

Counties win major victories in Farm Bill

At the Farm Bill's signing ceremony, President Obama also unveiled a new initiative — Made in Rural America — aimed at helping American farmers and rural businesses boost exports. NACo is participating in this program by coordinating with the White House Rural Council, U.S. Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, the Export-Import Bank, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Delta Regional Authority and the Appalachian Regional Commission on a series of forums, conferences and training programs over the next year. See this story online at www.countynews.org for more details.

By **ARTHUR SCOTT**
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

WEB* CONTENT The five-year farm bill, signed into law Feb. 7, contains several critical county priorities including FY14 funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, reauthorization of vital programs within the rural development title.

It includes programs that assist counties in the development of rural water-wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband expansion, nutrition assistance, renewable energy, local and regional food systems, support for new farmers and business development initiatives.

"The new farm bill counts as a major win for the nation's counties and the residents we serve," said NACo President Linda Langston. "It cannot be overstated how important 2014 PILT program funding and reauthorization of county-supported rural development programs are to local economies as we work to emerge from years of recession and slow economic growth."

Specifically, the farm bill will provide:

- \$435 million PILT funding for FY14, which is a \$35 million increase over FY13 funding (post-sequestration). PILT payments allow local governments with federal land in their jurisdictions, including 1,850 counties in 49 states, to provide critical services for residents, such as education, solid waste disposal, law enforcement, search and

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Flood insurance reform gets go-ahead in Senate

By **CHARLIE BAN**
STAFF WRITER

Days before another round of updated flood plain maps were released for a pair of New Jersey counties, the U.S. Senate passed the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act (S. 1926), which would delay dramatic rate increases for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The measure moves to the House, where

proponents hope its companion bill (H.R. 3370) will see action in a few weeks.

The rate increases have already been delayed for at least a year — likely until June 2016 — as part of the FY14 omnibus spending bill's provisions. The increases, part of 2012's Biggert-Waters Act, are intended to help fund the government's

See **FLOODS** page 2

Accountable Care Communities center stage at health forum



Photo by Charles Taylor

Commissioner Lindora Baker (r), Caddo Parish, La., has questions for Jennifer Flynn of Premier Inc. after her presentation during the Accountable Care Communities 101 session at NACo's Healthy Counties Forum Jan. 30 in San Diego.

By **CHARLES TAYLOR**
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

WEB* CONTENT For counties big and small, the days of "flying solo" are numbered when it comes to improving the health of their communities

and employees — in ways that are cost-effective and achieve positive outcomes.

That assessment, by a Summit County, Ohio public health official, sums up key takeaways from NACo's 2014 Healthy Counties Forum: Improving Health in a Climate of Change, held recently in San Diego County, Calif.

Speakers stressed that public-private partnerships and collaborations between primary care and behavioral health are redefining models of care — all in an environment of constrained local resources and new opportunities created by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Commissioner Jim McDonough, Ramsey County, Minn., chair of NACo's Healthy Counties Advisory Board, said there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

"Although, we all face similar challenges in figuring out how to improve the health of our residents and employees, the needs and landscape of each county are

unique," he said. "There is no cookie-cutter approach to making our counties places people want to live, learn, work and play."

Presenters and attendees represented a cross-section of America from Hopkins County,

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EPA may order phase-out of certain light fixtures in public buildings

By JULIE UFFNER

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



EPA recently briefed state and local government groups on the agency's forthcoming rulemaking on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in public buildings.

It is deciding whether to require an immediate replacement of fluorescent light ballast fixtures (FLB) in buildings that have not experienced energy efficiency upgrades ahead of the U.S. Department of Energy's rule to replace these same light fixtures by 2020.

The yet-to-proposed rule would affect a number of public buildings

constructed prior to May 1979 such as courthouses, schools, jails, hospitals, nursing homes, recreation or entertainment venues, airports and daycare facilities. It is in response to reports from New York of PCBs leaking from ballasts in city schools.

The agency has produced a presentation that includes several options. Among them are: phasing out the use of PCB fixtures in one year; phasing them out in 3-5 years; or requiring inspection of all FLBs in one year to find leaking FLBs and requiring publicly available data on the location of leaking PCB FLBs.

EPA asked state and local governments to submit comments on how the options presented might create compliance costs for state

and local governments, specific examples of impacts (including number and type of public buildings in the county that may be affected) and suggestions on how to mitigate these impacts while providing retrofit cost data and suggestions for other relevant options.

EPA is accepting comments from state and local governments on the proposal until Nov. 8. Please send written comments to EPA staff at Simons.Tom@epa.gov and copy Hanson.Andrew@epa.gov. Please copy NACo on your comments, juffner@naco.org.

**To read NACo's comments on the proposal and see the EPA's draft proposal, read this story online at www.countynews.org.*

New hope for immigration reform as Boehner unveils principles

By MARILINA SANZ

SENIOR ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

At the beginning of the Republican House Caucus retreat in mid-January Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) unveiled his principles for immigration reform. While short on details, Boehner's statement has given new hope for the prospects of immigration reform in the current 113th Congress.

The statement proposes a legalization process for the nation's undocumented immigrants, but does not call for a special path to citizenship. It does, however, include citizenship opportunity for the individuals who were brought to the country as children. The statement reiterates Boehner's intention to proceed on a step-by-step basis.

The legalization proposal would include requirements for background checks, fines and English language and civics class requirements. The statement also mentions that there would be no access to public benefits

for this group. This means these individuals would continue to rely on county hospital emergency rooms for health care. The English language requirements will also lead to greater demand for classes at the time that many states have reduced their adult education funding.

In addition to the legalization and youth proposals, the statement addresses border security, employment verification, reforms to legal immigration and a temporary worker program.

The House Judiciary and Homeland Security committees have passed five incremental bills addressing these issues. The five bills are the Legal Workforce Act (H.R. 1772), the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act (H.R. 2278), the Agricultural Guestworker Act (H.R. 1773), the SKILLS Visa Act (H.R. 2131) and the Border Security and Results Act (H.R. 1417). The Legal Workforce Act and the SAFE Act are of great concern to counties. The Legal Workforce Act mandates state

and local governments to confirm employment eligibility through E-Verify for all existing employees within six months of enactment. Language was added to the SAFE Act making unlawful presence a criminal violation rather than a civil violation, which will compel all state and local governments to enforce immigration law.

NACo supports comprehensive immigration reform that includes a modernized legal immigration system, establishes a temporary worker program, provides an earned path to citizenship and enhances border security. NACo further supports a national strategy for consultation and coordination on immigration between federal, state, local and tribal authorities. Lastly, NACo supports a sustainable funding stream to cover the costs of immigrant health care, criminal justice and education, including adult English as a second language and citizenship classes.

Flood insurance reform bill moves to House

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flood insurance program that is \$25 billion in debt, but involve dramatic premium increases and rely on what critics call incomplete flood plain maps and questionable actuarial data.

Supporters were encouraged by the bill's 67-32 vote Jan. 30.

"We were very pleased by the vote in the Senate not simply because it passed, but because it passed on a bipartisan, national basis," said Michael Hecht, CEO of Greater New Orleans Inc. and director of the Coalition for Sustainable Flood Insurance. "To pass both chambers, it has to be a national issue, and it's becoming one."

Ultimate passage of the bill would mean a longer timeline for the program's solvency, but Hecht said the current Biggert-Waters Act wouldn't necessarily be effective, because it would encourage policy holders to jump ship.

"The rates spikes are so dramatic that they're almost surreal. It isn't until people see their own flood maps that they believe that their rates can go up 2,000 - 3,000 percent," he said. "You cannot ignore NFIP, because the longer this goes, the more maps will roll out, the more people will realize it's unsustainable."

In Pinellas County, Fla. the total assessed value of the 33,000 single family homes, 17,000 condos and additional commercial real estate in the flood zone adds up to 15 percent of the county's tax base. The county is researching an estimate of the total impact new insurance rates would have on the tax base.

"We're ground zero for this," said Wendy Nero, the county's intergovernmental relations officer. "We're economically vulnerable to dramatic tax revenue impacts if it affects sales and sales price."

"This isn't a problem for rich people in second houses," she added. "This is about ordinary people who face dramatic and unrealistic increases to their premiums

SpeedRead » » »

» S. 1926 passed 67 - 32 Jan. 30, delaying Biggert-Waters Act until an affordability study can be completed

» House will take up its companion bill, H.R. 3370, likely in March

that until now they've been largely unaware of. What we need is some independent verification that the new rates reflect actual risk."

If passed, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act would not cover commercial properties, second homes and homes that have flooded repeatedly.

"It's a fix for people who have built homes where previous flood maps said they could, paid their insurance for years and all of a sudden find themselves facing rate increases that will force them out of their homes," Hecht said. "With more than 40 percent of the nation's population living near the coast, they're eventually going to see their homes remapped, so this is an evolving education effort as people start realizing they're in the way of this."

