

WRRDA shaping future of water resources

By DAVID MITAMURA
DCM POLICY CONSULTING

The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 became law June 10. Commonly known as WRRDA, the law authorizes projects and programs under the purview of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and provides policy and administrative direction for the Corps' activities.

A key provision in WRRDA, under Section 7001, requires the Corps to solicit proposals from its local and regional stakeholders for water resources studies or project modifications to be conducted in partnership with the Corps. Section 7001 provides an excellent opportunity for county executives

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Photo courtesy of Anne Arundel County, Md.

Tai Chi students at the Annapolis Senior Activity Center perform the "Golden Rooster" pose. The photo took home first place honors for Anne Arundel County in the National Council on Aging Falls Free Photo Contest. It will be used to promote Falls Prevention Awareness Day on Sept. 23. Many of the center's members have found that Tai Chi is a senior-friendly exercise program that makes a positive impact on their balance, flexibility and breathing. Turn to page 14 for more News from the Nation's Counties.

Next leader of NACo's FSC ready for the challenge

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

When David Thompson assumes the position of president and managing director of NACo Financial Services Center (FSC) in November, his move to the Washington, D.C. area will bring him closer to where he was born.

This son of an elite "force recon" Marine was born in Quantico, Va., about 40 miles south of Washington. But he considers the Tar Heel State home, despite his having lived in nine states by the ninth grade.

Change has been a constant in his career—as upward mobility led to a series of increasingly higher-profile county manager jobs in North Carolina's Hertford, Stanly, Henderson and Durham counties, consecutively, between 1985 and 2000. He's served as executive director and CEO of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners since 2005.

"I couldn't hold a job," he joked



Courtesy of NCACC

David Thompson, executive director, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, gives marching orders to North Carolina county officials on an advocacy day in Raleigh.

in a recent conversation. That's far from the case, according to NACo's management. It was his diversity of experience that made him rise to the top of the list of candidates in

a national search, according to Bill Jasien, FSC's executive chairman, to whom Thompson will report. NACo Executive Director Matt Chase calls Thompson a "visionary" leader.

"In particular," Jasien said, "for me it is David's track record of success as both a county manager, in multiple counties, and as the state executive coupled with his sterling reputation for being a skilled leader, strong communicator and effective strategic executor."

Thompson said that having Jasien—who brings private sector, finance and federal government experience to the table—at the helm was a key factor in his decision to take the job. "One of the things that interest me is the vision that he's outlined along with Matt about our working relationship with the state associations and our counties in trying to provide good solid, value-added services to their

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SCOTUS will consider cell tower siting question

By LISA SORONEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

In *T-Mobile South v. City of Roswell* (Ga.) the U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether a letter denying a cell tower construction application that doesn't explain the reasons for the denial meets the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TCA) "in writing" requirement.

The State and Local Legal Center's (SLLC) *amicus* brief, which NACo joined, argues it does. This case is significant to counties because local governments generally regulate land use.

T-Mobile applied to construct a 108-foot cell tower in an area zoned single-family residential.

Roswell's ordinance only allowed "alternative tower structures" in such a zone that were compatible with "the natural setting and surrounding structures." T-Mobile proposed an "alternative tower structure" in

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A Racine County, Wis. program morphs disaffected youth into county boosters > [Page 2](#)

Catch the second part of the analysis of decisions in the last session of the Supreme Court > [Page 3](#)

Wellness programs keep the doctor away and premiums at bay > [Page 4](#)

NACo policy committee leaders are meeting in Washington this week to plot strategy for the coming year. Learn who they are > [Page 6](#)

Students take year-long county committee fellowships

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

To Racine County officials' chagrin, 80 percent of teenagers did not feel valued by their community. They decided to change that.

"That was a terrible statistic, shockingly low," said Supervisor Monte Osterman. "Everyone wants to feel appreciated, and 80 percent of our young people didn't feel like they had a place here. That was something we had to change."

A 2010 study profiling the county's youth prompted the Board of Supervisors, with the University of Wisconsin Extension Office, to find a way to put young people in touch with what counties do and how they value citizens of all ages. As they figure it out, a variety of perspectives came together to explain that sense of alienation.

Hayden Hendersen, a senior at the Prairie School, assumed county government meetings were simply inaccessible to her.

"I just figured they were closed meetings, it was an elite group I couldn't be a part of," she said. "I couldn't even answer if someone asked me what our county government did."

Walden High School senior Chardonay Wingfield simply felt young people's voices were not heard. Christian Ryan, a senior at Union Grove High School, felt that while people his age knew that county government existed, they often put state and federal government ahead in the hierarchy.

"People my age don't see what county government does," he said. "They think it doesn't apply to them, and they don't feel like they have representatives."

Now they do.

Hendersen, Wingfield, Ryan, and seven other Racine County high school students are getting a long look at how government works on the county level through the Youth in Governance program. They're in those once-inaccessible meetings,



Photo by Bev Baker, Racine County University of Wisconsin-Extension

Members of the Youth in Governance program tour the Racine County, Wis. Register of Deeds office while on a tour of county departments and facilities.

asking questions and bringing what they learn to their peers.

The planning process for Youth in Governance took two years, but in the end, the county had a guidebook that Osterman feels is strong enough to give any county a solid start in adapting the program for their needs.

The program involves assigning pairs of students to the county's five board committees. They attend monthly committee meetings, participate in discussions and offer their non-binding votes to the committees. Mentors are on hand to keep students up to speed and answer questions without interrupting the meetings. Students would, however, not be present for closed sessions.

"In our county, the real work gets done at the committee level, the discussion, the debates and the process," Osterman said. "That's where they could learn the best."

The program kicks off with a day-long tour of county facilities and an orientation for the "YGs," as the county calls the participants.

The hard part was reaching potential YGs, with an appetite for learning.

"We had to do some serious outreach, there are a lot of programs fighting for attention from school kids," he said.

Osterman and other supervisors, county officials and extension office staff did presentations at schools, pitched the program to teachers and guidance counselors and trusted them to bring them enough applicants to fill up to 10 slots.

The haul amounted to 60 students, which was culled down to 30 applicants and 20 interviewees, who

SpeedRead » » »

- » Students are paired up in the county's five board committees
- » They take non-binding roles, independent of superiors

met with Osterman and other program managers in groups of three.

"We wanted to keep it relaxed, and that's hard to do when a 16-year-old has to face three adults alone," he said.

In the population that Osterman worried was turning away from government, he instead found himself invigorated as he conducted interviews.

"One of the greatest things I've learned came out in an interview," he said. "When we asked them to tell us why we should pick them over someone else, one girl said, 'It's easy for me to accomplish things. I have a clear conscience, if you have a clear conscience, nothing gets in your way; it's easy to accomplish things.'"

Josh Graf, a senior at Union Grove with Ryan, hopes to take what he learns about local land use policy to help him talk to his real estate developer uncle on more even ground.

Like Ryan, Graf focused his interest in government on the state and federal level, and was surprised to find a lack of partisanship on the County Board.

"There's so much to do running a county; there's no time," he said. "It's just a matter of trying to do the right thing for your community."

Graf is Hendersen's cousin, and he pointed out that four of the 10 YGs attended the same elementary school.

Ryan's work with the government affairs committee has given him a chance to work with the sheriff's office and give input into how the county's anti-Internet exploitation effort could be more successful.

"We want to give it more teeth, make it more effective," he said. "I think we're making progress."

Osterman said the county staff and supervisors have welcomed the YGs, helping them with any questions and taking opportunities to provide some guidance.

"I've noticed the YGs reinvigorating some of my colleagues on the board," he said. "The youth movement works the other way, too."

