

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Supreme Court to review Voting Act provision

By DESEREE GARDNER
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

WEB* CONTENT On Feb. 27, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a case that questions the constitutionality of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), legislation that outlawed discriminatory voting practices.

The court will decide whether Congress' reauthorization of Section 5 violates the constitutional rights of sovereign governments by imposing "preclearance" requirements on certain jurisdictions.

The Voting Rights Act is widely considered landmark civil-rights legislation, though certain provisions have sparked political controversy. Section 5 of the VRA established extensive federal oversight of elections administration, providing

See **VOTING RIGHTS** page 2



NACo welcomes the nation's 3,069th county and Alaska's 19th borough, Petersburg Borough, population 3,831. Formerly the city of Petersburg, the borough lies halfway between Juneau and Ketchikan. It encompasses 3,829 square miles of land and water in central southeast Alaska. Voters approved the change in December 2012 by a vote of 782 to 600.

'Why Counties Matter,' hallmark of 2013 Legislative Conference

More than 1,300 county officials will deliver a strong, personal and multimedia Why Counties Matter message to federal lawmakers and policymakers during the National Association of Counties' 2013 Legislative Conference, March 2–6

in Washington, D.C.

NACo leadership and members are rolling out an aggressive ground and digital campaign during the Legislative Conference to demonstrate that the nation's 3,069 county governments provide the essential building blocks to create healthy, vibrant and safe communities.

This includes supporting and maintaining key public infrastructure, transportation and economic development assets; creating and sustaining a skilled workforce to meet the needs of private industry; ensuring public health and public safety needs to protect the public; and implementing a broad portfolio of federal, state and local programs in a cost-effective and accountable manner.

Through advertisements in the Capitol Hill publication *POLITICO* and *POLITICO.com*, and the unveiling of a new 3-minute *Why*

Counties Matter video, NACo will demonstrate how counties and the services and programs they provide are essential to the American people and communities across the country.

NACo and its members will use social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to spread the county message and communicate their individual activities throughout the five-day conference.

During the conference, NACo leadership and members will meet with key congressional offices to deliver the Why Counties Matter message and offer to work collaboratively with their federal partners to meet and exceed the needs of the American people.

"Counties matter because our services touch the lives of virtually every American," said NACo President Chris Rodgers. "If you

See **CONFERENCE** page 8

County funds help aging mentally ill with housing

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

WEB* CONTENT An older woman has a "pretty significant" mental health problem. Increasingly frail, her delusions and obsessions created such anxiety that she frequently called 911. She wasn't doing well living alone.

Today, she counts among her neighbors a veteran with heart disease. On his own, he wasn't taking his medications reliably nor faring well with his depression.

Both have improved "markedly" over the past year, since moving into Arlington County, Va.'s Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence, according to Angela King, senior vice president of aging and disability services for Volunteers of America (VOA), a church that operates the county-funded facility.

Arlington budgets about \$2.4 million a year to operate Mary

See **HOUSING** page 6

CountyNews Features

Quick Takes

Top 5% Areas with High-Income Households 2007–2011

	Percentage of Households
Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, Conn.	17.9
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, Calif.	15.9
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, D.C.-Va.-Md.-W.Va.	14.1
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, Calif.	13
Trenton-Ewing, N.J.	11.6

U.S. Census Bureau

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Santa Cruz County, Calif. wins Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's new "RWJF Roadmap to Health" prize, worth \$25,000 ▶Page 8

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Bipartisan Senate and House members introduce Internet sales tax measure ▶Page 6

County and tribal interests claim the spotlight in two Western Legislatures ▶Page 7

Water Resources Development Act is House, Senate priority

By Julie Ufner
Associate Legislative Director

Legislation important to counties with Army Corps of Engineers' projects will be a top priority this year for both House and Senate committees that deal with water resource issues, according to committee leaders.

On Feb. 13, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) said the committee's first priority would be passage of a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill. WRDA is also a priority for the Senate Environment and Public Works committee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.).

Historically, the WRDA — last enacted in 2007 — has contained a compilation of earmarks for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) projects in specific locations. The Corps, an agency in the Department of Defense with both military and civilian obligations, oversees a wide

variety of water projects involving navigation channels, harbors, beach management, levee repair, aquatic ecosystems, flood emergency and water infrastructure projects.

Through WRDA, Congress authorizes the Corps to undertake studies, start new projects, modify existing Corps projects and provide policy directives. WRDA does not appropriate funds for specified activities.

Shuster advised congressional members and communities with Corps projects to educate their colleagues and members about why the federal government should be investing in local WRDA projects. This is especially critical since bills containing earmarks have been banned, and congressional members can no longer request specific Corps project funding.

While WRDA is a priority of both the House and Senate committees, how the committees plan to deal with the earmark ban has yet to be determined.

Long-term solution sought for Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act

By Dalen A. Harris
Associate Legislative Director

Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) and Rep. Richard Nugent (R-Fla.) have introduced bipartisan legislation intended to improve safety in communities by enhancing access to mental health services for individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act (H.R. 401/S. 162), introduced in late January with more than 25 cosponsors, would reauthorize the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction

Act (MIOTCRA) for five years. The act's reauthorization has been a key NACo legislative priority.

President George W. Bush signed the original legislation into law in 2004. It authorized a \$50 million grant program — administered by the Justice Department — to help counties and states design and implement collaborative efforts between the criminal justice and mental health systems.

The law, with its Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP), was reauthorized in 2008 and expanded to include training about mental health and

substance abuse issues for law enforcement personnel, and jail diversion programs for the mentally ill or substance abusers. It is slated to expire in September 2013.

The current proposal would also authorize a \$50 million grant program to fund the same types of initiatives supported in the last two bills.

Over their history, JMHCP grants have funded 254 projects in 46 states. An initiative such as Salt Lake County, Utah's mobile mental health crisis units, launched in 2012, is an example of projects funded through MIOTCRA.

NACo has joined more than 200 organizations from across the nation in endorsing the bill, including leading law enforcement and corrections groups, veterans' services organizations and mental health advocates. NACo members are strongly encouraged to contact their members of Congress and urge support for the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act (H.R. 401/S. 162).