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NACo launches new online community

By BERT JARREAU

NACo CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER

NACo has launched a private, managed online community for local government leadership and staff dubbed the *County Innovation Network*, or COIN, at www.countyinnovation.us. COIN will enable counties to leverage the wisdom of the crowd nationally, for learning, discussion and decision-making.

The COIN community features:

- **A simple registration process** with rules that ensure and maintain the security of the membership and defines their information needs

- **Member-to-Member Connection** to search and communicate with local government members locally or nationally

- **Information Exchange** to share relevant documents and media files

- **Helping Hands** get local government's questions answered online by subject-matter experts

- **Groups** that organize subject-specific sub-communities to support NACo practice areas and special interest groups

- **Community Hot Topic Conversations** to foster open discussions among local government



members about practice areas and special interest topics

- **Top of Mind** public discussions between counties and the corporate community

- **Supplier Zone** for suppliers to present relevant products, services and solutions in storefronts to engage with prospects in a standardized way

- **Link to the NACo Application Store** (a partnership between NACo and Oakland County, Mich.) to share knowledge about deployed IT solutions across counties.

- **Coming Soon:** Link to NACo's **County Intelligence Connection (CIC) 2.0** to obtain a wealth of county data to help make accurate, informed and publicly justifiable decisions. CIC 2.0 will be available in July 2014, and its user-friendly interactive design will capitalize on developments in big-data analytics and Web mapping, providing 61 datasets with 640 indicators for the 3,069 counties, ranging from county financial data to the demographic characteristics of counties.



'Food stamps' funding is reduced by \$8 billion

FARM BILL from page 1

rescue, health care, environmental compliance, firefighting and parks and recreation, and

- \$228 million in mandatory funding for the rural development title, including language that would allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture to prioritize up to 10 percent of their funds for multi-jurisdictional projects.

In other county-related issues, the legislation codifies EPA's long-standing policy that specific silvicultural (forest management) activities do not require National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The language in the farm bill permanently bars citizen suits for forest roads and silviculture activities under EPA's storm water program. The language was proposed as a result of the 2012 U.S. Supreme Court *Decker v. Northwest Environmental Defense Center (NEDC)* case, which involved two county roads.

The nutrition title in the con-

ference report preserves the three provisions supported by NACo, listed below, but adds a new requirement to the performance bonus provision:

- States will continue to have the flexibility to apply categorical eligibility to families that receive non-cash assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant

- The secretary of agriculture retains the authority to grant waivers to states with high unemployment from the three-month benefit limit for single adults, and

- The performance bonus payments would continue, but states will need to reinvest them in fraud and abuse prevention.

On the funding side, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will be reduced by \$8 billion over 10 years in the conference report. The \$8 billion in savings would be achieved by increasing the minimum Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit level that would allow individuals to automatically qualify for SNAP.

Under current law, states can automatically enroll individuals in SNAP if those individuals receive LIHEAP benefits. This permitted some states to give nominal LIHEAP benefits — as low as \$1 — to some residents so that those residents would automatically qualify for SNAP. The conference report would set a minimum benefit level of \$20.

**To learn more about county priorities within the Rural Development Title, see this story online at www.countynews.org.*

CIC 2.0 will enable users to select their county, dataset and the latest annual value of a desired indicator and benchmark against other counties of similar population size.

COIN is the result of the farsighted vision conveyed by a number of NACo technology and innovation leaders, including NACo

Past President and Commissioner Randy Johnson, Hennepin County, Minn.; Maricopa County, Ariz., Recorder Helen Purcell; Orange County, Calif., Assessor Webster Guillory; and Phil Bertolini, deputy county executive and chief information officer for Oakland County, Mich.

COUNTY INNOVATION NETWORK
A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NACo AND SOLUTIONIZE

Please get started by registering to become COIN members and get engaged at www.countyinnovation.us. To discuss how COIN can help you, contact support@countyinnovation.us.

Quick Takes

Deepest Southern Snows by State*

- **North Carolina**
50 inches (March 14, 1993)
- **Virginia**
47 inches (Jan. 7, 1996)
- **Kentucky**
31 inches (Jan. 20, 1978)
- **South Carolina**
29 inches (Feb. 18, 1969)
- **Arkansas**
26 inches (Jan. 22, 1948)

*excludes mountain snows
The Weather Channel, November 2013

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Renewable energy lights path to resiliency

By Rob Pressly
GREEN GOVERNMENT PROGRAM MANAGER



This month NACo's Green Government Initiative (GGI) will release a special report on smart grids, a type of technology that uses computer-based remote control and automation to enhance energy efficiency. The publication's release is one in a series of events in early 2014, including a March 3 workshop at NACo's Legislative Conference and a forum in late March, exploring how counties are turning to renewable energy solutions to lower operational costs, reduce waste, conserve energy, and in the process, raise their resiliency quotient.

Generated from sources that are naturally replenished or can be restored in a short period of time, renewable energy can provide a number of environmental, health

and economic benefits to counties. Renewable energy production releases little to no carbon emissions, meaning it has less of an impact on the environment and air quality. Electricity generated from renewable sources can also be sold to local utilities as another source of revenue for counties, and the development of renewable energy projects can create a demand for new skilled jobs.

The most commonly used methods of generating renewable energy are from solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal and biomass sources. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), hydroelectric accounts for 58 percent of the renewable energy produced in the U.S., with wind and biomass rounding out the top three at 27 and 11 percent, respectively. Advancements in technology now allow for renewable energy to be developed from once-unused sources, includ-



The Santa Rita Jail, in Alameda County, Calif., is the fifth largest county jail in the country.

ing methane captured from landfills.

Since 2006, DeKalb County, Ga. has used methane produced at its Seminole Road Landfill to both generate electricity and fuel a county fleet of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles. After capturing naturally occurring methane from the landfill, the county uses the methane to power electricity generators that create 3.2 megawatts (MW) of electricity per hour — enough to power 3,000 homes. The county sells the electricity to the local utility, generating nearly \$100,000 per month for DeKalb County.

The county also built a CNG fueling station at the landfill, which it uses to fuel more than 40 vehicles in the county's fleet. The CNG emits fewer pollutants than diesel fuel and sells for the equivalent of \$2.10 per gallon. The reduced emissions are equivalent to annually removing 2,800 vehicles from the road, and the county expects to save nearly \$3 million on vehicle fuel costs by 2020.

Beyond the environmental and financial benefits, renewable energy can also provide counties with a path towards resiliency in the face of unexpected events such as extreme weather.

Research from the Public Technology Institute found that solar and wind energy systems offer prime examples of how distributed and modular energy systems are less prone to fail due to storm damage. Large-scale projects are spread out and connected over a wide area, so a weather event that disrupts one portion of a solar or wind project will not cut off electricity to the entire region.

Yet counties do not necessarily need to develop large-scale renewable energy projects to become more resilient. Alameda County, Calif. recognized that developing a micro-grid at its Santa Rita Jail would both reduce energy costs and

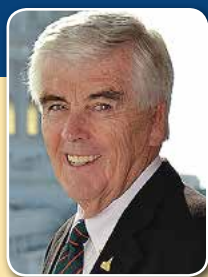
NACo forum to explore renewable energy benefits

You can learn more about the benefits of adopting renewable energy sources by attending a special forum, entitled Powering County Resilience: Renewable Energy Solutions, March 20–22, in Santa Barbara County, Calif.

Sponsored by NACo's Green Government Initiative, this day-and-a-half forum will bring together county leaders and industry experts to share how they have implemented sustainable energy solutions. Participants will learn new ways to help their counties reduce environmental impacts while cutting energy costs through presentations, panel discussions and site visits.

For more information and to register for the forum, visit www.naco.org/GGI2014.

Profiles in Service



► Dennis O'Loughlin

NACo Board of Directors
Supervisor, Dane County, Wis.

Number of years active in NACo: Five

Years in public service: 16

Occupation: retired Wisconsin Air National Guard and mortgage banker

Education: Fitchburg State Teachers College

The hardest thing I've ever done: accept a doctor's statement that I had three to five years to live (that was 10 years ago)

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Mother Teresa, General George Patton and John F. Kennedy.

A dream I have is to: to be a passenger on a trip into space.

You'd be surprised to learn that: I have a collection of 200 Harley Davidson shirts.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: travel across the country on my Harley.

My favorite way to relax is: exercise alone.

I'm most proud of: my wife and family.

Every morning I read: Wisconsin State Journal, USA Today online and Wisconsin Politics.

My favorite meal is: boiled lobster with clam chowder.

My pet peeve is: not returning phone calls, or making excuses.

My motto is: "Success is peace of mind in knowing you did your best."

My favorite movie is: Return to Me.

My favorite music is: Neil Diamond and Susan Boyle.