Three months into the program, Wingfield and her peers are getting the hang of how their meetings work, and where they can offer their input.

After tours of the Racine County Jail and its youth detention center, Wingfield pointed out what she saw as determinism in the basic process of introducing youths to detention.

"They talk about rehabilitation and making sure kids are ready to go back home, but a lot of times it seems like they're being prepared to go back to jail when they're older," she said. "It was really similar to the jail."

CORRECTIONS

► In State to State on page 20 in the Aug. 24 issue, the infographic lists North Dakota. It should have listed West Virginia. Also, the banner above the article should have read Maine and West Virginia. We regret the errors.

She and Hendersen are on the Health and Human Services Committee. Hendersen chose that committee in part because of her plans to study medicine in college, but she is already feeling the tug of policy studies making her reconsider. She already sees the Youth in Governance program starting to address the concern that was its genesis in the first place.

"Even though they're only picking a few people, all of my friends are hearing about what the county does, so the word definitely gets out," she said. "They weren't just picking representatives for the youth, they made us representatives for the county."

Likewise, Wingfield is seeing her role develop.

"I want to be a voice not only for the youth, but the adults," she said. "The experience is helping me be a bridge, to help people understand what county officials are saying and what they mean, where they're coming from. I will make things easier for people to understand and care."

Racine County has materials available for counties interested in replicating the Youth in Governance program. Contact Monte Osterman at Monte.Osterman@goracine.org.

CountyNews

President | Riki Hokama
Publisher | Matthew Chase
Public Affairs Director | Tom Goodman
Executive Editor | Beverly Anne Schlotterbeck
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Staff Writer | Charlie Ban
Graphic Artist | Jack Hernandez
Editorial Assistant | Christopher Johnson

ADVERTISING STAFF
Job Market/Classifieds representative
Christopher Johnson
National Accounts representative
Beverly Schlotterbeck
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Quick Takes

TOP 5 AVERAGE PROPERTY TAXES PAID (2007-2011)

1. Westchester County, N.Y.
2. Nassau County, N.Y.
3. Bergen County, N.J.
4. Hunterdon County, N. J.
5. Rockland County, N.Y.

Source: Brookings Now

Supreme Court 2014 review includes clean air, unions, railroad rights of way, tribal sovereignty

By LISA SORONEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

From First Amendment rights to the Affordable Care Act, the U.S. Supreme Court decisions so far in 2014 reflect what appears to be a key characteristic of the court under Chief Justice John Roberts—an inclination toward nominally incremental rulings with vast potential for great change. Below are cases the Supreme Court ruled on that affected counties.

(This is the second in a two-part series on U.S. Supreme Court decisions with a county connection.)

Clean Air Act Permits

In *Utility Air Regulatory Group v. EPA* the court held 5–4 that EPA cannot require stationary sources to obtain Clean Air Act permits only because they emit greenhouse gases. But the court concluded 7–2, EPA may require “anyway” stationary sources, which have to obtain permits based on their emissions of other pollutants, to comply with “best available control technology” (BACT) emission standards for greenhouse gases.

The court reasoned that permitting all newly covered stationary sources for greenhouse gas emissions “would place plainly excessive demands on limited governmental resources is alone enough reason for rejecting it.” EPA’s regulations would increase the number of permits by the millions and the cost of permitting by the billions.

To avoid the result described above, EPA issued the “Tailoring Rule,” which increased the permitting threshold for greenhouse gases from 100 tons – 250 tons per year to 100,000 tons per year, initially. The court concluded EPA “has no power to ‘tailor’ legislation to bureaucratic policy goals by rewriting unambiguous statutory terms.”

Finally, the court held if a stationary source is already being regulated because of its emissions of other pollutants it may be subject to BACT emission standards for greenhouse gases. “Even if the text [of the Clean Air Act] were not clear, applying BACT to greenhouse gases is not so disastrously unworkable, and need not result in such a dramatic expansion of agency authority, as to convince

us that EPA’s interpretation is unreasonable.”

Unions

In *Harris v. Quinn*, the court held 5–4 that the First Amendment prohibits the collection of an agency fee from home health care providers who do not wish to join or support a union. Medicaid recipients who would otherwise be institutionalized may hire personal assistants.

In Illinois, the Medicaid recipient is the employer and is responsible for almost all aspects of the employment relationship, but the personal assistant is a state employee for collective bargaining purposes. A number of personal assistants did not want to join the union or pay it dues.

In *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, the court held in 1977 that state and local government employees who don’t join the union may still be compelled to pay an agency fee to cover the cost of union work related to collective bargaining.

The court refused to extend *Abood* to personal assistants who aren’t “full-fledged” public employees. What justifies an agency fee is that unions must promote the interests of members and nonmembers alike, meaning they cannot negotiate higher pay for members or only represent members in grievances.

This justification has little force where a union cannot negotiate pay or represent nonmembers (or members) in grievances. While the court was highly critical of *Abood*, it did not overrule it. This ruling is a setback for personal assistants in other states that followed Illinois lead and allowed them to unionize.

Railroad Rights Of Way

In *Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust v. United States*, the court held 8–1 that the United States does not own the abandoned railroad rights of way it granted in the General Railroad Right-of-Way Act of 1875. The court ruled against the United States “in large part because it won when it argued the opposite before this court more than 70 years ago in the case of *Great Northern Railway Co. v. United States*.”

The United States and the State and Local Legal Center (SLLC) argued that the court should not read *Great Northern* so broadly and that a series of federal statutes grant the United States title to abandoned 1875 rights of way (unless a state or local government establishes a “public highway,” including a

recreational trail, within one year of abandonment).

While the justices discussed at oral argument the SLLC’s argument that state and local governments have relied on these statutes, the court concluded they don’t apply because “[they] do not tell us whether the United States has an interest in any particular right of way; they simply tell us how any interest the United States might have should be disposed of.” This case only impacts abandoned 1875 rights of way, not all abandoned railroad corridors.

Tribal Sovereign Immunity

In a 5–4 decision in *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*,

the court held that Michigan’s suit against the Bay Mills Indian Community to stop the tribe from operating a gaming facility on non-Indian lands is barred by tribal sovereign immunity. Indian tribes retain historic sovereign immunity and cannot be sued unless Congress abrogates sovereign immunity.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) abrogated sovereign immunity for gaming activity on Indian land that violates a Tribal-State compact.

Bay Mills opened a casino about 125 miles from its reservation. Michigan asked the court to overturn its precedent that held that there is no exception to sovereign immunity for illegal ac-

tivity occurring outside of Indian lands. The court refused “for a single, simple reason: because it is fundamentally Congress’s job, not ours, to determine whether and how to limit tribal immunity.”

The court pointed out that Michigan has many powers over illegal Indian gaming other than suing a tribe including: denying a gambling license, seeking an injunction for gambling without a license, injunctive relief against tribal officers for unlawful conduct, and prosecuting those who maintain or frequent an unlawful gambling establishment.

And in their compacts, states can and have negotiated a waiver of sovereign immunity for gaming outside Indian lands.

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Counties grant employees insurance premium holidays

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Employees in Hennepin County, Minn. knew to expect July 4 and Christmas Day off this year. What they didn't anticipate was a three-pay-period, health insurance "premium holiday."

The Board of Commissioners in

July approved a premium holiday for three paydays, ending Sept. 12. During that time, 8,200 employees who participate in the county's self-funded health insurance plan have had no premiums deducted from their paychecks for individual or group coverage. On average, employees pocketed the \$60 to \$650 that normally covers their share of

premium costs.

