main issue is how to give



Photo courtesy of Mobile County, Ala.

► ALABAMA

A monitoring station in **MOBILE COUNTY** contributes data to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s **Mobile Bay Storm Surge Monitoring Network**. Input from five stations around the county will help prepare for, monitor and respond to the effects of storm surges caused by coastal storms during this hurricane season and beyond. The network will make weather forecasting more accurate, providing more dependable information for evacuations and other life-saving responses. The data will be on NOAA's website this fall.

code enforcement officials a way to respond to complaints about noise and odor problems. Many subdivisions have deed restrictions or homeowners associations that prohibit certain animals, but the *News Chief* reported that animal-related complaints have originated from subdivisions that predate these regulations.

County planners proposed 50-foot setbacks, which would effectively push farm animals out of most residential areas.

► IDAHO

A legislative battle focused on state vs. local control is brewing as **PAYETTE** and **WASHINGTON** counties scrap for water quality and property rights in the face of a **new natural gas industry**.

County officials, including Washington County Commissioner Rick Michael, worry the drillers will have too much power. "I think they should have a voice at the table. I don't think they should be the dominant voice," he said.

The Idaho Department of Lands has completed a draft that came out of rulemaking negotiated by the industry, environmentalists, local activists and local officials, but Washington County has completed a new draft of its own ordinance that would regulate drilling there.

Meanwhile in Payette County, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved a conditional-use permit for a dehydrator for removing water vapor from natural gas—

with conditions to limit noise and other activities to satisfy neighbors.

County officials have heard other opinions, though, and believe they are on firm legal ground in passing a land-use ordinance that regulates drilling.

"I think we can make regulations that protect us, and I don't think the state can stop us," Michael told the *Idaho Statesman*.

► KANSAS

Repaying college loans may be **MARION COUNTY**'s way into two new residents' hearts. The County Commission set aside \$3,000 each of the next five years to entice people to move to the county by repaying portions of their student loans. The state will match that amount.

The **student loan repayment** program is part of Kansas' Rural Opportunity Zone program. The first two qualifying applicants who move to the county will be eligible to have student loans up to \$15,000 paid over a five-year period, provided they continue to live in the county the entire time.

It doesn't matter whether the person's degree is from a two- or four-year college, postgraduate, or from a trade or technical school, as long as the school is an accredited post-secondary school, according to the *Peabody Gazette-Bulletin*.

► MICHIGAN

New self-service portals are allowing **OTTAWA COUNTY**

citizens to become **their own county clerk**.

The portals allow people to print out certified copies of vital records from the county clerk's office through a Web interface. Users won't need to visit the clerk's office or receive paperwork through postal mail. Birth certificates, marriage licenses, property deeds and other records will be available through the online service.

The program encrypts and hosts documents on a county website, but neither the document locator nor encryption key—both of which are provided by the county clerk—are stored on the county's website, to preserve security.

The process of document retrieval should be simpler, and the office staff is expected to save money on printer ink, County Clerk Dan Krueger told *Government Technology* magazine. The system could also help counties collect revenue from usage fees.

► MINNESOTA

The little packets of silica gel found in new shoes say "do not eat," but in **GOODHUE COUNTY**, the message is "do not mine."

County commissioners **temporarily blocked silica mining** to give county officials time to assemble an advisory board to study the potential health, environmental and financial impacts of sand mining around the county.

Goodhue County is particularly strategic for its deposits of "frac" sand, round grains of sand that are used in fracture mining, Minnesota Public Radio reported. It is highly sought after for its size and strength. Frac sand has perfectly round grains that look like brown sugar crystals.

Sand in parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois is considered some of the best frac sand in North America because it is chemically inert and can withstand the intense pressure needed to break apart rock.

► NEBRASKA

The state recently announced its intention to have counties pick up the cost of youth services designed to help rehabilitate troubled kids and keep them out of the legal system.