My favorite President is: John F. Kennedy.

sustain power if its connection to the utility grid is interrupted. The Santa Rita Jail is the fifth largest county jail in the country, housing 4,000 inmates. Powering the facility requires 3 MW of electricity, and due to the nature of the facility, any disturbance in the electrical supply could threaten the safety of the jail's staff and inmates.

To mitigate the risk of electricity loss, the county entered into a public-private partnership to develop a micro-grid for the jail that works in tandem with the regular utility grid, but would automatically disconnect in a power failure and operate independently. Completed in 2012, the micro-grid is powered by a 1.2 MW solar panel system on the jail's roof; five wind turbines and a one-megawatt cogeneration plant that allows for waste-heat recovery to reduce energy usage. In case of a power failure, a 2 MW energy storage system is able to store enough electricity for the jail to continue operating for up to eight hours until power is restored or conventional generators need to be used. The county expects the micro-grid to save it nearly \$100,000 per year in energy costs. Alameda County

Supervisor Keith Carson notes the multiple benefits of this system, "in terms of showing that you can be sensitive to the environment and still save money proves both of those things."

Projects like those in DeKalb and Alameda counties are indicative of the growing importance of renewables in our country's energy portfolio. In 2009, approximately nine percent of electricity generated in the U.S. was from renewable energy. Today, that share has risen to nearly 13.2 percent. The EIA projects that electricity generated from renewable resources will increase by 3 percent in 2014, and is expected to continue to grow over the coming years.

** NACo's Green Government Initiative provides comprehensive resources for local governments on all things green—including energy, air quality, transportation, water quality, land use, purchasing and recycling. GGI serves as a catalyst between local governments and the private sector to facilitate green government best practices, products and policies that result in financial and environmental savings. See this article online at www.countynews.org to learn how you can become more involved.*

Rail transport of hazardous materials ups ante for counties

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

It was a math problem from hell. One train was traveling at 28 miles per hour. Another was traveling in the opposite direction at 43 miles per hour. They were headed to the same point on the tracks.

In the end, Cass County, N.D. was lucky. The town of Casselton was a quarter mile away and nobody was injured, even when the crude oil carried by three of the train cars ignited.

The conditions at the time didn't help emergency response crews. With temperatures hovering around 15 degrees below zero Dec. 30, 2013 in North Dakota, water and foam were ineffective in putting the fire out, so it just burned off — 400,000 gallons, by the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) assessment.

"Given those conditions, in a more populated area, I would question our ability to fight that fire," said Cass County Administrator Keith Berndt. "We get more than a

hundred trains a day, and many are carrying dangerous materials. There are obviously a lot of risks associated with that kind of traffic."

The current oil boom, centered in western North Dakota and eastern Montana, has helped contribute to the almost 40-fold increase in railroad cars carrying oil nationwide between 2008 and 2013. Oil, ethanol and chlorine are just a few of the commonly transported substances that, if released in a crash or derailment, could be hazardous or devastating.

The NTSB's accident reports include the probable cause. Chief among them—human error and faulty tracks. When five of the 21 cars that derailed in Perry County, Miss. Jan. 31 broke open, they released oil, fertilizer and methanol into the ground, according to the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Sheriff Jimmy Dale Smith said that day that a broken piece of track was to blame.

The day before, one of four train cars that derailed into an Escambia

County, Fla. creek leaked phosphoric acid.

Jim Healy, a commissioner from DuPage County, Ill. and chairman of NACo's Transportation Committee, said counties have largely gotten lucky in most train derailments.

"A trainload of chlorine coming through the Midwest, derailing in a cornfield, is an environmental problem we need to address," he said. "The same derailment in a suburb or a city is a devastating tragedy of unknown proportions."

When Cass County officials noticed more trains coming through, the increased rail traffic prompted Emergency Manager Dave Rogness to prepare for the chance of an accident, including three drills in summer 2013.

"There's an adage in emergency management that you shouldn't do training and drills for specific events because then they'll happen, but it was important in coordinating our response in December," he said. "There was significant concern about the potential for that happening, so we got some hands-on experience just in time."

Drills included exercises modeled on a derailment in West Fargo, hazmat team deployment in Fargo, and a command and control exercise with Fargo's department heads. The local rail providers noticed, Rogness said, and opened communications with the county and cities.

"Putting thought into these drills gave rail providers an opportunity to develop a relationship with our local officials," he said.

That's what Healy wants to see and has seen over the last five years as NACo has gotten more involved in rail issues.

"Our short-term fix is getting an idea from these railroads what is coming through out counties, so if there's a problem emergency response teams already know what they're dealing with," he said. "It's something that will come along when counties and railroads work together."

Rogness sees that from his perspective, too.

"There's a lot of scrutiny on the industry, they have been a lot more responsive as the volume of oil on trains has increased," he said. "They're doing the right thing."

On the western side of the Bakken Formation, from which the oil in the recent boom has been extracted, Montana has also seen a major rail volume increase. In Yellowstone County, Mont. Commissioner John Ostlund, who serves as transportation committee chairman for the Montana Association of Counties, has been pleased with railroads' responsiveness.

SpeedRead » » »

- » The amount of oil shipped via rail has increased 40-fold between 2008 and 2013
- » Almost 70 percent of tankers have been judged inadequate to withstand the forces of a derailment by the NTSB
- » Communication between railroads and localities about what materials are coming through is key to response planning

"We're blessed to have the business that is the boom in the Bakken and the rail traffic that comes with it," he said. "To date we've had no accidents to report and Burlington Northern and Montana Rail Link (railroads) are working very hard to upgrade their rails and put extra effort into safety."

He said the railroads have been active in communicating with emergency services directors and commissioners in Yellowstone and counties across the state, soliciting concerns.

"The state association has its mid-winter meeting this week and nobody has registered concerns about railroads or oil transport or called to put anything on the (transportation committee) agenda," he said.

A more medium-term goal Healy

sets out is for railroads to enhance the safety of their existing rail cars. Almost 70 percent of tank cars are model DOT-111, which the NTSB found to be "inadequate to withstand the forces of a derailment."

Longer-term, Healy would like to see railroads develop alternate routes around urban areas to further decrease the likelihood of an accident close to a population center. That, though, will be difficult and expensive.

"A hundred years ago, when these tracks were laid down, nobody knew how cities were going to develop," he said. "Now it's too expensive to get the right of ways. Alternate track routes are going to take a lot of zoning work by counties."

Until then, attention to rail conditions and emergency response planning seem to be the best options.

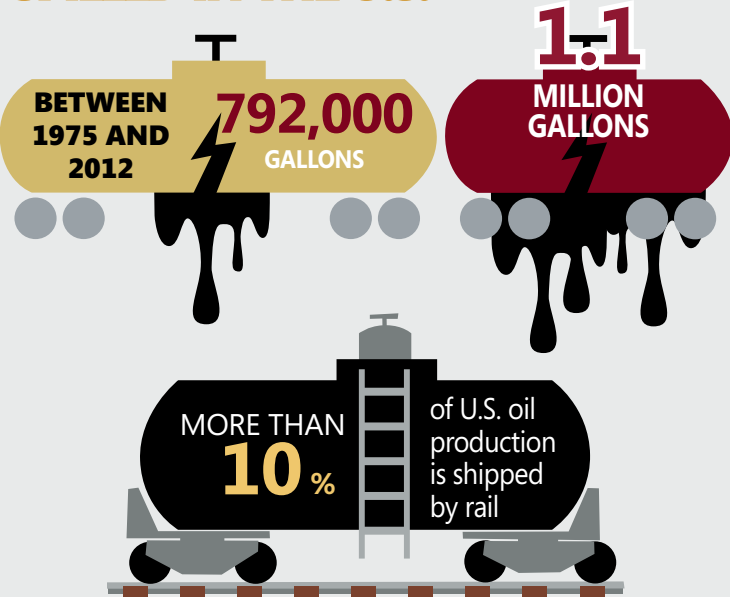
"Those exercises in the summer definitely helped us develop our policies on dealing with a derailment," Rogness said. "I talked to people afterward and they said they didn't exactly stop in the middle and check the policy, but they followed procedures shaped by our policy."

Crossing fingers doesn't seem unreasonable either.

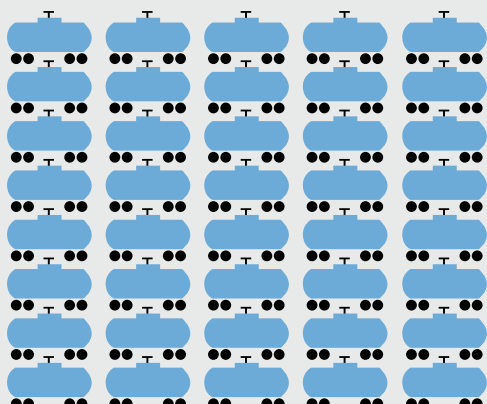
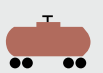
"We had that quarter-mile buffer, but after a while, we had to push firefighter crews back," Rogness said of the Dec. 30 derailment and fire. "It just got too hot, there was too much fuel to burn."