Benefits Manager Jeremy Zajicek said the holiday extended to the county as well. "Because we're not contributing (the county's share) that month, it's a savings to us," he said. The county collects about \$95 million a year in health insurance premiums — employees pay 17 percent; the county's share is 83 percent or \$8 million in 2014.

County Board Chairman Mike Opat credits downward-trending insurance claims for helping the county beef up its insurance plan reserves. "Our employee wellness initiatives have been causing that, so we're able to take a holiday and use what we have banked already," he said.

Over the past few years, several counties — from Davis County, Utah to Calvert County, Md. to Woodbury County, S.D. — have done likewise, albeit for varying numbers of pay periods.

"The idea behind a premium holiday, in general, is that you have reserves that are larger than you would normally like to see and you have had favorable claims experience recently," according to Ed Gilliland, human resources director for Woodbury County, whose County Board unanimously approved a premium holiday in 2011. Those reserves exist to cover "incurred but unreported claims," he said, that is, claims of people who have had medical expenses that have not yet been processed.

He recalled that a few years ago, unusually high claims brought the plan "literally to brink of being out of money, unable to pay claims." A county like his, with about 400 employees, can see wide swings in claims activity from year to year.

One option was to raise insur-

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- » Insurance premium holidays save employees and counties money
- » Healthy reserves in self-funded plans make them possible
- » Counties see premium breaks as rewards for employees' lowering health care costs

ance premiums, which the county did. "You hit people hard with increases if you don't stay adequately reserved," he said. "If you've got a group of 1,000 to 2,000, you should be able to estimate claims very closely within just a very few percent every year. But with a smaller group like this in the 380 to 400 range, statistically, you know you're going to have years that you are 10 percent or more off."

Gilliland said being able to provide a premium holiday is one of the benefits of a self-funded insurance plan, but it's not for everyone. Any employer with more than 100 employees "is probably safe being self-funded, as long as you've got somebody knowledgeable managing the plan; 200 certainly is safe," he said.

"If you're having a problem with cash flow, if you're having a problem with finances, you definitely need to be fully insured."

Like Hennepin County, Woodbury also instituted wellness and disease management programs — about 60 percent of employees participate — which Gilliland said resulted in lower claims in 2010 and reserves "beyond the minimum." This is preferable to raising premiums, he said, because doing so can create bargaining

issues where members of the workforce are unionized, as is the case in Woodbury and Hennepin counties.

For that reason, Gilliland said it's better to hold the line on premiums rather than lower monthly deductions across the board. "It still keeps you on track from a funding perspective, so that people are used to the level that you're funding at," he explained. "In case something does happen that you need to start increase premiums, you're not starting from an artificially low point."

In South Dakota, the reserves can't be used for purposes unrelated to the health insurance plan. It's a different story in Utah, according to Mel Miles, personnel director for Davis County, which participates in the state's Public Employees Health Program.

The county received a credit from PEHP of more than \$586,000 and was able to provide \$86,000 in relief to employees in a premium holiday declared in 2012. It also was able to set aside \$500,000 to cover county capital expenses such as building repairs or renovations. The county's roughly 750 employees typically pay 10 percent of their health insurance premium.

"Our claims experience had been running quite well; we have a very active wellness program where we're constantly encouraging employees to be thoughtful users of the insurance plan and to do everything they can to improve their own health status," Miles said.

"I think it provided a nice little morale bump for employees; I think it sent the right message to them that we're all in this together in terms of doing everything we can to manage health care costs."



Profiles in Service

Joe Briggs

Chairman, Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee
Commissioner, Cascade County, Mont.

Number of years active in NACo: three

Years in public service: 10

Occupation: full-time commissioner. Prior to election, I owned and operated a consulting firm specializing in local and wide-area computer networks.

The hardest thing I've ever done: deliver the eulogy at one of my best friend's funeral

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Thomas Jefferson, George Patton and Ronald Reagan

A dream I have is to: travel to the capitals of the ancient world.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: love to cook especially with Dutch ovens and over campfires.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: white-water canoeing.

My favorite way to relax is: tent camping in the middle of nowhere with no cell service or electricity.

I'm most proud of: my wife and two children.

Every morning I read: *The Great Falls Tribune*.

My favorite meal is: prime rib, Caesar salad and a baked potato.

My pet peeve is: sycophants (self-seeking people).

My motto is: "Find it, fix it and move on."

The last book I read was: *The Iron Realm*, a novel my daughter recently finished writing.

My favorite movie is: *El Dorado* starring John Wayne and Robert Mitchum.

My favorite music is: country.

My favorite president is: Ronald Reagan.

I am a member of NACo because: NACo and our state association, MACo, offer a unique blend of information, support, fellowship, fun and the ability to band together and change the world one decision at a time. To me, the position of an county elected official is a bit dichotomous in that although we need to continually seek the input and perspective of our constituents, there are a limited number of them who actually understand what we do.

I think this is particularly true of county commissioners, judges, supervisors or whatever title is used in your home state. NACo is a place to have open discussions with your peers, people who understand what you do and who can provide the perspective of their own experiences as an elected county official. We learn from each other, we combine our efforts across state lines to solve real problems and we support each other from afar.

I am active in my state association and in NACo because they help me to be a better commissioner for my citizens as well as a better person.

Corps requests non-federal proposals

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and administrators to shape the future of the Corps by identifying beneficial and necessary water resources projects to be developed through federal or non-federal cost sharing.

Does your county have a problem with frequent flooding? Does the port that supports your local and regional economy need improvements? Would the quality of life in your community be improved by restoring an urban stream or watershed? Is your growing economy dependent on additional

water supply? The key missions of the Corps support the development of water resources projects to tackle these types of issues. Through the Section 7001 solicitation, county executives can help the Corps and Congress identify where scarce federal resources can be invested to address the nation's water resources priorities.

The Corps is currently requesting proposals from non-federal interests — such as county executives and their staffs — for proposed feasibility studies and proposed modifications to authorized water resources development projects.

The request is open until Dec. 3. Once proposals are collected, the Corps will publish an annual report to Congress listing the proposed projects.

The report is intended to be the sole list of water resources projects to be considered for authorization in future legislation. This important opportunity gives county executives and administrators a voice on the Corps' focus into the future.

The official notice of the request for proposals can be found in the Federal Register at <http://1.usa.gov/1vpY84X>.



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[hmoody@
dinwiddleva.us](mailto:hmoody@dinwiddleva.us)

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Collector of Revenue
Polk County, Mo.
collector@polkcountymmo.org

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Midland County, Texas
luis_sanchez@co.midland.tx.us

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Commissioner
Renville County, Minn.
bob_f@co.renville.mn.us

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pope.craig@co.polk.or.us

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Commissioner
Lake County, Fla.
[wcadwell@
lakecountyfl.gov](mailto:wcadwell@lakecountyfl.gov)

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Board Member
Will County, Ill.
dwinfrey13@gmail.com

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DeKalb County, Ga.
lmay@dekalbcountyga.gov

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Commissioner
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Minn.
[victoria.reinhardt@
co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:victoria.reinhardt@co.ramsey.mn.us)

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Commissioner
Catawba County, N.C.
kbarnes@catawbacountync.gov

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Supervisor
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mason@fairfaxcounty.gov

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[rbockenfeld@
co.arapahoe.co.us](mailto:rbockenfeld@co.arapahoe.co.us)

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Commissioner
Lake County, Ohio
dtroy@lakecountyohio.gov

Carol Holden • vice chair
Commissioner
Hillsborough County, N.H.
ccommish@comcast.net

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Palm Beach County, Fla.
ptaylor@pbcgov.org

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Tax Collector
Seminole County, Fla.
rvaldes@seminoletax.org