Shelby County case tests VRA preclearance requirement

VOTING RIGHTS from page 1

that jurisdictions with a history of discriminatory voting could not implement any change in election laws affecting voting or changes in polling places, without first obtaining the approval of the Department of Justice, a process known as preclearance. The preclearance requirement was imposed on jurisdictions in which less than 50 percent of the population was registered to vote in 1964. A jurisdiction remains covered by the preclearance requirement unless an exemption is sought through a process commonly referred to as a "bail out."

Congress has extended the provisions of Section 5 four times, most recently in 2006, when it reauthorized the extension of Section 5 from 2006 to 2032, despite the objection from some members of Congress that renewing the preclearance requirement would represent an overreach of federal power and placed administrative burdens on jurisdictions that have since abandoned discriminatory practices.

In 2009 the Supreme Court noted in *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District No. 1 v. Holder*, a lawsuit challenging the extension of the Section 5 provision, that "the law imposes current burdens and must be justified by current needs."

While the court did not declare preclearance unconstitutional, the decision redefined the law to allow any political subdivision covered by Section 5 to request exemption from federal review. Prior to that decision, in order to obtain exemption from Section 5 preclearance requirements, a covered jurisdiction had to obtain

a declaratory judgment from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

In April 2010, Shelby County, Tenn. filed suit in D.C. court asking that Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act be declared unconstitutional. Shelby County argued that Congress did not have the constitutional authority in 2006 to reauthorize Section 5 of the VRA. The D.C. court upheld the constitutionality of Section 5, a decision that was affirmed by the U.S. Court of Appeals in 2012.

The Supreme Court granted review in *Shelby County v. Holder* last November. The court will limit its review to whether Congress exceeded its authority under the 14th and 15th Amendments, when it reauthorized Section 5 in 2006, thereby violating the 10th Amendment and Article IV of the Constitution which protects the sovereignty of states to govern without excessive interference.

* For more information on Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, see this story online at www.naco.org/countynews.

(Sheba Newman-Blount, NACo legislative intern, contributed to this report.)

CORRECTION

An article in County News, 2/11/13, page 1, "Study finds growing interest in shared services," incorrectly stated Kent County, Mich.'s savings from reverse auctions. The county saved about 17 percent in 2010 on more than \$1 million of commodities purchased, or approximately \$170,000.

In Case You Missed It

News to use from past County News

» Now accepting entries for NACo-Nationwide Scholarship

This spring, four high school seniors will earn \$2,000 for college from the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship.

Winning applicants will have written a short essay describing why it's important for a public sector employee to start saving early for retirement. This is the eighth consecutive year NACo and Nationwide have teamed up to encourage high school seniors to think about retirement.

Applications and entries must be submitted online at www.nrsforu.com/scholarship by Sunday, March 3.

For additional information, please contact Lisa Cole at lc@naco.org or 202.942.4270 or by calling Nationwide at 1.877.677.3678.

Limerick Corner

Even though this limerick by Grant Veeder, Black Hawk County, Iowa auditor, made its appearance at the fall board meeting in Shelby County, Tenn. this past December, it remains on point.

NACo Fall Board Meeting
Memphis, Shelby County, Tenn. • December 7, 2012

The country is filled with frustration
Regarding the planned sequestration.
What good is a Congress
That just makes a new mess
When faced with a huge conflagration?

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Funds available to states for public safety broadband

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) recently announced Feb. 6 the availability of \$121.5 million in grants to assist states as they prepare for a nationwide public safety broadband network dubbed FirstNet (First Responder Network Authority).

Available to all states and territories, the grants will support planning, consultation, education and outreach activities as well as help fund efforts to collect information

on infrastructure and equipment that could be used by FirstNet in building a wireless public safety broadband network. As envisioned, the network would rival the size of the largest commercial telecom networks and enables first responders to better communicate with each other during emergencies.

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 created FirstNet and directed it to deploy a nationwide wireless broadband network that will enable first responders to better communicate with each other during emergencies and save lives.

"The State and Local Implementation Grant Program will be an integral part of statewide planning and preparation in anticipation of this nationwide public safety broadband network," said Lawrence E. Strickling, assistant secretary of commerce for communications and information, and NTIA administrator.

"State, regional, local and tribal governments play a critical role as FirstNet develops its plans for this network, and NTIA's grant program will provide the necessary resources to help them consult with FirstNet as mandated by the act."

The deadline for states to apply is March 19.

Timothy Loewenstein, former Buffalo County, Neb. commissioner, now NACo special advisor for public safety and technology, has represented NACo at the federal level on advisory committees

dealing with interoperable communications for public safety agencies for more than a decade.

Following is a Q&A with Loewenstein about FirstNet and the State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP).

What is FirstNet and what does it mean for counties?

The establishment of FirstNet by congressional action was a giant leap in deployment of the nationwide public safety broadband network, intended to provide speed and interoperability for voice and data communication used by public safety personnel. As envisioned, FirstNet would be as large a network as those operated by the nation's leading commercial telecoms. This involves all the infrastructure, interconnectivity and security required for such a network.

FirstNet is also shorthand for the authority's board of directors, who are tasked with managing and deploying the infrastructure needed for building out the network.

Can you give us an example of what these grants might fund at the county level?

There's not so much funding for the county directly, but the funding will directly affect the county. For example, one of the seven items the state has to complete to satisfy Phase 1 involves developing pro-

cedures to ensure local and tribal representation in the public safety governance structure.

Can local governments apply for the grants?

No, only states are eligible to apply. However, clearly the funds are to be used in governance development with counties and other locals at the table. Subsequently, locals will have the ability to express how they would use FirstNet and what assets they may have to make available to the network during the building out, deployment and operation.

What should my county do now to benefit from my state's grant?

It is essential that each county contact its statewide interoperability

coordinator, or SWIC. He or she will have a good understanding of how their state is going to complete the specific tasks outlined in the grant guidance. The SWIC, if not designated as the "single officer" for the purposes of the grant by your governor, should know who has been designated for that key role and will collaborate with that individual.

Where can I find out more about these grants?

NTIA has provided an FAQ website that answers many of the questions. <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/other-publication/2013/slign-frequently-asked-questions>. In addition, you may contact Mike Dame, SLIGP program director at NTIA, at 202.482.1181 or email him at mdame@ntia.doc.gov.

FirstNet's Consultation Requirement

NACo's Fact Sheet on the county role in FirstNet includes a section on the level of consultation that is required by FirstNet's authorizing act, the 2012 Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act.