A rupture of just one oil rail car would spill

28,800 GALLONS OF OIL
AMOUNT OF OIL SPILLED IN THE U.S.



The number of oil freight railroad cars increased from **9,800** in 2008 to ...



400,000 cars in 2013

Sources: Association of American Railroads and Energy Information Administration

EPA to release coal ash regs by year's end

By JULIE UFRER
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The EPA filed a consent decree Jan. 28 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia agreeing to publish "a notice taking final action" on its 2010 proposed regulations on coal combustion residuals, aka coal ash, by Dec. 19, 2014.

In 2010, EPA proposed the first-ever national rules to ensure the safe disposal and management of coal combustion residuals. The proposed rule laid out two options for management of coal ash.

One option would overturn current regulations and designate coal ash as a hazardous waste, thus eliminating the beneficial use market, while the second option proposed to maintain coal ash as a non-hazardous waste. The consent decree means the agency will signal a choice by the December date, although it doesn't mean the choice

will necessarily be between the two options already presented.

Coal ash is generally managed under state law as delegated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), which is the primary federal law governing state and local management of solid waste.

Coal ash, a byproduct of combustion at power plants, can cause health problems and contamination if not properly handled. Coal ash, though, can be recycled for beneficial uses, reducing the need to dispose of byproducts in landfills. The EPA sought to clarify these beneficial uses through the rule-making. Local governments use coal ash as a major component in road bed construction projects. Byproducts are also heavily used in cement, concrete, brick, roofing materials, agriculture applications, paints, plastics, and snow and ice control.

Counties share best practices at Healthy Counties Forum

HEALTH FORUM *from page 1*

Ky. (pop 46,000) to San Diego County, with its 3.1 million residents.

Throughout the day-and-a-half-long conference, Jan. 30–31, county public health leaders highlighted the wellness “triple aim:” improved population health, improved quality of care and lower per capita cost of care.

Forum host, Nick Macchione, director of San Diego’s Health and Human Services Agency, said one of the most powerful roles that counties can play is that of conveners.

“Health insurance and payment reform have been happening to us; it’s the service-delivery-reform components that now have to respond and adapt to that accordingly. And that’s in large part taking place in the counties.”

He cited San Diego’s Live Well initiative as an example of building the type of evidence base that’s needed to benchmark progress and show what works. The county has reduced its childhood obesity rate by 3.2 percent over a five-year period. “It’s been about training, educating, putting policies in place like supporting community gardens,” Macchione said. “The Board of Supervisors made a commitment to support Live Well San Diego for all 52 county departments, land use, public safety, libraries — they are all rowing together.”

Creating an Urban Accountable Care Community

Summit County (pop. 542,000) is working with Akron, Ohio-based Austen BioInnovation Institute to develop its Accountable Care Community model, which the institute defines as a “collaborative, integrated, and measurable strategy that emphasizes shared responsibility for the health of the community, including health promotion and disease prevention (and) access to quality services.” Hospitals, public health, the private sector and nonprofits work together to prevent — or lessen the burden of — chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

Donna Skoda, the county’s assistant public health commissioner, gave an urban perspective on creating Accountable Care Communities (ACC). Mimi Khin Hall, public health director for Plumas County, Calif., explained the challenges of doing so in a rural county.

Summit County’s Accountable Care Community initiative is supported by a Community Transformation Grant from the

ACA’s Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was recently fully funded in the FY14 federal budget.

“It’s a shared responsibility,” Skoda said, “and I can’t say shared responsibility loud enough.” In addition to the county, partners include universities, local nonprofits and a national park, among dozens of other agencies and organizations.

Early results from the ACC initiative show that in about two years, the county and its collaborators have made significant strides in diabetes care and outcomes by focusing on medical care, nutri-

tion, physical activity, social and emotional well-being and patient self-management. The cost of diabetic care for those in the pilot program decreased by more than 10 percent per month; more than half of the participants lost weight; and diabetes-related emergency room visits decreased.

“What we learned very quickly,” Skoda said, “was if we could keep those people in care ... their costs went down. And I’m not talking about fancy stuff. I’m talking about going to the doctor, getting some basic diabetes supplies, figuring out you need to get your eyes and your toes checked.”

For Rural Counties, Big-county Lessons Are Scalable

Plumas County has a population of 20,000 residents, scattered eight people per square mile. Hall explained how her agency rolled its effort to become accredited by Public Health Accreditation Board into its ACC planning. The Affordable Care Act mandates that hospitals conduct community health assessments every three years, resulting in a Community Health Improvement Plan. One of the requirements for public health accreditation is that applicants “participate in or lead a

collaborative process resulting in a comprehensive community health assessment.”

Plumas received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to do model Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement plans, working with the hospitals, tribal entities — the Greenville Rancheria of Maidu Indians — and other partners.

Hall said performing the assessment was challenging because the three county hospital districts

See **HEALTH FORUM** page 8

STATE → TO → STATE

★ GEORGIA ★ NEVADA ★

Georgia



With a shorter election cycle combined with a law banning state lawmakers from fundraising while in session, Georgia’s 2014 legislative session looks to be little more than the minimum 40 days.

“I don’t see them extending the session,” said Ross King, executive director of the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). “They typically keep extending and go to April, but they’re going to want to get out and campaign.”

That said, both King and Mike Berg, the Dawson County Commission chairman and president of the state association, feel the Legislature has been a good partner with the state’s counties, especially recently.

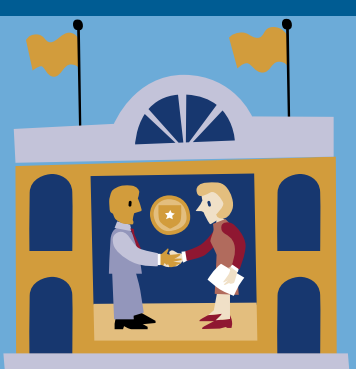
“They try to make it easier for us to get things done absent their involvement,” King said. “They’ll ask what they can move off the regulatory books for counties to handle on their own. That comes in handy with a short legislative session.”

“It’s the best communication we’ve had with statehouse leadership in years,” Berg said.

Counties have, however, seen some unfunded mandates in the areas of health care, juvenile and criminal justice.

The 2008 recession continues to cast a shadow over every level of government in the Peach State. Berg, a bank president in private life, is concerned that 86 banks throughout the state have lost their charters in the last four years, limiting economic viability in some places. In response, ACCG is promoting regional consolidation among the 159 counties and more

COUNTY MANAGEMENT



IN GEORGIA'S 159 COUNTIES, THERE ARE

820 county board members and executives.
12 are elected county executives.

IN NEVADA'S 17 COUNTIES, THERE ARE

75 county board members and executives.
1 is an elected county executive.

our climate, but it takes a while for that to ultimately turn into revenue counties can get a benefit from.”

The association is celebrating its centennial in 2014, an opportunity to ask the question, “What would Georgia be like without counties?” A “virtual county” program is being developed that will demonstrate what services counties provide and how the state would be different without them. The association was formed when counties raised money to help fund a state highway system, back when county commissioners were known as road commissioners.

As King looks ahead to what is coming for counties in Georgia, it’s hard for him not to see the “virtual county” program as an allegory to economic development.

“When I started in government in the 1970s, there were pretty consistent standards for what a business needed, in terms of zoning and road design,” he said. “Now with high-speed Internet, an antebellum house in a rural area can be just as viable as a business and give a qualified workforce an option as to where to live. It could keep our rural and suburban areas young.”

Nevada



With the Nevada Legislature not reconvening until February 2015, counties are looking at the February 2013 session to see what they need to address.

The 17 counties dealt with budgetary issues, the forming of a land use task force and approving a partial tax abatement for economic development.

“Nevada counties are beginning to see improvements in the economy,” Nevada Association of Counties Executive Director Jeffrey Fontaine said. “But there are still issues they need to keep their eyes on.”

Some of those issues include passing functional home rule authority for counties, supporting a margins-tax ballot initiative and an education priority initiative. The margins tax initiative would place a 2 percent margins tax on businesses that have a gross revenue of \$1 million or more and would raise \$800 million for primary education in Nevada. The education priority initiative would tax gold and silver mining across the state to fund education with more than \$300 million per year to hire new teachers, develop and fund English language learner programs and establish an education stabilization fund. It would set a 10 percent net proceeds tax on gold and silver mining revenue.

Persistent challenges in 2014 and beyond include developing strategies for aging services for the counties’ seniors, developing ordinances for medical marijuana and working with the state to address the county and the state role in health care. State Senate Bill 452 gave \$20 million back to the counties for Medicaid enhancements.

“Counties had a lot of encouraging news from the last legislative session,” added Fontaine. “The main focus until the 2015 session will be on the ballot initiatives and making progress on home rule.”

(Charlie Ban and Christopher Johnson, County News staff, contributed to this report.)