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Commissioner
Douglas County,
Neb.
[maryann.borgeson@
douglascounty-ne.gov](mailto:maryann.borgeson@douglascounty-ne.gov)

Larry Johnson • vice chair
Commissioner
DeKalb County, Ga.
larryjohnson@dekalbcountyga.gov

Clay Jenkins • vice chair
County Judge
Dallas County, Texas
clay.jenkins@dallascounty.org

Toni Preckwinkle • vice chair
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Cook County, Ill.
Pamela.Cummings@cookcountyil.gov

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Skagit County, Wash.
kend@co.skagit.wa.us

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Toni Carter • chair



Commissioner
Ramsey County,
Minn.
[Toni.Carter@
co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:Toni.Carter@co.ramsey.mn.us)

Fred Foster • vice chair
Commissioner
Durham County, N.C.
jnjackson@dconc.gov

Craig Gregory • vice chair
Council Member
St. Martin Parish, La.
runningtherace67@yahoo.com

Hubert Walsh • vice chair
Supervisor
Merced County, Calif.
Dist2@co.merced.ca.us

George Hartwick • vice chair
Commissioner
Dauphin County, Pa.
ghartwick@dauphinc.org

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Guilford County,
N.C.
[kcashio@
co.guilford.nc.us](mailto:kcashio@co.guilford.nc.us)

Judy Shiprack • vice chair
Commissioner
Multnomah County, Ore.
district3@multco.us

Sally Heyman • vice chair
Commissioner
Miami-Dade County, Fla.
heyman@miamidadegov

Leon Evans • vice chair
CEO
Center for Health Care Services
Bexar County, Texas
l_evans@chcsbc.org

Nancy Schouweiler • vice chair
Commissioner
Dakota County, Minn.
nancy.schouweiler@co.dakota.mn.us

Public Lands Steering Committee

Ron Walter • chair



Commissioner
Chelan County,
Wash.
[ron.walter@
co.chelan.wa.us](mailto:ron.walter@co.chelan.wa.us)

Mike Murray • vice chair
Commissioner
Lewis and Clark County, Mont.
mmurray@co.lewis-clark.mt.us

Tim Josi • vice chair
Commissioner
Tillamook County, Ore.
tjosi@co.tillamook.or.us

Lesley Robinson • vice chair
Commissioner
Phillips County, Mont.
threelazyj@yahoo.com

Lynn Padgett • vice chair
Commissioner
Ouray County, Colo.
d1bocc@mtngeogeek.com

Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee

Joe Briggs • chair



Commissioner
Cascade County,
Mont.
[jbriggs@
casadecountymt.gov](mailto:jbriggs@casadecountymt.gov)

Patricia O'Bannon • vice chair
Board Chair
Henrico County, Va.
tuckahoe@co.henrico.va.us

David Whicker • vice chair
CIO
Rockingham County, N.C.
dwhicker@co.rockingham.nc.us

Lloyd Hara • vice chair
Assessor
King County, Wash.
Lloyd.Hara@kingcounty.gov

Transportation Steering Committee

Peter McLaughlin • chair



Commissioner
Hennepin
County, Minn.
[peter.mclaughlin@
hennepin.us](mailto:peter.mclaughlin@hennepin.us)

Cindy Bobbitt • vice chair
Commissioner
Grant County, Okla.
gtcommnd2@wiredok.com

Edward Emmett • vice chair
County Judge
Harris County, Texas
judge.emmett@cjo.hctx.net

Gary Fickes • vice chair
Commissioner
Tarrant County, Texas
gdfickes@tarrantcounty.com

James Healy • vice chair
Board Member
DuPage County, Ill.
jdh@gsrnh.com

Large Urban County Caucus

Roy Charles Brooks • chair



Commissioner
Tarrant County,
Texas
[rcbrooks@
tarrantcounty.com](mailto:rcbrooks@tarrantcounty.com)

Rural Action Caucus

Michael Victorino • chair



Council Member
Maui County,
Hawaii
[michael.victorino@
mauicounty.us](mailto:michael.victorino@mauicounty.us)

Visit
www.NACo.org
for more information
on NACo steering
committees and
caucuses.

Culture of Health spotlights Spokane County, Wash.

The June 30 issue of *County News* reported on the three county winners of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health prize. We're following up with an in-depth interview with Spokane County, Wash. Commissioner Shelly O'Quinn, who expressed an interest in sharing more about her county's journey into a culture of health.



Commissioner Shelly O'Quinn
Spokane County, Wash.

Q: What does building a culture of health mean in Spokane County, Wash.?

In Spokane County, we want to build a culture of health, through a shared vision for lasting change that ensures that that every man, woman and child in our county has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life. As a community we recognize the powerful impact education has on long-term health, and are working to improve health by expanding educational opportunities that empower young people and increase educational attainment for all.

Q: How did your county prioritize which community issues to focus on?

Priority Spokane, a leadership coalition of which Spokane County government is a member and funder, convened a series of community meetings in 2009 to prioritize issues of importance. Work groups were developed around economic development, education, public safety, transportation and the environment. After long discussions about data and root causes behind metrics, when it came to the final vote the outcome was clear: educational attainment won two-to-one over the next highest issue, economic vitality. Spokane County citizens

understood that educational attainment is the key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and its related health inequities.

Q: What led your county to focus on addressing community health, and how education became the primary tool to improve the community's overall health?

In 2012, the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) produced a report entitled *Odds Against Tomorrow: Health Inequities in Spokane County*. The data was shocking. The report revealed an 18-year difference in life expectancy between the wealthy neighborhood on the hill with the highest life expectancy and the poor neighborhood downtown with the lowest rate, even though the two neighborhoods are only a few miles apart.

When we took a look at the data around education, there was a clear link between a lack of education and lack of income, poor health and low-life expectancy. For example, babies born to mothers with less than a high school education are 2.5 times as likely to die before their first birthday as babies born to mothers with a college degree. We recognized that one of the most effective ways to build a culture of health in our community was to improve educational attainment, which we had already identified as our community priority in 2009.

Armed with the new data from the report, we set out on a path to create a culture of health in our community focused on educational attainment. However, when you consider that Spokane Public Schools — the second largest district in the state — had an on-time graduation rate of 57.7 percent in 2006 and county-wide the rate was around 70 percent, this was not a good prognosis and we had a lot of work to do!

Q: What has the county undertaken to move towards building that culture of health?

To empower young people in Spokane County and expand educational opportunities to improve health, we are transforming our

Drought affects counties in more ways than agriculture

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

As several years of drought conditions parch states in the West and Midwest, counties are starting to see the impact outside of the crop output.

California is seeing the worst effects, to a point that the U.S. Drought Monitor measures most of the state as experiencing "exceptional drought," and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared "direct drought conditions" in 57 of the state's 58 counties. In total, 558 counties nationwide were given primary drought designations, as of Sept. 3.

Water usage restrictions are mostly dictated by the state and water districts and authorities, but some counties, including Fresno in California, have placed some restrictions in their community water districts, such as setting watering hours and requiring hoses to have pistol controls to avoid spillage.

Supervisors in Santa Clara County, Calif. directed each county department to cut water usage by 25 percent in response to the drought.

"The state's restrictions on water use have mostly targeted homes and businesses," Supervisor Dave Cortese said. "County government employees should lead by example and explore strategies to use less water at work."

The lack of rain has trickled down to cause unexpected problems, namely on rural, unpaved roads.

That's where Cindy Bobbit has seen a surprising impact. She focuses on roads and bridges in Grant County, Okla., where she is a commissioner.