State and Local Consultation

The act directs FirstNet to "take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of the network in consultation with Federal, State, tribal, and local public safety entities."

More specifically, the act requires FirstNet to consult with regional, state, tribal and local jurisdictions about the distribution and expenditures of any amounts required to carry out the network policies that it is charged with establishing including:

- construction of a core network and any radio access network build-out
- placement of towers
- coverage areas of the network, whether at the regional, state, tribal or local level
- adequacy of hardening, security, reliability and resiliency requirements
- assignment of priority of local users
- assignment of priority and selection of entities seeking access to or use of the nationwide public safety interoperable broadband network, and
- training needs of local users.

To access NACo's Fact Sheet go to: <http://www.naco.org/legislation/Pages/fact-sheets-and-priorities.aspx>.

FirstNet Board of Directors

FirstNet's board of directors, charged with managing and deploying the infrastructure for this new public safety asset, is composed of 15 members. By law, the U.S. attorney general, the secretary of homeland security and the director of the Office of Management and Budget are members. The other 12 members, including Story County, Iowa Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald, are appointed by the secretary of commerce and represent a broad swath of corporate, local government and federal agency expertise.

They include:

- Tim Bryan, CEO, National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative
- Charles "Chuck" Dowd, deputy chief, New York City Police Department
- F. Craig Farrill, wireless telecommunications executive
- Samuel "Sam" Ginn, telecommunications executive
- Jeffrey Johnson, fire chief (retired); former chair, Oregon State Interoperability Council; CEO, Western Fire Chiefs Association
- William Keever, telecommunications executive (retired)
- Kevin McGinnis, North East Mobile Health Services
- Ed Reynolds, telecommunications executive (retired)
- Susan Swenson, telecommunications/technology executive
- Teri Takai, government information technology expert; former CIO, states of Michigan and California
- Wellington Webb, founder, Webb Group International; former mayor, Denver, Colo.

Profiles in Service



» Carol H. Holden

NACo Board Member
Vice Chair, Board of Commissioners
Hillsborough County, N.H.

Years affiliated with NACo: 14 years

Years in public service: 28 years

Occupation: secondary school teacher (Mass., Calif., N.Y., Pa.), state representative, Amherst School District moderator, and county commissioner

Education: B.A., Trinity College (D.C.); M.A.T., Boston College

The hardest thing I've ever done: was flying in a Cessna 172 with my husband as pilot

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: U.N. Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, collector Joseph A. Maynard and Helen Holden Slottje, Esq.

A dream I have is to: sleep under the stars in Oman.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: resigned as assistant majority leader in the N.H. House of Representatives to accept a judicial appointment as county commissioner.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: to climb the Great Pyramid by flashlight.

My favorite way to relax is: to sail or to snowshoe.

I'm most proud of: my family.

Every morning I read: my emails and the online version of *The Wall Street Journal*.

My favorite meal is: a clambake.

My pet peeve is: people who are two-faced.

My motto is: *Carpe Diem*.

The last book I read was: *When We Were the Kennedys* by Monica Wood.

My favorite movie is: *Lawrence of Arabia*.

My favorite music is: the blues and jazz.

My favorite president is: Ronald Reagan.

Start planning now for NCGM in April

By JIM PHILIPPS
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER

Counties and county officials can be a powerful force when working together. Nearly 18,000 elected county officials serve communities, and counties spend more than \$362 billion delivering those services each year. But many of the people who benefit from these services do not know or fully understand what counties do. That is just one reason why National County Government Month (NCGM) is so important.

The theme for NCGM in April is “Smart Justice: Creating Safer Communities.” The theme complements one of NACo President Chris Rodgers’ presidential initiatives, Smart Justice, which is highlighting innovative county government justice system policies and practices among the nation’s counties.

Since 1991, NACo has encouraged counties to actively promote county government services and programs. A great way to accomplish this is during NCGM and taking advantage of the free resources available to NACo-member counties.

The best approach is to begin

planning today. A booklet full of ideas to celebrate NCGM is available on NACo’s website on the NCGM page located in the Solutions Center “Tell the Public What Counties Do” section. The booklet contains suggested community activities, a draft proclamation, a sample news release, media outreach strategies and more.

You will also find free downloads on the NCGM webpage for logos, banners and posters with the 2013 Smart Justice theme and blank space for your county to localize and “make it your own.”

“I am really excited about National County Government Month this year,” Rodgers said. “Counties do much for so many, yet too many Americans are unaware of the essential services their own county provides 24/7, 365 days a year. It’s really up to us as county officials across the country to reach out in a thoughtful and coordinated way to showcase what counties are all about.”

Rodgers is encouraging counties to link the 2013 Smart Justice theme to as many NCGM activities as possible.

“Counties run the nation’s local justice systems, many with innova-

tive programs and services that should be highlighted under the Smart Justice theme,” Rodgers said. “Examples include pretrial justice services, post-release service coordination, justice and mental health collaboration, supportive housing and employment services.”

Popular events include holding public tours of county facilities; talking to students, community organizations and business leaders about county programs and services; holding essay and art contests; and sponsoring county family day events on the courthouse or administrative building grounds. Many counties hold news media events, write newspaper columns, or guest on local radio and TV shows to discuss new county programs or highlight existing ones.

More counties are turning to social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook for their outreach efforts. New this year is a NCGM Facebook page where counties can post photos and share how they are celebrating NCGM.

NCGM Awards

A popular NCGM feature is the awards program. The purpose of the program, now in its third year, is to encourage counties to participate in NCGM and nationally recognize counties that sponsor outstanding programs during the month of April.

The National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO), a NACo partner, will again judge the 2013 award entries. Three counties will receive the top award — rural counties (population less than 100,000); suburban counties (population between 100,000 and 500,000) and metropolitan counties (population above 500,000). First-place winning entries will receive two, free registrations that can be used at any NACo conference. This prize is worth more than \$1,000.

Second-place awards will also be presented. Counties chosen for second-place awards will receive one free conference registration. All counties that submit entries will receive certificates recognizing the programs they initiated.

The online application form will be available soon on the NCGM webpage at <http://www.naco.org/programs/countiesdo/Pages/ncgm.aspx>. The deadline for applications is Friday, May 24.