Growing counties need more transportation investment

By JOHN HORSLEY
NACo PAST PRESIDENT 1986-1987

(Note: This is the first installment of a two-part series that looks at how population growth, commuting and employment patterns have reshaped the need for spending on transportation in the nation's counties, and how these most significant players in the intergovernmental system are meeting the challenge.)

Maui County, Hawaii, whose population has grown from 70,000 to more than 155,000 since 1970, faces challenges similar to other counties across America. Providing well-maintained roads and bridges with enough capacity to keep up with traffic and affordable transit are two of the county's highest priorities.

Where is Most Growth Taking Place?

Since 1950, the share of U.S. population in central cities has declined from 44 percent to 20 percent and the share of the suburbs has

increased from 23 percent to more than 50 percent. For example, in the decade from 2000 to 2010:

While Washington, D.C. grew by 30,000, the suburbs surrounding it governed by counties in Virginia and Maryland grew by 740,000.

- In the Los Angeles metropolitan region, L.A. grew by 100,000, while the five counties surrounding it grew by 1.5 million.

- In the Miami, Fla. metropolitan region, the city grew by 40,000, the three counties surrounding it grew by 570,000.

In fact, mid-sized counties like Maui, Hawaii, with populations between 50,000 and 250,000, are some of the fastest growing in the country. Good examples of this are Kendall County, Ill., population 104,800, which has grown 92 percent since 2000, and Forsyth County, Ga., population 174,500, which has grown 77 percent. Kitsap County, Wash., just west of Seattle, in which I served as a county commissioner, has seen its population more than double from 101,000 in 1970 to 254,000 today.

SpeedRead » » »

- » America's counties are:
1. Where most of Americans live today
 2. Where most population growth is taking place
 3. Where most new jobs are being created
 4. Where the need for transportation capacity is the greatest

"The Burbs are Back"

According to urban analyst Joel Kotkin in *Forbes Magazine*, September 2013, "People are not moving back to the city, but further out... In the last decade in the 51 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, inner cores within two miles of downtown gained some 206,000 people, while locations 20 miles out gained over 8.5 million. During the last decade, suburbs and exurbs accounted for four-fifths of all household growth."

Interestingly, this pattern is supported by a personal preference survey done in 2009 by the Pew Research Center. According to Pew, the current pattern shows 31 percent of Americans living in cities, 26 percent in suburbs, 26 percent in small towns, and 16 percent in rural areas. Its survey shows their "ideal preference" to be 23 percent city, 25 percent suburb, 30 percent small town, and 21 percent rural. People are voting with their feet.

Where are Most New Jobs Being Created?

As most new housing, commercial development and office space is being built in county suburbs, commuting patterns are changing as well. The dominant commuting flow of the 20th century was from suburb to downtown. According to *Commuting in America III*, by Alan Pisarski, the commuting flow of the 21st century is different. The percentage of commuters from suburbs to central cities has dropped from 20 percent to 19 percent, and the percentage of those living in and commuting to jobs in the central cities has dropped from 28 percent to 26 percent.

Meanwhile the percentage of workers in the suburbs commuting to jobs in the suburbs has increased from 44 percent to 46 percent, and the percentage of workers in central cities commuting to the suburbs increased from 8 percent to 9 percent. What has really jumped is the percentage of workers living in one county while commuting to jobs in another county. Roughly half of all the workers added between

Where do most people live in the U.S.?

- Of the 10 local governments serving the largest populations, eight are counties and two are cities.
- Of the 48 with populations of 1 million and above, 39 are counties and nine are cities.
- Of the 328 with populations of 250,000 and above, 253 are counties and 75 are cities.

1990 and 2000 worked outside their county of residence. This seems to go beyond the suburbanization of jobs—and the consequent domination of circumferential commuting.

How do Counties Fit into the Nation's Transportation System?

Of the 4.1 million-mile U.S. road system, 45 percent of the road miles are owned by counties, 32 percent by cities and townships, 19 percent by states and 3 percent by the federal government. Counties own 228,000 bridges out of the national total of nearly 600,000.

For other transportation modes, counties are involved in the funding and ownership of nearly one-third of airports and around 30 percent of transit systems.

In the end, counties invest more than \$106 billion each year in public works and infrastructure. Nationally, in 2010 of the \$204 billion being spent on roads by all levels of government, local governments invested \$57 billion.

Fiscal Crisis 2008–2012

When the economic collapse hit the nation in 2008, the bottom dropped out from the tax base of counties, cities and states

alike. Instead of investing in the new transportation capacity for highways and transit that their communities needed, many were forced to cancel new construction, cut spending on road repair and reduce transit service. Now that recovery is on the way, counties all over the country are looking for ways to restore transportation investment to the levels needed.

Counties are Where the Need for Transportation Capacity Is the Greatest

Since 1980, the population of the U.S. has grown by 90 million, the number of vehicles on the road has increased by 93 million, and traffic has doubled. As I described earlier, because so much of this growth has taken place in areas for which counties are primarily responsible, they face the greatest challenge. They need to find the resources to maintain their roads, bridges and transit systems in good condition. They also need to add the new capacity needed. The good news is that many counties are actually finding ways to fund what is needed.

(In the next County News, Horsley will explore how counties are meeting the transportation challenge.)

WORD SEARCH

Glynn County, Ga. Facts

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

T M S L Y J N C S N A A Y A K X V B N M
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R S C W C J R T Z N A I N D R C H D D Q

- BLOODY MARSH** (battle in 1742 between Spanish and British forces on St. Simons Island)
BRANTLEY (west adjacent county)
BRUNSWICK (county seat)
CAMDEN (southwest adjacent county)
EIGHT (number of original counties in Ga.)
JEKYLL (one of three sea islands in county)
JOHN GLYNN (named after this member of parliament)

- MCINTOSH** (north adjacent county)
SEA (one of three sea islands in county)
SIDNEY LANIER (Georgia poet who wrote "The Marshes of Glynn")
ST SIMONS (one of three sea islands in county)
VICTORIAN (interior plan of courthouse)
WAYNE (northwest adjacent county)

Created by Christopher Johnson

NACo JOBS-ONLINE



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Through Jobs Online, NACo provides a method for counties to find the right person to fill that key vacancy. Job seekers can also find this section very helpful.

www.naco.org/programs/jobsonline



Forum highlights importance of data analysis to identify health trends

HEALTH FORUM *from page 6*

involved had no history of working together.

It took about a year to complete first draft of the Community Health Improvement Plan, and it incorporated measures to ensure sustainability. This was especially important in Plumas, where one hospital went through three CEOs during the assessment period and another changed leadership twice, Hall said.

"It doesn't do any good to get a leader or two or three to buy into what you want to do," she added, "so early on in our project we went to the tribal council, all the hospital boards and our (county) board and fashioned agreements so that if something happened to a key player that the work would continue beyond us."

One result was the creation of the county's 20,000 Lives: Living Well initiative. "This was a way of involving partners from business, government, nonprofits, everybody

in the work that we do, in a different fashion than we had for the last 20 years," Hall said.

Private Sector Partners Share Their Perspectives

Both counties' efforts were heavily dependent on data, the importance of which was highlighted by Aetna's Clarence Williams and Esri's Angelica Baltazar. Williams said counties can work with insurers to share data to better understand their populations, which can help them target activities to improve community health. Baltazar said GIS mapping technology can aid counties in better visualizing and graphically illustrating health disparities and other demographic trends.

Costs and funding are important components of any health improvement plan, whether for residents or employees. In a session titled Exploring Cost Drivers, moderated by NACO Second Vice President Sallie Clark, commissioner El Paso County, Colo., two corporate pre-

senters outlined questions county elected officials should be asking their human resources and benefits staff to understand what drives costs for county employees' health care coverage.

Paul Campbell, vice president, state and local solutions, UnitedHealthcare, cited statistics that fewer than half of local governments have programs in place to address their costliest employees, and that state and local governments spend 10 cents out of every dollar on employee health care. He encouraged elected county leaders to ask their human resources and benefits staff: What medical conditions and diseases do [their members] have? Which of those diseases have the biggest impact on costs?

"Are high-performing providers being used more often? If

you can drive your members to a high-quality provider (ones with track records of improving health outcomes cost effectively), not only are they getting better health care, but you're also saving money. You don't want to leave this lever off the table," Campbell said.

Tom Carey, vice president for business development at Optum, a UnitedHealthcare affiliate, said, "What we're trying to do is understand what are the challenges—and they're similar out there—whether the county has a couple of hundred employees or 18,000 employees."

He said counties need to know: What programs, tools and resources are in place to support their employees' health improvement? When was the last time your plan was reviewed? How are you measuring success?

"What are some of the things you can measure — whether it's tobacco surcharges or premium reduction or rewarding them for a health risk assessment. Don't just give them the tool or a reward for an action but for the outcome," Carey said. "Change the program so that it's outcome-based; that's going to create sustainable health."