"We have mainly dirt roads, and we can't grade them because there's no moisture to keep the ground together," she said. "If the soil is too dry, it will break apart and turn into dust and blow away."

Bobbit and Gila County, Ariz. Supervisor Tommie Martin serve on the federal drought advisory council.

The impacts on Grant County's roads isn't limited to dirt roads.

"We're seeing one-inch cracks forming in asphalt roads that aren't even nine years old," Bobbit said. "The earth that the roads are built on is shrinking from being dry so long."

Heavy use on dirt roads is caus-

ing dust problems that, without rain, aren't being tamed.

"Those trucks are really pounding the roads," she said. "They just keep breaking dirt up and making it easier to catch in the wind."

Though Bobbit said the drought, now in its fourth year in Oklahoma, has reached levels last seen in the 1930s and 1950s, conservation practices on agricultural land have helped keep dust from being a problem there.

Gila County is 96 percent federal land, most of it densely forested, and Martin said the drought turns that forest into a tinderbox.

"The trees are like straw when it's so dry, and they'd burn up in an instant," she said. "The fire would burn so hot that the soil would become like glass and any rain would just rush into our creeks like a storm drain."

Martin said the infrastructure replacement alone would bankrupt the county, but if the fire burned the 4 percent of privately-owned land, the county's tax base would be wiped out before it wrote a check.

"It's a vulnerable situation," she said. "One that could be improved with better forest management."

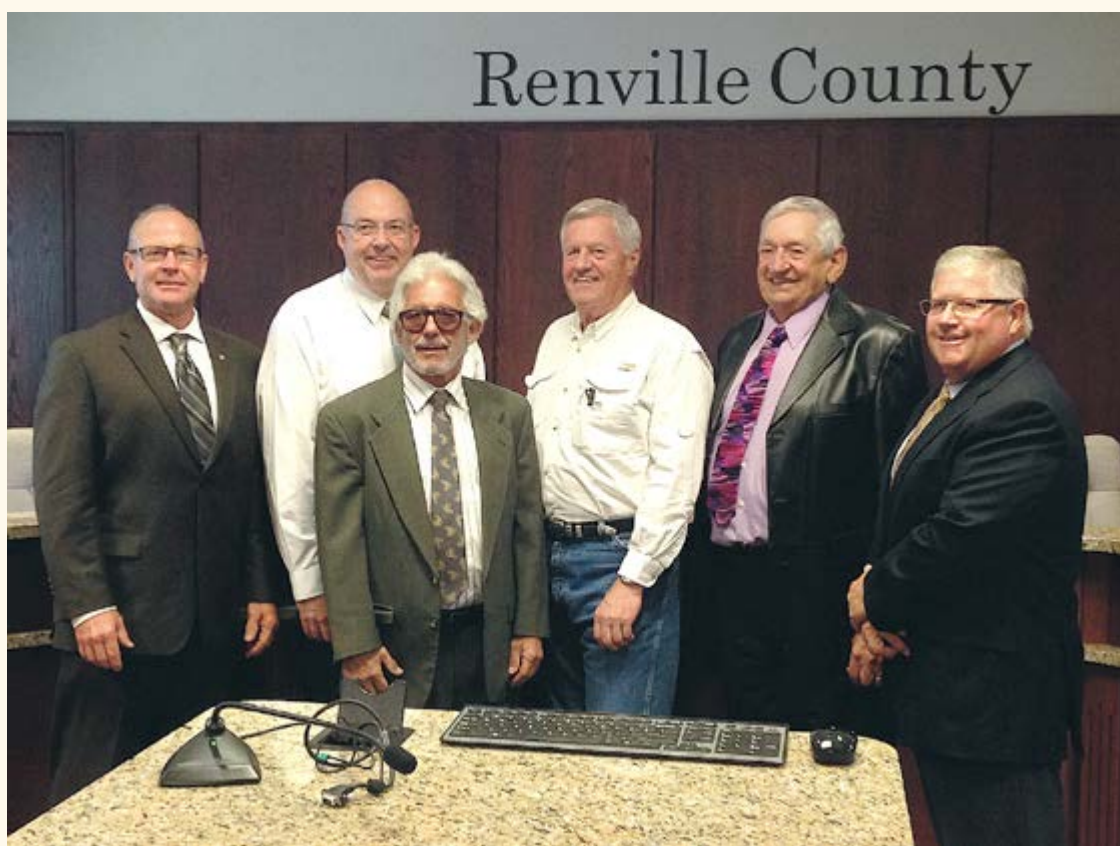


Photo courtesy of Bob Fox

Renville County, Minn. commissioners took advantage of the Capitol Hill summer recess to meet with their congressman, Rep. Collin C. Peterson (D-Minn.). They discussed regional conservation partnerships and the reauthorization of MAP-21. Pictured with Peterson (center, back row) are Commissioners Paul Setzepfandt (front), LaMont Jacobson, Bob Fox, John Stahl and Randy Kramer.

Spokane County, Wash. improving residents' health through education

HEALTH from page 7

approach to student success. A series of innovative steps have been undertaken, including:

- training childcare providers and teachers to recognize chronic childhood trauma and how to respond appropriately
- creation of a real-time Web-based Early Warning System in Spokane Public Schools so that early interventions can be developed for at-risk children
- establishment of Community Attendance Support Teams, an effective and restorative practice that addresses truancy at the middle school level
- increased opportunities for project-based learning in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) disciplines while tying those skills directly to the workplace
- formation of a collective impact effort around education, which is headed by United Way of Spokane County and called "Excelerate Success"
- adoption of a goal by Greater Spokane Incorporated (the merged Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council) that 60 percent of adults in Spokane County will have a technical certificate or a two- or four-year degree by 2025 (currently about 42 percent of adults meet that criteria.) and
- expansion of the Academic Health Science Center, a multi-



university campus focused on health care, to include a four-year medical program.

From the beginning, we have committed to using data to inform our decision making and to establish priorities; to monitor results; and to measure the impact of our initiatives on the community.

Q: What role do county elected officials play in building a culture of health in their communities?

Elected officials have the responsibility to work with other community leaders to identify a community's greatest issues and needs and develop goals and strategies to overcome these challenges. With the implementation of Spo-

kane County's goals and strategies to improve our community's health through educational attainment, I have had the opportunity to play many roles...from a convener/collaborator, to an investor, fundraiser, partner and champion...and we have been at the table from the beginning.

In my position, I have the ability to leverage existing relationships to inform the community about issues of educational attainment and a healthy community and champion the development of sound policy at the local level. I also have the opportunity to bring a blend of influence, capacity and resources to the table that are often unmatched by other stakeholders when planning and supporting community-wide strategies.

Q: What was the impetus for your county's applying for the 2014 RWJF Culture of Health Prize?

Since the 2009 vote resulting in educational attainment as our highest priority, Priority Spokane and its member organizations (which include representatives from government, academia, business and local nonprofit organizations), in partnership with several school districts in the county, increased the focus on educational attainment.

What has been the result of this effort? The graduation rate for Spokane Public Schools has risen from 57.7 percent in 2006 to 79.5 percent in 2013 and county-wide it is 82 percent! This has tremendous health implications for these young people and our community.

With this success in mind, Priority Spokane submitted an application on behalf of Spokane County for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize. The decision to apply was the beginning of a year-long, rigorous process that resulted in Spokane County's being recognized as one of six winners nationwide of the 2014 RWJF Culture of Health Prize!

The RWJF prize is an opportunity for our community to celebrate our successes as we reflect on the path we've taken to get here and continue to build a culture of health in Spokane County.

For more information about the Spokane County award, please go to: www.rwjf.org/en/about-rwjf/newsroom/features-and-articles/culture-of-health-prize/spokane-county-wa-2014.html.