Whether your county applies for an award or not, NACo wants to know what activities and programs you have planned for NCGM. A special online form will be available on the NACo website to conveniently input information to inform NACo about your county’s NCGM plans. There you will be able to upload your photos, flyers, calendars, proclamations and other materials so this information can be shared with other counties to help them have a successful celebration.

You may also send your activities and materials directly to Jim Philipps, NACo media relations manager, at jphilipps@naco.org.

For information about how your county can get started today in planning NCGM events, contact Philipps at 202.942.4220.

What’s in a Seal?

» Prince William County, Va. www.pwcounty.org



Capt. John Smith first discovered Prince William County during an expedition up the Potomac River in 1608. Smith found the region inhabited by Anacostan, Doeg, Iroquois and Piscataway Indians. The first known Colonial settlement was founded in 1722. In 1730, the Virginia General Assembly carved out an area approximately 2,000 square miles in size and named it Prince William County, after the second son of England’s King George II.

In 1730, the Dumfries area was prominent in the county and may have been the location of an official Tobacco Inspection Station due to its close proximity to the Potomac River. The river was a major regional route used to export tobacco to England, which was profitable for the southern colonies. The Tobacco Inspection law, passed in Virginia in 1730, required all exported tobacco shipments to bear an inspection certificate. Dumfries officially became a town in 1749, and in 1763 it reached an economic milestone by exporting more tobacco tonnage than the colony of New York.

The site of the first and second battles of Manassas in the Civil War; the battles will be reenacted this year as part of the sesquicentennial (150th anniversary).

The county seal commemorates the most important cash crop of the Colonial period. It depicts a hand holding the scales of justice evenly balanced over tobacco leaves.

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

2012 ‘Healthy Counties, Healthy Families’ Award Winners

Last year’s “Healthy Counties, Healthy Families” award winners provide a helpful glimpse of how many counties go “all in” to celebrate:

- **Wicomico County, Md.** held several community forum presentations around the county hosted by the county executive. The county sponsored events such as “Healthy Cooking, Healthy Families” and health department lunch-and-learn events. The county conducted tours of public works facilities to showcase recycling and methane collection functions, and displayed law enforcement and emergency vehicles.

- **Eagle County, Colo.** held a variety of events and activities surrounding its 2012 theme “Healthy Living in Eagle County.” Events included an Earth Day poster contest; an essay contest for high school students; presentations by Eagle County Public Health and Colorado State University Extension; parade celebrations honoring Week of the Young Child; and a 5k fun run-walk, and breakfast and provider fair. Healthy breakfast foods were donated by local companies. The resource fair featured nearly 30 family-youth service providers from throughout the county, and included free lead screenings for children, car seat checks and CPR-defibrillator training.

- **Manatee County, Fla.** held more than 50 events to focus on five parameters of health including physical, social, behavioral, environmental and economic health. Events included a Torch Run sponsored by Manatee Sheriff’s Office, a Health Department Farm Stand, a knee-pain workshop, a horseshoe tournament, many classes and learning opportunities on topics such as water conservation, physical activity, disease prevention and healthy eating, along with several Relay for Life Events.

- **Durham County, N.C.** held a lunchtime

Health and Wellness Fair; the Health Department had a booth about smoking cessation that informed citizens about the county’s upcoming enforcement of a smoking ordinance to create smoke-free zones; Cooperative Extension provided nutrition and 4-H club booths; 70–80 people including county employees and local college students took part in a “flash mob” to promote healthy movement; and a nutritionist shared how much movement people should strive to complete each week to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- **El Paso County, Colo.** celebrated the theme with a month-long series of events specifically designed to showcase “good for your health” programs and activities. Events included a third-grade art contest; a free public health education program in partnership with Kaiser Permanente; a household hazardous waste collection day; a family-centered hiking event; a lunch-and-learn program for county employees; a child abuse prevention and child trauma educational event in partnership with Northwestern University; a water stewardship day that included water-consuming invasive plant removal and water-wise garden preparation; a community recycling and cleanup event; a free community health event featured information and healthy local food as well as a presentation of a documentary film *Children in Crisis* that focused on the damaging effects of childhood obesity.

- **DeKalb County, Ga.** held, in partnership with *The Champion* newspaper, the CEO’s Community Hero Awards ceremony that honored individuals and organizations making a significant impact in DeKalb County through volunteerism. The county held lunch-and-learn sessions focused on physical, mental or financial health.

New Internet sales tax act introduced

By MIKE BELARMINO

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

For the first time, a bipartisan, bicameral bill has been introduced that would require retailers to collect sales taxes due on Internet sales transactions. The measure, introduced Feb. 14, would grant state and local governments the authority to enforce existing sales tax laws by requiring online and catalog retailers to collect sales taxes at the time of transactions.

The Marketplace Fairness Act of 2013 was formally introduced at a news conference by a bipartisan group of House and Senate members led by Sens. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) and

Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), and Reps. Steve Womack (R-Ark.) and Jackie Speier (D-Calif.).

The new Marketplace Fairness Act revives structures in previous bills by granting collection authority through one of two paths. The first is through the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement (SSUTA). The SSUTA, supported by NACo, is the result of a cooperative effort of local governments, states and the business community to simplify sales and use tax collection and administration by retailers and states. Currently, 24 states are full members of the agreement.

The second path is through the adoption of a minimum set of

simplification requirements of state sales and use tax administration. Among the requirements are states must: enact legislation to specify the taxes to which simplification requirements shall apply and the specific goods and services that will be exempted; provide a uniform sales and use tax base within a state; and provide certification procedures for software providers that create the programs necessary for retailers to calculate and collect the proper sales and use taxes.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) is joining Enzi and Durbin again in leading the charge in the Senate. Womack and Speier are also joined by Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.)

and Peter Welch (D-Vt.) to lead the efforts in the House. There were 53 senators and representatives joining the bills at introduction, including the leaders in each chamber. To see a complete list, visit <http://www.naco.org/legislation/Documents/MFA%20Cosponsors.pdf>.

If your senator or representative is on the list, be sure to thank them for supporting county government. If not, be sure to reach out and urge your members to support the legislation. NACo has been informed that the respective bill numbers will be S. 336 and H.R. 684.

For more information, contact Mike Belarmino at 202.942.4254 or mbelarmino@naco.org.