One reason for the decision is a change in Medicaid coverage for certain behavioral services.

Chris Rodgers, **DOUGLAS COUNTY** commissioner and chair of the Youth Services Committee, said the added financial burden to the county could be between \$2 million to \$5 million, according to WOWT-TV. Rodgers, who is also NACo first vice president, attributed

the cost-shift to the recent end of a state program involving foster care.

"When they started the pilot project, they invested a lot of money in providing services to kids in the home," Rodgers said. "Now that they've changed that; they're not going to pay for it—that switches that back to the county."

► NEW JERSEY

CAPE MAY COUNTY's evacuation for Hurricane Irene in August has been deemed largely a success but with some room for improvement, officials attending the county's annual Emergency Preparedness Conference late last month concluded, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported.

Speakers said more shelters for evacuees and their pets are needed, and better collaboration with neighboring **CUMBERLAND** and **ATLANTIC** counties.

"It's an important subject and one that needs some discussion. This was the first time any of us had ever lived through something like this," said Ralph E. Sheets Jr., freeholder director, who headed the conference.

► NORTH CAROLINA

• Plans for a **regional light rail line** linking **ORANGE** and **DURHAM** counties are on hold for now. Orange County's Board of Commissioners has postponed placing a half-cent sales tax increase on the ballot Nov. 8 that was to have funded the project, *The Daily Tar Heel* reported.

Commissioner Barry Jacobs said a quarter-cent sales tax that would create revenue for local schools and economic growth took precedence.

"We are focused on passing the quarter-cent first," Jacobs said. The board will discuss putting the half-cent tax increase on the ballot next year, he added.

• Speaking of lines, **ALAMANCE** and **ORANGE** counties are 91 percent of the way "there" in resolving the location of a portion of the **border between the counties**. The State Legislature accepted 91 percent of the changes earlier this year, according to *The Times News*.

Parts of the boundary have been in dispute since Alamance was carved out of Orange in 1849, affecting taxation, school attendance and zoning issues.

Changes made to the remaining 9 percent of the boundary line must be approved by both county boards by the end of October.

Research News

Census Data Shows Incomes Dip across the Country

Amid a still struggling economy, the nation saw a decrease in median income and more Americans slipping below the poverty line last year, according to the new data from the Census Bureau.

The numbers show that median household income, the average amount brought in by all the wage-earners in one residence, continued to decline.

Real median household income was \$49,445 in 2010, a 6.4 percent or \$3,378, decrease from 2007. Between 2009 and 2010 alone, that number declined by 2.3 percent, or \$1,154.

Since 2007, the year before the most recent recession, real median household income has declined 6.4 percent. The most recent numbers are



down 7.1 percent from the median household income peak in 1999.

Overall, median household income dropped in all but five states and the District of Columbia from 2007 to 2010 with Connecticut (6 percent) and Arizona (5.9 percent) seeing the largest declines.

The top five counties that experienced a median household income decrease include Greenwood County, S.C. (27.8 percent), Howard County, Ind. (24.2 percent), Clayton County, Ga. (19.5 percent), Coconino County, Ariz. (18.4 percent) and Bannock County, Idaho (17.7 percent).

With income falling, the national poverty rate increased as well. The national poverty rate climbed to 15.1 percent, up from 14.3 percent in 2009, and is at the greatest percentage since 1993.

In 2010, 46.2 million people were in poverty which is an increase from 43.6 million in 2009. This is the fourth consecutive annual increase in the number of people in poverty and the largest number in the 52 years poverty estimates have been published.

Between 2009 and 2010, the poverty rate increased for children under age 18 from 20.7 percent to 22.0 percent, meaning that more than one in five children live in poverty. For adults, the poverty rate increased to 13.7 percent.

While much of the country experienced increases in the poverty rate, some areas did see declines. The top five counties to experience declines in the poverty rate include Lafourche Parish, La. (6.9 percent), Coryell County, Texas (6.8 percent), St. Landry County, Texas (5.2 percent), Aroostook County, Maine (5.1 percent), and El Paso County, Texas (4.4 percent).