Q: What words of advice or encouragement do you have for a county thinking about entering the competition?

Apply! The application process is long and requires quite a bit of work...but it's worth it. It will give your county the opportunity to reflect on the great work they are doing, to share lessons learned and best practices and to meet communities around the country working towards building a culture of health. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is currently accepting applications through Sept. 17. Take the time today to share your county's story and success!



Photo by Mike McArthur

Camron Doss, Small Business Administration district director, Portland, Ore., introduces panelists at the final Made in America Regional Forum, hosted by Clackamas County, Ore. and co-sponsored by NACo. The forum, held Aug. 28, was the fifth and most well attended of the forums intended to assist rural business and community leaders develop long-term relationships with federal export service providers.

WORD SEARCH

Bennett County, S.D. Facts

G L H T C T A B Z G R N N N W C K O D K
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- ALLEN (town within county)
- CHERRY (south adjacent Nebraska county)
- FALL RIVER (County Bennett was formerly part of)
- JACKSON (north adjacent county)
- LACREEK (national wildlife refuge)
- MARTIN (city within county)

- NATIVE AMERICAN (half of population in county)
- SHANNON (west adjacent county)
- SIoux (territory name for centuries)
- SWETT (unincorporated community)
- TIMBERLAND (forest land managed for timber)
- TODD (east adjacent county)

STATE → TO → STATE



ALASKA



What issues are driving state associations' legislative agendas? What are the latest and most persistent challenges your county colleagues in other states are facing? What looks to be looming on the horizon?

State-to-State explores these questions and helps keep you in touch with your fellow leaders across the country.

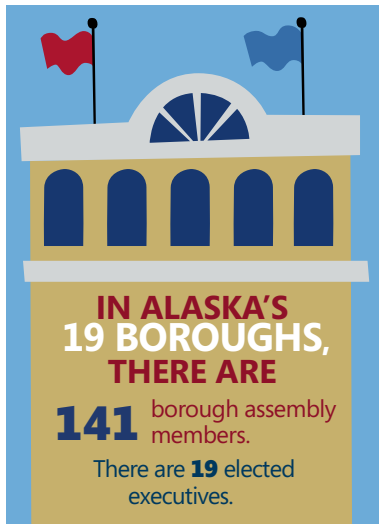
Alaska



For a state rich in natural resources, Alaska's boroughs are hurting for money.

The Legislature cut \$8 million from what was previously \$60 million in revenue sharing that went to the 19 boroughs.

"The state says they have no money left, which is laughable," said Kathie Wasserman, executive director of the Alaska Municipal League. "They've threatened to keep cutting off \$8 million, and that's a major problem for our municipalities."



Wasserman said the league's priorities have remained consistent in recent years — trying to prevent further cuts to local government funding. Struggling with state-approved incentives for oil drilling nearly gave local governments a victory in August, when a veto referendum targeting \$2 billion in tax cuts failed 47.8 percent to 52.2

percent, a difference of fewer than 7,000 votes.

The statewide total of property tax exemptions for seniors has increased to \$59 million — and the state stopped reimbursing municipalities years ago — and with the cut to revenue sharing down to \$52 million in 2014, the municipalities are in a \$7 million hole.

The size and low population density of the state limits transportation options, with only one interstate road, leaving air travel as the best way to reach most of the state. Basic services like law enforcement take much longer to reach people who need them, sometimes taking days to travel a few hundred miles.

Costs associated with delivering goods to Alaska drive up consumer prices, and in the case of fuel in this oil-rich state, residents are parched on a raft in the ocean.

"Gas is \$6.70 a gallon in Nome, and people are paying \$10 a gallon for diesel," she said. "People don't have that kind of money, there aren't jobs to support these prices, and in our smaller municipalities, we have close to third-world conditions."

Wasserman points to the dramatic energy costs in most parts of the state as main concerns for boroughs, which, lacking their own resources for basic government functions thanks to cuts in funding, have less leeway to provide relief to residents.

New FSC leader comes from N.C. association

FSC from page 1

portfolios," Thompson said. That type of engagement can spill over into advocacy and increase the likelihood of counties wanting to join their state associations and NACo, he added.

At NACo's FSC, he hopes to replicate some of his successes at NCACC. It derives only about 11 percent of its revenue from membership dues, which the association has been able to reduce for five years in a row. "We're heavily dependent on the service revenue that we get by working with our counties," Thompson said.

One program that has accrued positively to North Carolina counties' bottom lines is the association's debt set-off program; 98 of 100 counties participate in it and the remaining two are being courted.

NCACC and the N.C. League of Municipalities established a joint clearinghouse through which local governments can submit any outstanding delinquent debt of \$50 or more to the state's Department of Revenue in an effort to offset the delinquent debts against individual state income tax refunds or winnings from the North Carolina Education Lottery. The program, he said, for example, helped Gaston County collect more than \$1 million.

The varied background that Thompson, 58, will bring to FSC

includes having served as chief operating officer and chief financial officer for FreemanWhite, Inc., one of the largest architectural, engineering and consulting firms in the Carolinas, from 2000 to 2005. He was the first non-architect partner in the 100-year-old firm's history. He holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in political science and public administration, respectively, from North Carolina State University.

He and his wife, Jane, have two adult sons — one of them a Marine, like Thompson's late father. But for fate, Thompson would have followed that path as well. "The deal that I had with my father was that if we were in conflict when I graduated high school, I would go into the Corps, and if we were not in conflict, I would go to college. The year was 1974, post-Vietnam.

"I said, 'I've served 20 years under your command, and I think it's time to go to school.' And he agreed."

A bit of fatherly advice sticks with him today — the kind that could, perhaps, only come from a Marine: "Always go towards the threat." Interpreting from Corps-speak to the real world, Thompson hears the message behind those words as "Don't run away from a problem; confront it directly."

It is with that philosophy that he'll approach the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for NACo and FSC.

What's in a Seal?



► **Bennett County, S.D.**
www.sdcountries.org

Bennett County, in southwestern South Dakota, was once part of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation designated in 1889. For centuries, this land was traditionally known as Oglala Lakota, also known as the Sioux. On June 3, 1909, the South Dakota Legislature created and named Bennett County in honor of two federal judges both with the last name of Bennett.

The county contains 198,442 acres of tribal trust lands and 16,027 acres in the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge with the remaining 528,229 acres as deeded land. The county seat of Martin is located on a tract of land that was first platted as a city in 1911 and named after Eben Martin, a lawyer and congressman from Hot Springs, S.D.

The seal was designed and authorized by the County Board of Commissioners in 2012. The seal shows farm land and cattle pastures separated by the Little White River that flows through the county with the Nebraska Sandhills in the background, representing the primary economy of farming and ranching. The building represents the original county courthouse and the crossed peace pipes over a dream catcher, at the lower center, represents the heritage of the Oglala Sioux who still live in the county. The flying Canadian geese represent wildlife heritage and Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge. The outer ring depicts a wreath of wheat, representing the primary agricultural crop of the county and continued prosperity.

Description provided by Rolf Kraft, chairman, Bennett County Board of Commissioners.

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

SCOTUS decision to define 'in writing'

CELL TOWERS from page 1

the shape of a man-made tree that would be about 25-feet taller than the pine trees surrounding it.

After a hearing, where city councilmembers stated various reasons for why they were going to vote against the application, Roswell sent T-Mobile a brief letter saying the application was denied and that T-Mobile could obtain hearing minutes from the city clerk.