Email helps incarcerated family members stay connected

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



In the past when someone went to jail, the only form of contact was face-to-face visits, phone calls or hand-written letters. Ventura County, Calif. is trying to change that.

The county's "Email an Inmate" program allows family and friends to correspond with inmates behind bars. The fee-based service allows community members to send emails to prisoners. The emails are printed, screened by the Sheriff's Office then delivered to inmates. However, the inmates will not be able to respond electronically but via U.S. mail in the form of postcards, letters and greeting cards, or by telephone and weekly visits.

Inmates also currently receive postcards from family and friends in addition to magazines and books directly from publishers. There is no restriction on legal or governmental correspondence.

"We're doing this to create efficiencies and speed up communication between the community and inmates," said Linda Oksner, a commander with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. "It also helps the county raise much-needed funds for day-to-day operations with the rest going towards the Inmate Welfare Fund."

During the initial phase of the program, only text will be allowed, no attachments or images. Each email has a maximum of 4,500 characters (the equivalent of one page). Cost of the participating in the program will be \$10 for a set of 10 emails, \$23.75 for 25 emails and \$45 for 50 emails. A \$1.50 processing fee will also be charged for each set. Inmates will be allowed to receive up to five emails per day per sender.

* See this story at www.naco.org/countynews for more information on Ventura County's program.

CORRECTION

Allan Angel's given name was misspelled in the in a second vice presidential candidate's profile that appeared in the 2/11/13 County News.

Mentally ill seniors have few private housing options

HOUSING from page 1

Marshall, county human services officials said. Because the county doesn't have a housing authority, under Virginia law it is forbidden to own public housing, so it contracts with other entities to provide affordable housing.

"So many of the folks in this residence are the poorest folks with mental illness," said Glenda Blake, division chief for aging and disability services with Arlington's Department of Human Services. "There really aren't other options."

"This is home; this is not a kind of transitional housing," she added. "They're building a home community for folks to age in place successfully for life." She said people who have left have needed nursing home or hospice care.

The public-private partnership enables 52 low-income adults—each earning less than \$37,000 a year—aged 55 and older with mental illness, or intellectual or developmental disabilities, to live independently in supportive housing in a group setting. "We have many people there who are making \$16,000–\$17,000 a year from general relief or Social Security disability benefits," said Cynthia Stevens, housing assistance bureau chief for the Human Services Department. In a place like Arlington, in the Washington, D.C. region, it's difficult to find private residential assisted living facilities that charge less than \$50,000 a year, she said.

VOA's King said housing seniors with mental illness or developmental disabilities is a growing problem nationwide.

Between 5.6 million and 8 million older Americans—14 percent to 20 percent of the nation's elderly population—have one or more mental health conditions or problems



Photo courtesy of Volunteers of America

Mabel Dauda, a care coordinator at Arlington County, Va.'s Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence, provides care with a smile to the facility's residents, senior citizens with mental illnesses or intellectual disabilities.

stemming from substance misuse or abuse, according to a 2012 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.

Blake said the number of seniors in Arlington needing a place like Mary Marshall could be as high as 1,000.

"This is the first generation of folks with disabilities, particularly folks with mental illness, who've lived into senior status," King said. "So what to do with those folks is just now becoming an issue, because they don't fit well with traditional senior services."

One step Arlington County took to improve outcomes for this population was to fund the facility at a level that allowed for a 1-to-6 ratio of staff to residents. In some traditional assisted living settings, it can be one employee for every 20 residents, Stevens said.

"We've learned the hard way that these are the kind of folks that get evicted from long-term care residences unless there is extensive support for the staff that has to take

care of them," Blake explained. "These folks need extensive planning and emergency procedures in place for short-term hospitalizations and managing psychotropic meds, and things like that."

"The county really put a lot of thought into ensuring that all those services were in place and that VOA could meet that one-to-six ratio, which is intense for a facility."

The county identified a need several years ago and bought the property for \$2.7 million in June 2003 after a state-licensed assisted living facility at the site ceased operations. Arlington selected VOA as its development partner through a competitive process. The federal government awarded \$4.8 million in grant funds to renovate the facility, built in the 1940s, and the state of Virginia granted another \$1.7 million for renovation expenses.

King said the county's partnering with a faith-based organization didn't raise any eyebrows or red flags. "We have a long history of providing government services at

the federal, state and local levels," she said. "And while we are established as a church—we're similar to the Salvation Army in that respect—we consider ourselves a ministry of service." Employees, who work for VOA not the county, aren't required to have any religious affiliation, nor are the residents, she added.

Before Mary Marshall opened, many of its residents led lives filled with uncertainty, Stevens said. They may have been in substandard private housing, receiving inadequate medical care and living from benefit check to benefit check. "Some were homeless, living in shelters, couch-surfing. You don't pay attention to your health needs when you're in survival mode," she said.

Blake said she is proud of Arlington's approach to meeting the needs of a vulnerable population because it allows them live with dignity. She and Stevens have seen improvements in residents who have become more stable, better socialized and, with help, are managing their conditions. King has as well.

Though she lives in Texas, King visits the Washington area several times a month.

"As I go to the facility and I see folks who came a year ago and their physical appearance, their health, their outlook on the world, their ability to participate in life, to go out on activities, to have a meaningful day is just greatly changed from when they were admitted," she said, "I'm very proud of that."

* You can see more photos of the Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence by viewing this article online at www.naco.org/countynews.

Los Angeles County works to curb school violence

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



The shootings at Newtown resurrected memories of other school shootings and local efforts to keep students at all levels safe from harm.

One effort to insulate students from violence arose in response to the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007. Los Angeles County's Department of Mental Health established a School Threat Assessment Response Team (START) in 2008

dedicated exclusively to preventing campus violence in schools from elementary to college.

"We leave Freud at home and talk about behaviors," said Tony Beliz, deputy director, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. "Through the training and education of parents and educators, we de-escalate student pathways to violence."

Funded through ongoing mental health service dollars, START collaborates with educational institutions, law enforcement and other agencies to address school violence

though training and consultation, early screening and identification, assessment, intervention, case management and monitoring.

Referrals to the program — currently averaging more than 30 per day — come from teachers, students, parents or siblings. Once a referral is received, someone from the mental health department and a law enforcement officer interview people who know the child. After the interviews, with the permission of the parents, they visit the home and spend five to six hours assessing the student by talking to them while

looking through journals, social media pages and the browser history for any peculiar searches.