Also in the arena of employee wellness, Janice Sakamoto of CBS EcoMedia advised counties that funding is available to counties, with no investment on their part, to fund WellnessAd projects.

**For a link to the presentations delivered at the Health Counties Forum, more details about Live Well San Diego, a list of forum sponsors and other resources, see this story online at www.countynews.org.*

CVS kicks the habit

CVS Caremark, a NACO strategic partner in the association's prescription and health discount programs, "has taken a bold step to address public health policy by dropping tobacco sales in their stores," NACO President Linda Langston said.

CVS, the nation's second largest pharmacy chain, announced Feb. 5 that its 7,600 stores would cease selling tobacco products Oct. 1. Instead, the company will focus on a future as an alternative to the doctor's office, Helena Foulkes, CVS's president, told *USA Today*.

"Selling tobacco is very inconsistent with being in that business," she said. "We really thought about this decision as it relates to the future as a health company — it's good for customers and our company, in the long run."

Langston, a Linn County, Iowa supervisor, agrees.

"Their outstanding commitment to the health of their customers affirms their understanding of health promotion and also confirms their long-standing partnership with NACO," she said.

"We commend them for their actions and look forward to our continuing efforts together to advance the health of the nation's counties."

Since 2005, NACO's Prescription Discount Card Program has posted \$563 million in savings on more than 44 million prescriptions for residents in almost 1,400 counties nationwide.

In July of 2013, NACO and CVS Caremark added additional discount medical services such as vision, eyeglasses, hearing aids, labs and imaging to enhance the member benefit program.

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NACO National Association of Counties

2014 Legislative Conference

March 1–5 | Washington, D.C.

National Party Leaders Headline Conference Receptions

● March 3 and March 5

Democratic National Committee Chair **Debbie Wasserman Schultz** and former Democratic National Committee chair, **Sen. Tim Kaine** (Va.) will headline receptions for members and guests of the National Democratic County Officials Organization.



● March 3

The National Conference of Republican County Officials will spotlight former National Republican Committee chairman and Mississippi **Gov. Haley Barbour** at their conference reception for members.



Check your conference app or program for more details. Scan the QR code to download the app to your smartphone.

Register today at
www.naco.org/legislativeconference





County Innovations and Solutions

Caddo Parish, La.

New Arts Center Fuels Renewed Interest in Blighted Area

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

When arson claimed the Shreveport Regional Arts Council (SRAC) building in 2009, taking with it every piece of artwork inside, community leaders took a second to mourn before pledging to rebuild.

The scope they took in rebuilding, however, became much larger than one building. What resulted would go on to change Caddo Parish and Shreveport, the parish seat.

"In the arts community, we like to mine tragedy, dramatize things, but we didn't even get that," said SRAC Executive Director Pam Atchison. "Within three days we were calling the fire chief."

She was calling about a fire station that had been defunct since 2005. It was slated to become a fire-fighting museum, but state funding was diverted following Hurricane Katrina. Now, it would be the new home to the arts scene in Caddo Parish (pop. 255,000) and northwest Louisiana. And that home would be better than ever. The parish kicked off fundraising for the fire station's renovation with \$100,000, which attracted funding from both the public

and private sectors. The parish also matched \$300,000 that SRAC has received from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"Everyone agreed that it wasn't going to be the end of the world," Atchison said. "It was the beginning of a new mission for SRAC."

“ In the end it became an opportunity for us to change a neighborhood.”

The beginning would start off with the new facility's location — a blighted neighborhood on the west side of town. It was in the middle of nine blocks of neglect.

"If you asked me where you should spend three minutes in Shreveport, I would have said anywhere else," Atchison said. "In the end it became an opportunity for us to change a neighborhood."

The new arts center, with architectural features restored and renovation completed in early 2013,

turned out to be a small part of the overall effort in what became known as Shreveport Common.

Caddo Parish funded a \$350,000 design study for a central green space, to be named Caddo Common. That green space, along with the arts center, are the centerpieces for a mixed-use development expected to house 500 new residents within five years. That development could mean a cumulative property tax revenue increase of almost \$385,000 over the next five years. Because the parish also taxes land improvements, five new construction projects and two renovation projects are projected to net an additional \$1.27 million in tax revenue.

"Truly when one door closes, another door opens," said Randy Lucky, assistant parish administrator. "This is 10 times better than what they had before. The fire was tragic, but it let Pam and SRAC go bigger and better."

Those returns are rewarding what Atchison said was a significant shift for the local governments involved.

"Both the parish and city had been fiscally conservative so long,

always finding a way to cut back," she said. "They recognized that this was an opportunity to reap long-term benefits and actually see returns from investing in the arts, because development here is going to make Shreveport Commons a vibrant place to be."

Next door to the old fire station, the tower that the crews once used to dry their fire hoses is being converted into an apartment — albeit

a tall but narrow one, to house an artist-in-residence.

As for repopulating the exhibit spaces, SRAC allows artists to choose between a nominal cash fee to use the new arts center or work pro bono for social service organizations dedicated to the area around Shreveport Common.

County Innovations and Solutions highlights award-winning programs.

Research News

New Estimates Show Shifting U.S. Populations

Population changes can create opportunities or challenges for governments, including counties. The U.S. Census Bureau recently released the 2013 population estimates for states and regions, which are a good preview of the more detailed data at the county level forthcoming in March. The 2013 state population data shows continued national population growth, but with important regional differences.

Population growth varied significantly across regions and states. Overall, the U.S. population expanded by 0.7 percent between 2012 and 2013. This overall growth rate was slightly slower than the previous year and continued a trend of declining growth rates. At the regional level, the South and West added residents at higher rates than the national average, similar to previous years. Population in the Northeastern and Midwestern regions also expanded, but at much slower rates of growth than the other regions.

Some states stood out for their rapid population growth in 2013. With an economic boom fueled by the expansion in the oil industry, North Dakota was the state with the fastest population growth in 2013, at more than 3 percent. Since

2011, North Dakota has topped the charts in terms of population expansion rates. Population growth accelerated in Idaho in 2013, moving the state to among the top 15 with the fastest growth rates. Ohio is also adding more people than in the previous years; there were almost 18,000 more Ohioans in 2013 than in 2012, more than five times the growth the previous year.

Other states have experienced scant or no population growth over the past year. Based on Census population estimates, West Virginia lost population in 2013 after several years of modest, but positive growth. In Maine, population remained virtually at the same levels as in 2012. Population growth in New Mexico was less than 0.1 percent, in contrast to more than 1 percent annual growth experienced before 2009.

In March of this year, the 2013 county population estimates will be available and provide an opportunity to examine whether the same trends apply at the local level. The NACo research team will deliver a more in-depth analysis of the county population data in March.

(Research News was written by Kirk Heffelmire, research intern.)



Photo courtesy of Shreveport Regional Arts Council

Relics of its fire station past hang in the new Shreveport Regional Arts Council building.



News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES COUNTY will explore an agreement with the state Department of Motor Vehicles that could make it easier for offenders coming out of county jails and juvenile camps to **get identification cards**.

Those cards could help them find jobs and enroll in school or treatment programs. The county will study the feasibility of having DMV workers stationed at county jails and probation facilities. The county already has a program to help juvenile offenders get their birth certificates and is rolling out a similar program for adults, *The Los Angeles Times* reported.

► COLORADO

• Five western counties that produce natural gas hope to ease **proposed new air quality standards** and are urging the state not to adopt statewide standards that may not apply in some areas.

GARFIELD, MESA, MOFAT, RIO BLANCO and MONTEZUMA counties support strong regulation of oil and gas operations, including many of the draft rules now before the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, but they say some of the current proposals are too broad, according to the *Glenwood Springs Post Independent*.

Garfield County officials said records show that Garfield and other natural-gas-producing counties on the Western Slope are consistently within federal pollution limits.

• **DENVER COUNTY** is adding **cannabis-themed contests** to its 2014 summer fair. It's the first time pot plants will vie with tomato plants and homemade jam in competition for a blue ribbon.

There won't actually be any marijuana at the fairgrounds, though. The judging will be done off-site, with photos showing the winning entries. And a live joint-rolling contest will be done with oregano, not pot, the Associated Press reported. The entries will be shown in a "Pot Pavilion" open only to people over 21.

Alongside the pot entrants will be 24 categories of homemade beer, four categories for homemade wine and one category for "spirits and liqueurs."

County fair organizers say the marijuana categories will add a fun twist on Denver's already-quirky county fair, which includes a drag queen pageant and a contest for dioramas made with Peeps candies.



► MINNESOTA

The painting of Louis Armstrong, titled "Satchmo" by Melodee Strong, is among a dozen or more works of art honoring African and African American leaders this month, Black History Month, at the Hennepin Gallery in the Hennepin County Government Center. "Remembering Our Leaders" features works by 12 local artists who have chosen at least one historical figure for recognition in the show.

The gallery is a project of Hennepin County Public Affairs.