The TCA requires that a state or local government's decision denying a cell tower construction permit be "in writing." The district court and other circuit courts have held that the TCA requires a written decision and a written record that explain why

the City Council's majority rejected the application. The district court granted T-Mobile's application.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed, relying on a plain reading of the statute. The TCA doesn't say, the appeals court reasoned, that "the decision [must] be 'in a separate writing' or in a 'writing separate from the transcript of the hearing and the minutes of the meeting in which the hearing was held' or 'in a single writing that itself contains all of the grounds and explanations for the decision.'"

The SLLC's *amicus* brief takes the position that the "in writing" requirement is met when a local government issues a written denial letter and the reasons for its decision can be gleaned

from written minutes or a transcript.

The brief argues that T-Mobile's interpretation of "in writing" to mean local governments must issue a separate written decision with formal findings and conclusions "is not supported by the plain text of the statute, by its legislative history, by the weight of precedent, or by considerations of public policy." The brief also points out the practical effect of T-Mobile's position would be to impose "substantial new costs and burdens on local governments, without providing any benefit in terms of facilitating the granting of meritorious wireless siting applications."

SLLC's brief was joined by NACo, the National League of Cities, the United States Conference of Mayors, the International City/County Management Association, the International Municipal Lawyers Association and the American Planning Association.

The H.R. Doctor Is Out ...

The H.R. Doctor will return in the Sept. 22 issue of County News.



County Innovations and Solutions

Michigan Counties

Counties Direct Federal Funds to Pay Delinquent Property Taxes

BY CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

With mortgage foreclosures climbing rapidly in the latter half of the 2010s, six Michigan treasurers found a way to adapt a federal stabilization program to benefit their counties, along with homeowners.

The federal Hardest Hit Fund program, which began in 2010, opened up \$7.6 billion to mitigate foreclosure crises in 18 states. That typically meant subsidizing mortgage payments during unemployment, helping homeowners catch up with their mortgage payments and modifying mortgages. Each state developed its own program to distribute money to homeowners, and those state agencies coordinated locally to take the money the rest of the way.

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) was primarily subsidizing mortgage payments, but Washtenaw County Treasurer Catherine McClary and her counterparts in Genesee, Ingham, Kent, Newaygo and Wayne counties asked, could that money pay delinquent property taxes?

"Paying real property taxes was



“It proved to be beneficial to everyone — the state, the local governments, the counties and the residents.”

allowable under the federal rules, but nobody contemplated paying them directly to county treasurers,” McClary said. “MSHDA agreed to go to bat on our behalf with the feds, and they ended up getting a waiver and permission from the treasury to do it.”

In 2013, all 83 Michigan counties followed the six original planners’ lead and managed to pay off \$28.6 million statewide in delinquent property taxes, which benefitted 3,432 families, and the counties in which they lived.

“It proved to be beneficial to everyone — the state, the local governments, the counties and the residents,” McClary said. “We were able to convert these federal funds into real property taxes that paid for schools and police and vital, important government services, when we were just beginning to pull out of the recession.”

The counties’ agreement to handle administration of the money helped tip the scales in their favor, including doing the work for other local governments. McClary said although it’s a little extra paperwork for treasurers’ offices, the overall program incurs no additional costs to the counties.

“Not only are we handling delinquent taxes, but we convinced MSHDA that if there were current taxes for the current year owed to a city or township, the county treasurers would do the account-

ing and the collection to include that in their request to MSHDA for an approved customer that we would forward those funds and the receipts,” she added.

Participating homeowners sign forgivable loan notes for the assistance they receive, and 20 percent of the loan is forgiven every year

the house is their primary residence.

County Innovations and Solutions highlights award-winning programs. Washtenaw County took the lead in submitting “Preventing Tax Foreclosure” to the 2014 NACo Achievement Awards, for which it was named the best in category for Community/Economic Development.

NACo on the Move



Peter McLaughlin

► In the News

- A letter written by **Peter McLaughlin**, Hennepin County, Minn. board member and chair of NACo’s Transportation Steering Committee about Transportation Funding being made a federal priority was published in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* Aug. 31.

► NACo Officers and Officials

- NACo President **Riki Hokama** spoke about NACo and his presidential initiative at the opening general session of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama Annual Convention in Baldwin County Aug. 20.

- NACo First Vice President **Sallie Clark** presented information on NACo, Why Counties Matter and federal legislative issues important to Arkansas at the opening general session of the Arkansas Association of Counties 46th Annual Conference in Pulaski County Aug. 20.

► NACo Staff



Deborah Cox

- **Deborah Cox**, legislative director, discussed federal issues of interest to counties at the Virginia Association of Counties’ County Official Summit in Henrico County Aug. 14.

- **Mike Belarmino**, associate legislative director, spoke on a panel for a session titled “Federal Funding for County Causes: Working with Congress,” describing the effect of federal legislation and funding on county infrastructure projects nationwide and how to get more involved in NACo on current policy issues at the Maryland Association of Counties’ Summer Conference at the Roland Powell Convention Center in Worcester County Aug. 13–16.

► Coming Up

- **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director, membership/marketing, will be exhibiting on behalf of membership at the South Dakota Annual County Convention in Hughes County Sept. 15–17.

- **Alex Koroknay-Palicz**, membership coordinator, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Michigan Association of Counties 2014 Annual Conference in Mackinac County Sept. 15–17.

- **Bev Schlotterbeck**, executive editor of *County News*, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Wisconsin Counties Association 2014 Annual Conference and Marketplace in Sauk County Sept. 15–17.



Alex Koroknay-Palicz

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

Financial Services News

How Cooperative Purchasing Can Help Counties Save Time, Money

Participating in a cooperative purchasing program is an established best practice in public procurement.

Cooperative purchasing consolidates the buying power of government agencies, schools and nonprofits nationally to provide benefits in pricing, product quality and contract efficiencies.

Aggregating the purchasing power of these organizations can lower costs, increase services and save time.

There are a variety of regional and national cooperatives available, and as counties explore this purchasing option, there are many factors to consider beyond just product offerings. Most purchasing

cooperatives offer cost and time savings, which are key to an effective procurement process.

Other factors to consider in your due diligence process include assessing the history and purchasing power of the cooperative. Those with years of experience, a substantial customer base and significant sales volume are in the best position to deliver contracts that offer the most competitive pricing.

Beyond pricing, your county will need to evaluate the process in which the contract or supplier was solicited and awarded.

To ensure compliance with state-specific guidelines, procurement officials should select a purchas-

ing cooperative that adheres to a competitive bid solicitation process through a lead public agency. Cooperative purchasing programs that engage in this best practice will also offer transparency to taxpayers by providing access to documentation to confirm compliance.

Additionally, counties that implement stringent supplier commitments, audits and price benchmarking will enable you to participate in the program with confidence.

For more information, visit www.uscommunities.org.

(Financial Services News was written by Sarah Lindsey, marketing specialist, NACo Financial Services.)



News From the Nation's Counties

► ALABAMA

The **ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONS OF ALABAMA** has given **ST. CLAIR COUNTY** Commission Chairman Stan Batemon the award for **Outstanding Contribution to County Government** in recognition of his significant contributions of time, talent and energy toward the benefit of Alabama's county governments. This is the highest honor bestowed by the association of Alabama's 67 counties.

Batemon has served seven terms on the St. Clair County Commission, 20 years as chairman, and served as the association's president in 2005–06. He has also served in a number of leadership roles within NACo, including chairmanship of that organization's Veterans and Military Services Committee.



Photo courtesy of Santa Clara County, Calif.

► CALIFORNIA

► CALIFORNIA

- The most popular new attraction at the **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** Fair might not be a ride, treat or performance.