The poverty line defined by the government is an income of \$22,314 a year for a family of four and \$11,139 for an individual. The Office of Management and Budget updates the poverty line each year to account for inflation.

The census report also contained data on health insurance showing the number of uninsured Americans climbed to 49.9 million last year, up from 49 million in 2009.

Overall, about 16.3 percent of the population was without health insurance in 2010.

To view the full report, visit www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf.

(Research News was written by Kathryn Murphy, senior research associate.)

Financial Services News

Retirement Event Spurs Employees to Act

Just like so many counties across the United States, resources are tight in Seminole County, Fla., but the needs of the people who serve the county are just as important.

So says Commissioner Bob Dallari, who was concerned earlier this year that Seminole County employees weren't doing enough for their retirement.

"We're proud of the excellent retirement plan Seminole County has in place for our employees," Dallari said, "but it's our belief that employees should also take advantage of their deferred comp program to supplement what their pension will provide in retirement income. Deferred compensation is one of the best ways public workers can supplement their other financial resources for retirement."

The county needed a way to get employees' attention and, in a positive way, encourage them to take action through the NACo Deferred Compensation Program. For more than 30 years, NACo has worked with Nationwide to offer the program as a way for county employees to supplement their pension and Social Security benefits when they're ready to retire.

So, Dallari asked their local Nationwide representative, Jennifer Massey, for ideas. Having had recent success in other communities with a similar event, Massey suggested hosting a retirement expo for Seminole County's 1,230 employees.

"Doing something more to get employees attention seemed long overdue, but this was our first attempt at a comprehensive seminar," said Brenda Carey, County Commission chairperson, who also sent a video invitation out to employees. "We worried that not enough individuals would come out to make the effort worthwhile. Turned out, they did, in droves."

Carey says employees came to the expo with questions that suggested they were just as concerned about the retirement-income prospects as the county was. The event gave employees ample opportunity to hear from retirement specialists discussing the financial markets and strategies for investing in seminars and one-on-one conversations. On the day of the expo, up to 30 percent of employees took part in an account review with more than 10 percent taking action, including

increasing contributions, rebalancing their accounts and rolling assets from another account into their NACo Deferred Compensation Plan accounts.

Nationwide did an excellent job helping prepare and staging the expo, said Vicki Hathaway, Seminole County human resources training advisor. "It was well-organized and well-presented. People who attended got a lot out of it. Employees told me they really enjoyed it."

National Save for Retirement Week is Coming

National Save for Retirement Week, Oct. 16–22, offers county employers a congressionally designated opportunity for helping employees understand how participating in their deferred compensation plan may benefit them. Nationwide representatives are prepared to work with NACo-member employers to use the week in ways that spur employees into action.

Whether it's by hosting a retirement expo or some other worksite event, "The more we can do to make connections with employees, and encourage retirement saving and planning for the future by taking control of it, the better it is for the county and their employees," says Angela Buchanan, Nationwide program director.

To find out more about how Nationwide can help, contact a Nationwide representative at 877.677.3678, option 2.

(Financial Service News was written by Bob Beasley, communications consultant, Nationwide Retirement Solutions.)

Investing involves market risk, including possible loss of principal.

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

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Some Good News ...

Despite the downturn, a few areas saw growth in median household income. The District of Columbia, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, West Virginia and Virginia all saw growth in median household income.

The top counties to experience growth were Monongalia County, W.Va. (27.3 percent), Muskogee County, Okla. (23.3 percent), Scioto County, Ohio (22.2 percent), St. Mary's County, Md. (20.1 percent) and Nassau County, Fla. (19.9 percent).

What's in a Seal?

» Laramie County, Wyo.