► FLORIDA

• **BREVARD COUNTY's** new ordinance may succeed in **combating synthetic designer drugs** where others have failed.

Though other local, state and federal laws take aim at outlawing chemicals sold under the names "Spice," "K2" and "bath salts," among others, they often target a specific composition, which can easily be changed, leaving legislators a step behind.

Under the new county ordinance, *Florida Today* reported, the sale, display for sale, marketing, advertisement or other offer for sale of synthetic drugs will be considered a county code violation.

The ordinance describes what synthetic drugs are in detail, including noting that they often are "marketed for a purpose for which it is rarely, if ever, suitable for use," such as food additive, glass cleaner, incense, insect repellent, iPod cleaner, plant food, potpourri

or therapeutic bath crystals. Fines could reach \$15,000.

The ordinance notes, "The price of the product is disproportionately higher than other products marketed in Brevard County for the same or similar use."

• Fed up with complaints from tourism and business leaders about **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY's lackluster taxicab service**, county commissioners took action. The county will require all cabs, within two years, to accept credit cards and, within six months, to install prepaid toll transponders. Passengers will get a discount if they pay cash.

For the privilege of picking up passengers at the airport and seaport, drivers will have to apply for a special decal and wear collared shirts, long pants and closed-toed shoes, *The Miami Herald* reported.

• The **VOLUSIA COUNTY** Council rejected a proposal to tem-

porarily allow leashed dogs on the beaches. The *Daytona Beach News-Journal* reported discussion about the issue touched on parasites, bites and possible confrontations between dog owners and people who would rather visit a dog-free beach.

► ILLINOIS

• **COOK COUNTY** Board President Toni Preckwinkle is reviving plans to **redevelop Cook County Hospital**, a 100-year-old dilapidated building shuttered more than a decade ago.

The county plans to hire a manager to guide the redevelopment with an eye toward preserving the historic beaux-arts-style public hospital building. Officials are calling for the new manager to fine-tune various development scenarios, hire a developer this summer and bring a plan to the Cook County Board for approval in the fall, *Crain's Chicago Business* reported.

The health system redevelopment would encompass the massive former hospital building — the size of nearly five football fields — a former nursing school the health system uses for administrative offices and an existing outpatient clinic, among other properties.

• Suburban county governments may ban their employees from **carrying concealed handguns in public**, despite a new state law allowing it.

Cook, **DUPAGE, MCHENRY, KANE and LAKE counties** are considering policies restricting non-law-enforcement employees from carrying concealed handguns while on duty outside of public buildings, even if they have a valid state permit. Officials tell *The Daily Herald* they are concerned employees packing guns increases the counties' risk and liability.

Such a ban would include building inspectors, health workers, planning and zoning officials, coroner's office employees, and any other employees who interact with the public.

The state's concealed-carry law allows no one except law enforcement officials to bring concealed weapons into public buildings, including courthouses and municipal buildings.

► IOWA

MUSCATINE COUNTY has called on the state to **increase the state's road-use tax fund**.

In the letter to the state, board members called for a 10-cent-per-gallon increase in the state's gas tax. It would be the first increase since

1989 and could help the state fund road projects throughout the county, *The Muscatine Journal* reported.

► MARYLAND

• An eleventh-hour amendment expanded **BALTIMORE COUNTY's food truck pilot program** from a location-specific endeavor to a countywide measure, the last in a series of alterations to the guidelines that aimed to make food trucks more welcome outside city limits.

County officials and the Maryland Mobile Food Vendors Association had previously agreed to a site-exclusive pilot program which would have provided a 300-foot buffer from brick-and-mortar restaurants in exchange for food truck parking zones near court offices and a university. Outside, the buffer is reduced to 200 feet, according to the *Baltimore Sun*.

County officials have said that the food truck parking spaces would need to be added administratively, as that aspect is too complicated to include in the law.

• Dr. Kevin Seaman, medical director, **HOWARD COUNTY** Department of Fire and Rescue Services has been selected as an innovator in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), one of the EMS 10: Innovators in EMS 2013. The EMS 10 program, sponsored by Physio Control and the Journal of Emergency Medical Services, recognizes EMS providers from across the country who have introduced significant innovations in the field in the past year.

Dr. Seaman was selected for his efforts involving improved response, survival rates and care for sudden cardiac arrest patients.

His award makes Howard County one of the leading jurisdictions in the resuscitation of cardiac arrest victims. He was recognized in ceremonies at the EMS Today Conference scheduled for Feb. 5–8 in Washington, D.C.

► MICHIGAN

MACOMB COUNTY Executive Mark Hackel instructed local motorists to call 911 if they see a **particularly bad pothole** on major roads — guaranteeing a response within one hour.

"Rather than having some obscure phone line that no one will remember, we want people to call 911 immediately if they see a pothole that will cause damage to vehicles," Hackel said.

Thousands of Dallas County residents could experience voting problems

NEWS FROM *from page 10*

He told the *Daily Tribune* the county roads department will send a crew out to address the situation 24 hours a day. The responding crew will decide whether a patch can be applied or if other personnel need to be called in, he said, adding that he wanted to start the 911-pothole campaign now because the number of car-jolting craters will increase once the weather warms up.

►MISSISSIPPI

While in **HINDS COUNTY** filming a movie, actor **Dan Aykroyd** was sworn in as a deputy in the sheriff's reserve squad. As reported by the *Clarion Ledger*, he submitted a letter of request to sheriff Tyrone Lewis, and said he hoped to promote the county and state — and bring publicity to the budget pressure that law enforcement agencies face.

In his films, Aykroyd enforced both municipal law as Sgt. Joe Friday in *Dragnet* and supernatural law in *Ghostbusters*. He also spent a night in jail in *Trading Places*, after which his character became aware of the plight of the American correctional system inmate.

►NEW YORK

ONONDAGA COUNTY and Syracuse are discussing the possibility of **merging their parks and sewer systems**.

Ryan McMahon, chairman of the County Legislature, told the *Post-Standard* that county legislators

are hesitant to take on the costs of an aging sewer system before establishing a successful consolidation effort with something simpler, such as park maintenance.

A pilot program would likely involve the county taking over operation and maintenance of four or five major city parks.

The county executive and mayor recently announced a sweeping study of potential consolidation of city and county services, an undertaking publicly praised by Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D). Cuomo has proposed a state-subsidized freeze on property taxes that would be available to municipalities that restrain tax increases and take steps to consolidate.

►OHIO

Voters in **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** will decide whether a **countywide tax on alcohol and cigarettes** will continue to pay for professional sports in Cleveland for another 20 years.

County Council voted to send to the May ballot a measure that would renew the county's 'sin tax' to pay for stadium maintenance through 2035. The measure authorizing the ballot issue is expected to get a signature from County Executive Ed FitzGerald, who came out in qualified support of the campaign shortly before the vote, the *Plain Dealer* reported.

Council members said renewing the sin tax, a proposal backed by the Browns, Cavaliers and Indians, would help keep those teams in downtown Cleveland.

►PENNSYLVANIA

• **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** has launched a comprehensive, innovative campaign promoting wellness called **Live Well Allegheny**, intending to track childhood obesity and visit school districts to support evidence-based practices.

Health Department Director Karen Hacker and the Board of Health have already identified a group of stakeholders who will assist in identifying areas of strengths and challenges. They will work with the campaign to strategically plan activities and events related to obesity prevention and physical activity promotion.

The initial goals of the campaign are broad to respond to trends, data and statistics brought to bear by the Health Department and its stakeholders, but its initial focus will be on implementing an anti-obesity campaign, providing education and developing partnerships.

A referral resource which can point individuals, including medical providers, to programs and resources by zip code is in development and is expected to be ready this summer.

• **CHESTER COUNTY** is collaborating with townships and boroughs to **collect their taxes for them**, saving money for the municipalities and enhancing county revenue.

The county just added four municipalities to its roster of five that had signed on by mid-January. The State Legislature in 2012 had given county treasurers the opportunity to collect municipal taxes for those townships or boroughs that do not have their own tax collectors, or those municipalities whose elected collectors ask the treasurers to pick up that task.

Treasurer Ann Duke told the *Daily Local* the county charges municipalities \$1.65 per tax piece, about \$1 of which goes to pay the costs of printing and mailing the bills, done by a third-party contractor, and processing the returns when they come in. She estimated that in one township alone, West Brandywine, the estimated savings to the municipality reached \$20,000.

►TEXAS

Nearly 200,000 **DALLAS COUNTY** voters out of 1.2 million have been told of **possible problems with their identification**. Elections officials are working to resolve complications arising from Texas' new voter ID law before the March 4 primary — that a voter's name on a valid photo ID must exactly match the name listed in the voter registration database.

That requirement could be particularly nettlesome for women, who are more likely to have changed their names after getting married or for other reasons, such as adopting their maiden names as middle names, the *Dallas Morning News* reported. The issue raised its head during the November election and although it didn't prevent anyone from voting, the solution added time to the act of voting.