The last step involves monitoring them at school followed by a final assessment about what needs to be done to help the child. Further action may include daily visits to the guidance counselor or hospitalization in serious cases.

The Mental Health Department uses a database to track students who express suicidal or homicidal behavior, are assaultive, cut class frequently or have an aggressive outburst at school. Students are kept in the database as long as clinically necessary.

"The families we have spoken with about including their child in the database have been fully supportive," Beliz said. "They want their child to receive help for as long as they need it."

"Bullying is one of the key reasons a lot of these students act out towards paths of violence," he added. "Helping students develop support systems through the school and their family will likely diffuse the situation and get them off the database."

START recently signed an memorandum of understanding with the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Police Department to collaborate on students of concern. This partnership allows for a coordinated effort to assist school threat-management teams and enhance intervention strategies.

This partnership is the first of its kind in the country, according to L.A. County officials.

The program's timely intervention has prevented school tragedies in numerous incidents, the officials said. These incidents vary from a student's verbal threats of violence to bringing a weapon to school.

"One student at one of our middle schools decided to saw off a shotgun at home so he could fit it in his book bag," Beliz added. "Another student saw the weapon and reported it to the teacher. The student is now getting the treatment he needs and we hope to find out why it was done in the first place."

Since the program's inception, teams all over the county have responded to approximately 250 incidents at elementary, middle, high schools and colleges.

"Counties no matter the size should have threat response teams at their schools," Beliz said. "With proper training as well as one to two people from law enforcement, education and mental health services to implement the program, it can work."

**See this story online at www.naco.org/countynews for more information on START and how it can be implemented in your county.*

County, tribal interests claim spotlight in two state legislatures

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Taxes, American Indian lands and counties intersect in measures now before two Western state legislatures. In Idaho, a bill would stop counties from collecting property taxes on tribal government buildings located on reservation land.

In Arizona, a bill proposes using Hopi and Navajo reservation land to create a new county for the tribes. A new jurisdiction would enable the state to share sales tax revenue with the tribes.

Counties' reactions have ranged from fear of a threat to the tax base in Benewah County, Idaho to tax forgiveness for a tribe in Kootenai County.

In Benewah County, the Coeur D'Alene Indians have been buying up land to incorporate into their reservation, County Clerk Deanna Bramblett said. She added that the annual property tax that would be lost — based on current purchases alone — would be \$121,000 if the bill before the Legislature passes. The county's 2013 budget is approximately \$12 million, but \$5 million is set aside for new hospital construction.

The Coeur D'Alene Tribe began receiving property tax notices seven years ago on land that it repurchased after having been homesteaded.

"It was definitely a surprise," said Helo Hancock, the tribe's lobbyist. "No state laws were changed and the tribe had no reason to expect this. Rather than run into federal court and initiate litigation, we tried to work with counties to find some other solution."

Among the solutions he proposed was legislation stipulating that tribal government property on reservations is not taxable.

"We want to make it clear that for Indian tribes or governments, just like counties and cities, property owned by government is exempted from taxation," he said. "We don't think counties will be left empty handed, we see that as fair treatment."

Meanwhile, Bramblett worries, "What's going to happen in the future if they continue to buy land?" She said the 776-square-mile county has limited remaining taxable land. Roughly half of the land in the county is part of the Coeur D'Alene reservation.

Bramblett expects the legislation to pass, and sees no other likely opponents besides Benewah County.

"It seems like we're the lone wolf here," she said.

In Kootenai County, the County Commission voted recently to forgive the last 3.5 years' worth of real estate tax bills on tribal lands there.

Commission Chairman Todd Tondee said there had been some question as to which land was tribal and which was taxable, and the county started working to resolve the issue in 2009.

"There was some confusion," he said. "Some disagreements, but we figured it out."

The forgiveness covered roughly \$340,000, which Tondee said is dwarfed by the contributions the tribe makes to its own infrastructure, which Hancock said approaches \$8 million annually for schools, roads and emergency services, among others.

"They pointed out that they are a government entity as well, they have roads, they have a health center that serves the public, so all of those things totaled up to \$8 million," he said. "They're supporting citizens

and in the grand scheme of things, the services they are providing are worth forgiving the bills."

Back in Arizona, a bill, introduced by state Sen. Chester Crandell, would explore the possibility of creating a county for the Hopi and Navajo tribes. A study, due by the end of the year, would analyze how much sales tax revenue Coconino, Apache and Flagstaff counties would lose in such a

See TRIBAL page 8

NACo's Smart Justice Initiative helps you ...

- Learn about local strategies, tools and resources that can help counties save money, increase public safety and improve outcomes for justice-involved individuals, and
- Build capacity for evidence-based, data-driven local justice policies and practices throughout the nation's counties.

For information and resources to assist your county with Smart Justice policies and practices, please visit www.naco.org/justice or use the QR code.

Santa Cruz County, Calif. wins Roadmaps to Health Prize

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



Santa Cruz County, Calif. is one of six communities nationwide — and the only county — to receive one of this year's inaugural Robert Wood Johnson Foundation "RWJF Roadmaps to Health" prizes.

The \$25,000 cash award honors outstanding community partnerships that are helping people lead healthier lives.

"The award is great recognition for the community collaboration that the county has with community-based organizations, young people in Santa Cruz and businesses," said County Supervisor John Leopold, who was in Princeton, N.J. with several colleagues from partner agencies to receive the award.

"And we've been able to move the needle on many different health-related issues; this recognition is a great sign that we're on the right track," he added. The Pacific coastal county, population 262,382, lies about 65 miles south of San Francisco at the north end of the Monterey Bay.

Among the programs RWJF cited are one that provides health insurance to virtually every child in the county. The Healthy Kids of Santa Cruz County program ensures children have access to comprehensive medical, dental, vision and psychological care. The program is funded through a variety of sources, including federal and state grants, county funds



Photo courtesy of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Members of *Jóvenes SANOS* (Spanish for Healthy Youth), an advocacy and leadership group in Santa Cruz County, Calif., survey local restaurants near a high school to assess whether they serve healthful meals, including fresh fruits and vegetables.

and private contributions, Leopold said. Another is an alternative-to-incarceration program that provides education, employment, treatment and social services to get people's lives back on track.