<http://webgate.co.laramie.wy.us>



Laramie County was originally created in 1867 as a county within the Dakota Territory. The county was named for Jacques La Ramee, a French-Canadian fur-trader. Laramie County became a county in the Wyoming Territory when the territorial government was formed in 1869. The county is the most populous of the 23 counties in Wyoming.

The county owes its existence to the coming of the Union Pacific railroad and the shifting of Fort Sanders a short distance to the south. Fort Sanders, originally called Fort John Buford, was established in July 1866 to protect the Union Pacific Railroad and the Overland Trail from Indian attacks.

The seal shows an American flag surrounding a cowboy in an arrowhead, which signifies the Indians that lived in the area, and the year the county was formed.

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

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Learning in Newberry County, S.C.

The HR Doctor recently had the pleasure and the honor to visit Newberry County, S.C. to present two seminars. Both were on the theme of practical steps which can be taken to mitigate and prevent liabilities facing the county. The idea was prevention and how to put off the day when bad things might happen. The focus was on human resources issues such as what to do in cases of bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of unlawful discrimination.

A subplot was to remind managers and executives of their special diligence responsibilities to insure that they are acting with honor and respect when they represent the people of the county in their daily behavior and performance on the job. It included a discussion on helping their subordinates appreciate their own responsibilities as well as that of their supervisors.

The chance to visit Newberry County was created during a conversation with a professional friend and colleague, County Attorney Jay Tothacer — also a long-time friend of NACo. Getting to meet County Administrator Wayne Adams, the sheriff's command staff and HR Director Wanda Hill was also a treat. So was the simple act of visiting a county which is far more representative of the American mainstream than is the giant urban county in which the HR Doctor currently lives.

The great hospitality, friendly

people and quaint downtown with a lovely Opera House performance venue gave the HR Spouse Charlotte and me the chance to hang out between seminars in a relaxed environment.

The HR Doctor grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y. in a sixth floor apartment. I got to look out at a sea of other brick apartment buildings. As the only child of two disabled parents who kept close watch on my safety, I was not allowed to go out and play at night on the streets. I was, however, allowed to go up on the roof, perhaps a more dangerous place. Nevertheless, it gave me a chance to experience a form of wide-open spaces by seeing the beauty of the night sky. That led to a lifelong interest in astronomy and the related philosophies and discoveries about how we may have gotten here and about our place in an amazing universe.

Fast forwarding many years, I can now look back as a daddy and a grandpa as well as a 40-year public administrator at the importance of perspective. That means living and thinking in terms of a mix of a widely focused strategic vantage point, much like astronomers view the cosmos, balanced with the tactical necessities of day-to-day transaction processing, daily meetings, problem solving, preparing memos and agenda items. These are the chores which dominate the day of a director and a chief administrative officer.



I have learned a great deal about the importance of viewing life and work with both a microscope and a telescope at the same time. A recent *Economist* magazine article looked at what bosses do all day. Only 3 percent to 4 percent of the day was spent thinking about long-term strategy, while 60 percent of the time was spent in meetings. There is something very wrong with that relationship.

It is always fun for me to do speaking engagements and seminars. I take them on thinking about what I can teach. I come away appreciating what I have learned. On that note, I am grateful to the employees of Newberry County for the chance to experience again what the heartland is like as well as getting to visit a more rural and pastoral setting.

I look forward to being able to do more conference presentations and seminars in smaller cities and counties, which may not have the resources for an ongoing training program for managers and supervisors. These smaller organizations, often with departments of one or two people, may also not fully appreciate the lurking liabilities of poor conduct and "malpractice" in decision making. The need for periodic and compelling reminders of what employees should do and

not do as stewards of the public trust is just as important there as it is in giant organizations. If they can be reminded of these risks and how to prevent or mitigate them in ways which are also fast-paced and laced with humor, so much the better.

Charlotte and I look forward to such visits and to experience even a brief encounter with smaller and medium-sized counties in the United States to help improve their perspectives — and my own. Perhaps that concept might evolve into a NACo-sponsored exchange program giving managers in very large and very small organizations the chance to see things from one another's viewpoints.