A short form reconciles differences between how names are listed on photo IDs and in the county's voter database.

►WISCONSIN

Private workers on some **MILWAUKEE COUNTY** contracts and on county-financed projects will earn at least \$11.33 per hour, thanks to the passage of a new **living wage ordinance**.

The ordinance would affect workers only if their employers do business with the county under a number of criteria. Those include workers under county service contracts worth at least \$20,000, and companies that lease space from the county through deals worth at least \$20,000. It also affects developments receiving at least \$1 million in financial assistance from the county.

The minimum wage of \$11.33 is the federal poverty income level for a family of four. An original proposal set the minimum wage at 110 percent of the poverty level, or \$12.45 an hour, the *Milwaukee Business Journal* reported.

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

NACo on the Move

►In the News ...

• **Ryan Yates**, associate legislative director, was quoted in the *USA Today* article "Counties fight for reinstatement of federal payments" Jan. 24.

►NACo and County Officials

• NACo President **Linda Langston** spoke about NACo and its priorities at the New York State Association of Counties in Albany County Feb. 4.

• NACo Second Vice President **Sallie Clark** and Langston attended the annual FEMA Risk Analysis Division (RAD) workshop in Arlington County, Va. Jan. 28. Topics included Langston's presidential initiative, Resilient Counties, and experiences responding to natural disasters in counties.

• NACo First Vice President **Riki Hokama** spoke about NACo and its membership benefits as well as the presidential initiative at the Idaho Association of Counties Midwinter Legislative Conference in Ada County Feb. 3.

►NACo Staff

• **Jacquelyn Alamia** has been named the new legislative assistant for the legislative department. Alamia has been with NACo since September 2013 as a legislative intern. She grew up in Travis County, Texas and is a recent graduate from the University of Kansas where she majored in political science. During her time in Kansas, she was a legislative aide to Kansas State Rep. Annie Tietze. Prior to NACo, she interned for two U.S. senators, Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)



Jacquelyn Alamia

• **Paul Beddoe**, deputy legislative director, spoke about the status of federal legislation important to counties at the New Mexico Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Santa Fe County Jan. 22-23. He also discussed how to bridge Affordable Care Act coverage gaps, gave an update on the Affordable Care Act to the county managers' affiliate and gave an update on PILT to the commissioners' affiliate.

►Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, membership marketing director, will be exhibiting at the Police Jury Association of Louisiana Annual Convention in East Baton Rouge Parish Feb. 26-28.



Photo courtesy of Dauphin County, Pa.

Dauphin County, Pa. Board Chair Jeff Haste announces the launch of NACo's Discount Health and Dental programs at a news conference Jan. 15 in Harrisburg, the county seat and state capital. Also participating in the news conference were (l-r) Dauphin County Commission Vice Chair Mike Pries, Dauphin County Commission Secretary George P. Hartwick III and Tom Goodman, NACo public affairs director.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Every Day a Holiday

Practically every day is a holiday — especially if you are retired. The month of February offers some particularly interesting opportunities to admire the creativity of the greeting card industry or to explore some of the folklore or religious origins of some holidays.

Of course there are officially recognized holidays such as Presidents' Day on the third Monday of February. It was derived from a consolidation of George Washington's birthday and Abraham Lincoln's birthday, but expanded to celebrate the achievements of every president. Public offices are closed on those days and, I am sure, every government employee spends most of the day reflecting back on the importance of presidential achievements in our country's history — that is, when they are not watching TV or shopping all day.

February also contains many nongovernmental and perhaps more user-friendly holidays. My favorite is Valentine's Day. However, there are also days marked as national days set aside for the celebration of such things as Cherry Pie Day, National Pistachio Day,

National Tortilla Chip Day and National Gumdrops Day. There are also many other February holidays, and I apologize to the lovers of groundhogs, dog biscuits, kite flying, umbrellas and plum pudding if I have in any way offended by not mentioning those commemorations.

One of the more obscure days to think about, especially for elected officials, is National Lame Duck Day, celebrated Feb. 6. The 20th Amendment to the Constitution took effect on that day in 1933 and of course solved the problem of who might be in charge if some evil befell both the president and the vice president.

In a sense, however, Lame Duck Day is a celebration for all of us — a true "peoples holiday." None of us have any guarantee of permanence. Our lives are short and precious. So are our terms of service as elected or appointed officials. They represent precious little time for wonderful accomplishments. They are never to be squandered by using them only for day-to-day bureaucratic processing as opposed to thinking ahead to how we can serve the great

body of citizens in the creation of the future of which we can be proud.

The Winter Olympics also opened this month. They represent a reminder for all of us of the

The idea of a brief pause to think about and appreciate something in our lives is a wonderful activity for all of us to follow.

importance of putting aside the issues of the moment in favor of longer lasting principles. International sport can be a metaphor for honorable behavior and exciting competition — notwithstanding

"Ambassador" Dennis Rodman and the many substance-abusing, behaviorally impaired sports persons we read about every day.

Getting lost in those headlines and the stories about the extraordinarily high pay of some sports heroes, detracts our attention from the real heroes of society like teachers, doctors, letter carriers, police, fire and other public employees. It is important not to forget that there is real wonder in athletic competition by the tens of millions of kids, seniors and others who enjoy the exercise and the comradeship of sports.

Looking at the array of holidays we have created, every month should lead us to appreciate how important it is to celebrate. It almost doesn't matter what we celebrate. The idea of a brief pause to think about and appreciate something in

our lives is a wonderful activity for all of us to follow.

In the HR Doctor's view, a regular dose of appreciation for all that we have and all the reasons we have to celebrate, is every bit as important to a long and joyful life as losing weight, cutting out tobacco and exercising every day.

Finally, with regard to being thankful for Valentine's Day, I have to pause, as I try to do every day, to appreciate how incredibly lucky I was on June 29, 1968 when I first met the beautiful HR Spouse Charlotte. On that day I won the companion-for-life lottery, and I hope I always pause for that appreciation.



Phil Rosenberg

The HR Doctor • www.hrdr.net

Financial Services News

NACo-Nationwide 2014 Scholarship Deadline Approaches

The deadline for entries to the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship will soon be here. High school seniors intending to apply have until March 2 to submit their entries at www.naco.org/retirementscholarship or www.nrsforu.com.

This is the ninth year for the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship, a program which has awarded more than \$25,000 to worthy prospective college students. In 2014, four students will be awarded \$2,000 each.

The purpose of the scholarship is to encourage high school seniors to think about retirement. By applying, the students:

- must consider the financial impact of their decisions about college and their career
- begin to recognize the value of preparing for and making tough financial decisions and
- identify specific actions that help prepare an individual to be financially successful over the long term.

To be eligible, applicants must be graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents — their parent, grandparent or guardian must be enrolled in and contributing to the NACo 457 Deferred Compensation Plan. In addition,

the student must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2014–2015 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

In addition to prompting the students to think about retirement, the application process may encourage discussions in county workers' homes about finances, prudent spending and saving, budgeting and preparing for the future.

Applications are to be submitted online by March 2. All of the information about eligibility, judging criteria and notification process are on the NACo and Nationwide websites.

The NACo-Nationwide Scholarship is just one of the benefits of the 34-year relationship between Nationwide and NACo. Other benefits to county workers include the NACo Deferred Compensation Program, a supplemental 457(b) retirement plan that encourages public employees to invest tax-deferred income over the long term.

Public employees interested in getting more information about the NACo Deferred Compensation Program should contact the Nationwide retirement specialist

serving their county, or call Nationwide at 877.677.3678.

Employers wanting to learn more about the program, should contact Lisa Cole by email at lcole@nacorma.org or by phone at 202.942.4270.

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

Nationwide Retirement Specialists are registered representatives of Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, member FINRA.

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What's in a Seal?

► Glynn County, Ga.
www.glynncounty.org



Established in 1777 and named for John Glynn, a member of the British Parliament as well as a friend to the colonies, Glynn County is one of the eight original counties of Georgia.

Brunswick became the county seat in 1797. The town was abandoned during the Civil War, when citizens were ordered to evacuate. The city, like many others in the South, suffered from post-war depression. After one of the nation's largest lumber mills began operation on the nearby St. Simons Island, economic prosperity returned. Rail lines were constructed from Brunswick to inland Georgia, and, unlike many other southern cities during Reconstruction, Brunswick experienced an economic boom.

Glynn County includes the most prominent of Georgia's Sea Islands, including Jekyll Island, St. Simons Island and Sea Island. The Georgia poet Sidney Lanier immortalized the seacoast there in his poem, *The Marshes of Glynn*.

The seal shows the Sidney Lanier Bridge, a cable-stayed bridge that spans the Brunswick River in Glynn County and is the tallest bridge in Georgia at 480 feet tall. Also, the Altamaha River and a lighthouse represent its coastal significance.

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