Scott MacDonald, the county's chief probation officer, noted that the link between public health and criminal justice might not be obvious to all, but there is a connection.

"The other issue that intersects with health is that a lot of what's driven the huge fivefold increase in imprisonment has not been crime quite frankly, but it's been what we've chosen to incarcerate over," he said. "And primarily it's drug offenders and

substance abuse issues. So what we're trying to do is get better substance abuse treatment as a way to interrupt that cycle of crime and recidivism — which really is a health issue as much as it is a criminal justice issue."

He added that the county's Custody Alternatives Program allows people who are providing for children to continue to care for them, and lends structure and support for people already living at the margins.

Leopold said the county's ongoing Community Assessment Project Report has served as a guide, providing data that helps the county to pinpoint areas of focus — whether the issue is childhood obesity or curbing binge

drinking. The United Way of Santa Cruz County has been conducting the assessment for nearly 20 years. It identifies goals the community wants to achieve while benchmarking where it stands on indicators such as air quality, unemployment, high school graduation and crime rates.

The recognition of the county extends to all of its partners, including the United Way, local businesses and nonprofits, and cities within the county.

For example, a youth-led effort in the city of Watsonville found there were very few healthy food options around the area high school. The teens went to the City Council and argued for — and gained — new health policies that encouraged new healthy restaurants and rewarded existing restaurants for adding healthier food choices to their menus. More recently, they've been working to bring healthy vending machine options to the county's metro transit stations.

Mary Lou Goeke is executive director of United Way of Santa Cruz County. She said stakeholders in creating a healthy Santa Cruz realize that their fates are intertwined: "Our public safety officers would not succeed without our education leaders; our education leaders would not succeed without our faith communities; and our business communities and our social service sector need all the community to be involved."

Many of those entities will benefit from county's prize money, Leopold said. "We're going to be using it to fund the programs that we talked about in our application, but the recognition will also help us draw attention from people in our community, other funders, and it's also recognition from a national organization that our collaborative approach is a successful approach," he said.

The six Roadmaps prize winners were selected from among 160 applicants nationwide. Also recognized were New Orleans; Cambridge, Mass.; Fall River, Mass.; Manistique, Mich.; and Minneapolis.

"These prize winners represent leadership at its finest — trailblazers creating a culture of health," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO. "We hope it will inspire others to take bold steps to improve health in their communities."

The RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize is awarded annually. The call for applications for year two of the prize will be released on March 20. On that date, RWJF, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, will also release its annual County Health Rankings. Visit www.rwjf.org for more information.

**Check out this story online at www.naco.org/countynews to see a video highlighting Santa Cruz County's award-winning programs and accomplishments.*

Bipartisan scheduled speakers include Reps. Blunt, Clyburn, Terry, Pelosi

CONFERENCE from page 1

vote, drive to work, take the bus, get a flu shot, go to the library, go to the hospital, eat at a restaurant, get a marriage license, buy a house, play in the park, recycle, or call 911 — chances are that you are interacting with your county government.

Rodgers said that counties are a critical partner with the federal and state governments to lead the country toward economic growth and opportunity. NACo believes that it is important to find a balanced approach to deficit reduction and to avoid the looming across-the-board "sequester" budget cuts, which will negatively affect counties and the communities they serve.

"America's counties have already shouldered more than their share of deficit reduction cuts to the federal budget," Rodgers said. "We are

concerned that that there seems to be no real momentum to finding a bipartisan solution to replace the across-the-board sequester cuts scheduled to occur starting March 1. State and local budgets have been

slashed, and counties have had to balance their budgets yet continue shouldering so many of the critical programs and services that people, industry and communities depend upon."

Legislative Conference Speaker Line-Up

Also during the Legislative Conference, participating county officials will hear from national leaders on issues important to counties and communities:

Speaking at the Opening General Session, March 4 are Mark M. Zandi, chief economist, Moody's Analytics; Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Senate Republican Conference vice chair; U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder; and Bob Woodward, associate editor, *The Washington Post*.

Featured at Tuesday's Closing General Session will be House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.); U.S. Agriculture Sec. Tom Vilsack; Rep. Lee Terry (R-Neb.); and Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.), assistant House Democratic leader.

Arizona bill looks at creating new county

TRIBAL from page 7

change. The measure is expected to pass by observers on the county and state level.

Crandell said a successful effort down the road to create a county for the tribes would right a wrong — that the tribes don't reap the benefits from business done on their reservations.

"Creating a new county for them would enable them to get into the revenue sharing that other local governments enjoy, and it also gives them more of a substantial government presence," he said. "This is something they've wanted to do for years — be more represented on the state level."

The Arizona Association of Counties doesn't have an official position on the bill or on the concept of creating a new county for the tribes, but Jen Sweeney, deputy executive director, said the prospect raises a lot of questions

about feasibility that will have to be addressed.

"If the state creates a new county, would that mean it would have the same responsibilities as every other county, that is to host elections, provide public safety?" she asked. "Without a property tax, it will be very hard to do that with the amount of sales tax this would bring the new county. It's hard to see how they would fund those endeavors."

The precedent it would set, she added, could be difficult to rein in with 18 other tribes with land in Arizona, with the White Mountain, San Carlos and Tohono O'Odham reservations being the largest.

"If we do this for two of the tribes in Arizona, will we end up creating new counties for all of them, eventually?" she asked.

The affected counties are waiting on the legislation to comment on its implications.

Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Boulder County, Colo.

Social Media Transforms Parks' Information Sharing

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Boulder County, Colo.'s parks are a place to make memories, hold a picnic or party, and see the plants and vegetation as they grow. The Parks and Open Space Department's website was not nearly as dynamic, however, so the staff launched a comprehensive social media effort to help its virtual representation catch up to real life.

The key to that transformation was offering more options for two-way communications.

Part of that involved equipping staff members with smartphones so they could be in contact with the department's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Wildlife sightings, updates on facility availability, trail conditions and photo updates became dramatically easier when done at the push of a few buttons. The strategies cost nothing to develop and little to implement, just the new smartphones and data plans. The applications themselves are free.



Photo courtesy of the Boulder County, Colo. Parks and Open Space Department

Workers install a camera trained on an osprey nest at the Boulder County, Colo. Fairgrounds. The camera feeds to the county's Parks and Open Space Department website.