The fair has invested \$500,000 in various **cooling methods** to make sure fairgoers can stay safe in blistering temperatures. The first six months of 2014 were the hottest ever in California, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, and September routinely sees heat waves.

The cooling methods include 8,000 square feet of additional shading, hundreds of umbrella-equipped tables, 200 yards of overhead water misters and extra air conditioning units cooling indoor exhibits. The fair has also scheduled more events for after dark.

- Property owners who allow others to **launch illegal fireworks** will be held accountable, according to a new ordinance in the works in **SANTA CLARA COUNTY**.

Visitors to **SANTA CLARA COUNTY**'s parks are among the guinea pigs beginning Labor Day weekend, part of a growing social experiment, a cooperative with a Berkeley piano shop, which places **pianos in public places** encouraging anyone to simply strike up a tune.

The pianos will remain in the parks at least through September.

The Sunset Piano project brings professional musicians, singers and poets to free cultural events at the piano sites, in some cases downscale neighborhoods "where some people have no home, let alone access to music," the *San Jose Mercury News* reported.

The Board of Supervisors asked county lawyers and managers to come up with a set of laws and fines keeping property owners from pleading ignorance when the people who set the fireworks flee. Supervisors hope to have the ordinance on the books well before next year's Independence Day, the *San Jose Mercury News* reported.

The ordinance would primarily crack down on powerful, illegal fireworks, including rockets that burst high in the sky, cherry bombs, M-80 explosives and firecrackers.

The ordinance might be patterned after the county's "social host" law, which supervisors passed in 2008 to

hold property owners responsible for underage drinking parties. That law includes fines ranging from \$350 to \$700, and charges for the cost of sending public safety personnel to the scene.

► FLORIDA

- The **PALM BEACH COUNTY** Commission is considering banning or establishing rules about where a **Southeast Asian herb** can be sold.

Kratom trees are native to Thailand and their leaves have long been used an herbal drug, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Laborers in Malaysia chew the leaves as a stimulant, and at high doses kratom can have sedative effects, according to the DEA.

While not outlawed under the U.S. Controlled Substances Act, the DEA says that kratom can be addictive with potential side effects that include nausea, itching, sweating, dry mouth and increased urination. Withdrawal from kratom can cause aggression, hallucinations and confusion, according to the DEA.

In July, a man who was said to have been a kratom user jumped off of an I-95 overpass, and his family believed his kratom use contributed to his death, the *Sun Sentinel* reported.

- Hoping to draw tech-savvy folks into the sun, **St. JOHNS COUNTY** has debuted a **Reach the Beach** app, along with a Twit-

ter account and Facebook page, to broadcast beach conditions.

The platforms tell which beaches are drive-able each day, so beachgoers don't have to drive from one beach access to another.

It is information the county already collected, but is now offering it to the public in easy-to-access ways. The sites will also inform people about beach shuttles on busy holiday weekends, *First Coast News* reported. The county also debuted a satellite parking and shuttle program over Labor Day weekend to alleviate parking pressures at county beaches.

► MINNESOTA

CROW WING COUNTY has released its second *People's Report*, a graphics-based, multi-media **high-light of county contributions** from the governing board, employees, volunteers and citizens.

The report includes several components: Minnesota's Favorite Place, Serving Well, Delivering Value, Driving Results and Building a Better Future. Each includes links to more resources, including a form for citizen feedback. You can see it at www.crowwing.us.

► NEW MEXICO

DONA ANA COUNTY has received federal approval to **expand a foreign trade zone** countywide. Previously, the zone consisted of three specific areas near the Santa

Teresa Port of Entry along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The designation is expected to attract new businesses and jobs in warehousing and distribution, county officials said, according to the *Albuquerque Journal*.

Among other benefits, it also exempts companies operating in a foreign trade zone from duties on re-exports, lets them defer customs duties on imports and provides access to streamlined customs procedures, according to the U.S. Foreign-Trade Zones Board. The benefits are available to existing and new businesses.

Dona Ana County is the first of the state's 33 counties to secure countywide designation.

► NEW YORK

NASSAU COUNTY is **forgiving \$2.4 million in speed-camera fines** that were issued erroneously.

The cameras, in school zones, are supposed to operate only on days when schools are in session — before, during and immediately after school.

But five cameras cited drivers on days when schools were closed, and a sixth was activated prematurely, the Associated Press reported. The cameras recorded more than 30,000 citations at the schools.

► NORTH CAROLINA

- A stretch of shoreline in **DARE COUNTY** will be growing for the first time in more than 40 years under a county-approved **beach replenishment project**.

The \$20 million effort would expand two miles of receding beach near Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, widening it by about 250 feet, *The Virginian-Pilot* reported. The hope is that this will prevent hurricanes and winter storms from washing out the island's main highway, N.C. 12, for at least five years, according to the engineers who will do the work. It's the Outer Banks' only land access running the length of the island.

The project could begin in two years, pending permitting, Dare County Manager Robert Outten said. The county will pay for the project with lodging taxes set aside for beach nourishment.

- WAKE COUNTY** planners estimate that the county's **population hit the one million mark** within the past few weeks. County officials celebrated the milestone Aug. 18.

The county's Planning, Development and Inspections Office, in

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Wake County, N.C. celebrates the million-residents mark

NEWS FROM *from page 11*

partnership with the UNC Carolina Population Center, determined that between April 1, 2010 and July 1, 2013, Wake's population grew by 73,271 people. That equates to an average gain of 62 persons a day. At that rate, the county was on target to hit one million residents during the week of Aug. 18.

Wake, home of the state capital, Raleigh, is the 46th most populous county in the United States. Since the 2000 U.S. Census — when about 628,000 people called the county home — the population has increased by 59 percent, according to the *Triangle Business Journal*.

►PENNSYLVANIA

In a bid to use county resources more efficiently, **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** Executive Rich Fitzgerald will propose that **local park rangers police county parks**. Currently, nearly 50 county police officers patrol the parks.

Fitzgerald believes police are being “underutilized” in the parks and a better deployment would be in crime hotspots in the county. “I’ve been getting requests from different communities that want to see some help,” he told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

The police department's parks division has 45 funded positions that cost the county about \$5.3 million, according to the county budget. The county would hire up to 20 rangers, Fitzgerald said, at an estimated cost to the county of \$500,000 to \$1 million annually.

►UTAH

Taking a hike in **UTAH COUNTY**? There's an **online map app** for that to help you plan ahead. The Web application, Hiking Utah County, was the only county entry — among submissions worldwide — to receive recognition in the 2014 ESRI Storytelling with Maps contest.

It received an honorable mention in the travel and destinations category — along with an entry showing *Lord of the Rings* filming locations in New Zealand.

Hikers can use the app to preview trails based on degree of effort (easy, intermediate, difficult); the map also includes pictures that give would-be hikers a glimpse of what the trail looks like before they get there.

Users can also determine which trails are close to them and how to get to the nearest trailhead. Users can click on the trail and get information such as any special restrictions or features, the agency that takes care of the trail and a link

to that agency's website for more information.

►VIRGINIA

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) has recognized **FAIRFAX COUNTY**'s wastewater treatment plant for

its perfect record of meeting federal pollution removal standards 100 percent of the time.

This is 16th consecutive year the plant has received the association's Platinum Peak Performance Award.

The county's Noman M. Cole Jr. Plant is the largest advanced waste-

water treatment plant in Virginia, according to the county. Nearly half of the 100 million gallons per day of wastewater generated in the county is treated at the plant, which can handle 67 million gallons daily.

NACWA represents more than 460 of the nation's public wastewa-

ter utilities, which provide service to the majority of the nation.

(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.)

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