Phil Rosenberg

Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor • www.hrdtr.net

S.C. counties prepare to sue state over 2012 GOP primary costs

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

► OHIO

A state law that took effect Sept. 30 shifted the burden from prison to jails for some low-level felons. That means **increased costs** for Ohio's 88 counties, some criminal justice officials say.

While reducing the number of people eligible for incarceration, the new law increases the number eligible for local mental health and substance abuse evaluation and treatment. As a result, it shifts responsibility for rehabilitation and confinement away from the state and onto counties, many of which are already strapped for cash, OCM News Service reported.

MADISON COUNTY Prosecutor Steve Pronai said under the law, people convicted of crimes such

as fraud, receiving stolen property, drug trafficking and forgery are now more likely to be walking the streets than a prison yard.

► SOUTH CAROLINA

The **SPARTANBURG COUNTY** Council voted to **sue the state Election Commission**, if necessary, if the county is forced to pay for the Republican presidential primary next year.

The primary is likely to cost about \$1.5 million, according to the state Election Commission. Earlier this year, the General Assembly approved \$680,000 in rollover funds from the last election cycle, Mauldin Patch reported. The state GOP will kick in approximately \$300,000; that leaves a balance of \$520,000.

A spokesman for the Election Commission has said counties will

have to pay remaining local expenses of running the primary, the *Spartanburg Herald Journal* reported.

Henry Laye, director of the Spartanburg County Office of Registrations and Elections, said the local costs to the county would be between an estimated \$15,000 and \$20,000. The **GREENVILLE COUNTY** Council was considering taking similar action to Spartanburg's.

► WEST VIRGINIA

School and library systems in 12 counties will receive more than \$1.3 million to help **pay for Internet access**, *BusinessWeek* reported.

U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W. Va.) recently announced the "E-rate" funding from the Universal Service Administrative Corp. He helped found the program in 1996. Its goal is to ensure every student and adult regardless of income has access to computer technology. Rockefeller chairs the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, which oversees the program.

The recipients include libraries in **MORGAN, BERKELEY, JACKSON, MARSHALL, MORGAN** and **RALEIGH** counties.

(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 cbn@naco.org.)

Job Market & Classifieds

► CHIPPEWA COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – CHIPPEWA COUNTY, WIS.

Salary: \$95,00–\$110,000 annually; DOQ.

County Administrator, Chippewa County, Wis. (population 62,415) Salary DOQ. Chief administrative officer with statutory authority. Progressive County in western Wisconsin experiencing rapid growth. Excellent schools and attractive urban and rural environment. \$64.1M general fund budget; 400 employees; 29 member board. See www.co.chippewa.wi.us for complete position description, required qualifications, and county profile.

Required bachelor's degree, master's preferred; recent management/executive administrative experience in a complex organization; knowledge of budgeting/finance, human resources, intergovernmental relations, planning, and general county operations; strong interpersonal skills and commitment to team management and citizen participation/service. Application letter, resume, salary history, professional references to Public Admin-

istration Associates, LLC, P.O. Box 282, Oshkosh, WI 54903 or paassoc@northnet.net by Sunday, Oct. 16.

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – SARASOTA COUNTY, FLA.

Salary: DOQ.

Sarasota County, a full service county located in the middle of Florida's west coast, is seeking experienced administrator to plan, organize and direct all County programs and activities including an operating budget of \$867 million with over 2,000 full time employees. Requires Bachelor's degree and a minimum of 10 years' professional management experience or a Master's degree and two (2) years' experience as an appointed city manager or county administrator. A collaborative management style, candor, accessibility, fairness, transparency and flexibility are necessary attributes. Resumes by Fri. Oct. 28 to: Mr. James L. Mercer, 551 W. Cordova Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505. Email: jmercer@mercergroupinc.com. More information at www.mercergroupinc.com.

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