Parks and Open Space Social Media Links



[www.twitter.com/
bouldercountyos](http://www.twitter.com/bouldercountyos)



[www.facebook.com/
bouldercountyopenspace](http://www.facebook.com/bouldercountyopenspace)

Each ranger has an individual Twitter account, and parks spokeswoman Vivienne Jannatpour will retweet many of their postings to the parks department's account's 1,080 (as of mid-February) followers. The department's Facebook page has 2,140 "likes" and videos on the county's YouTube channel have been viewed 55,100 times.

"The rangers say their personal interactions with park users have improved, thanks to their Twitter presence," she said. "Now instead of thinking the rangers are just there to give people tickets, they come up and talk more. They think more about the wonders of our open spaces instead of what they can and cannot do while they're visiting."

Jannatpour said that interac-

tions with park users in general have been more positive than before, when most of the letters or emails to the department were complaints.

The social media interactivity has helped the parks department build partnerships with the mountain-biking and hiking community, which prompts trail enthusiasts to offer their own updates from places park staff might not frequently visit. That means some instant trail condition updates, notifications.

Jannatpour said as exciting as the process is, it can get time consuming.

"You commit to being pretty responsive, so you have to meet that commitment," she said. "But, the work we put in over social media saves other people time. If they can get their questions answered—and they're questions a lot of people have, online—fewer people will call to ask questions. It frees up staff time in the office."

The increased interactivity also helps foster stewardship in the parks, she added.

"It's public land, they own it, now they contribute to the information about it."

That's meant friendly competitions among park users to post the best photos or supply the most helpful tips.

The public enthusiasm about it became palpable when the parks department mounted a camera near an osprey nest when some babies were hatching.

"It got intense; people love those birds," Jannatpour said. "At one point, the camera went down, and people were practically having nervous breakdowns because they couldn't see the chicks."

The chicks are at a point now where their chances of survival are around 50 percent, and that's where some dramatic tension builds.

"There's a chance people might see something sad happen on that camera," she said. "We're not looking forward to that, but it will drive home how precious life is. It's one of the risks you run with this kind of connectivity, but if it happens, we'll make the best of it."

Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights award-winning programs.

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Does Bureaucracy Kill Creativity?

A short lecture by British guru of innovation, Sir Ken Robinson, offered a powerful view that the way the school systems of today function throughout the world ends up preparing students for the work of the 19th century instead of the 21st.

Children educated in a bureaucracy with inflexible rules, requirements and testing often come out at the end of the sausage-making machine with their innate creativity and curiosity stifled. Curiosity and willingness to explore are probably hard-wired into each brand-new human, yet we succeed in "educating" it out.

Those of us who have spent many years in bureaucracies, whether private or public, can appreciate the frustration and loss of human potential about which Robinson speaks. Many public

In a fast-changing societal environment, government must become much more flexible, limber and resilient in order to best serve the citizens.

sector rules may be the product of legislative action by people looking for quick and positive-sounding answers to huge and complicated issues.

Human resources offers many examples of how change is difficult and why some considerable amount of public sector performance excellence and potential is

lost along the way. Civil service is a brilliant concept that was formally anointed in the United States in the late 19th century. It provides structure, rules and regulations, and stability. It has morphed, however, into a bunker which is supposed to protect the agency from liability. All you have to do is follow the rules—all 900 pounds of them—and you are shielded from threats of career abuse. Getting promoted often means learning and adhering to all of the rules while remaining conscious. Success may be measured in terms of rules obeyed rather than processes improved.

In a fast-changing societal environment, government must become much more flexible, limber and resilient in order to best serve the citizens. Tolerance and strict adherence to systems which may be too slow, too expensive

and too annoying, no matter how well they worked in a mass-production economy, can become counter-productive. Chances for improvement will be missed, and the very best and brightest of public servants will look for other places to work, or will choose to leave public service. Others will choose not to enter this noble and critical field in the first place.

It is easy to cut a budget. Often the first thing that goes in the name of general fund salvation is training and employee development. That may not be so bad if the training program is solely aimed at reinforcing current and past ways of doing business. Creativity and innovation in such programs may be discouraged despite the suggestion box over in the corner of the room.

See H.R. DOC page 11



News From the Nation's Counties

► ALABAMA

A deal with European Depfa Bank Plc will **cut interest charges** on about \$162 million of **JEFFERSON COUNTY's** school debt.

Although the planned support agreement saves only about \$1 million a year for the county, which in 2011 filed a \$4.23 billion municipal bankruptcy, the resolution passed by the County Commission said the deal would bolster the county in talks to hammer out a broader adjustment plan with its Wall Street creditors, *Yahoo! News* reported.

Massive sewer system debt, now estimated at \$3.2 billion, drove the county into what is the biggest bankruptcy ever by a U.S. local government.

► CALIFORNIA

- Muslim women will no longer be required to **remove religious head coverings** in front of male deputies while in **ORANGE COUNTY** Sheriff's Department custody and will be provided temporary head scarves as part of an agreement between the department and the ACLU of Southern California.

The agreement will also cover religious head covering by members of other faiths, including Orthodox Jews and Sikhs, the *Orange County Register* reported.

The settlement ends a lawsuit between the county and a resident who claimed her religious freedom was infringed upon when she was forced to remove her headscarf while she was booked and in custody at a local court holding facility in 2006.

- **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** is offering an **anonymous gun buyback** in early March. The no-questions-asked event will allow anyone to drop off firearms in exchange for money — \$100 for handguns, shotguns and rifles, and \$200 for assault weapons. The county budgeted \$100,000 for the buyback.

► MARYLAND

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, which already bars smoking in restaurants and workplaces, **extended the ban** to most county-owned or leased property, including county parks and bus shelters.

The measure allows the county's director of health and human services to designate outdoor smoking areas in certain facilities that treat drug dependency, because officials were concerned that a total smoking ban might adversely affect some individuals in rehab. Tenants of private residences in county facilities are "grandfathered," and when the residences become

vacant, the ban will apply.

Another change authorizes the grandfathering of tenants who smoke in private. When those residences become vacant, they will be covered by the ban.

The bill also permits smoking on county-owned golf courses. At a recent hearing, Councilmember Roger Berliner said that sometimes he and other golfers like to enjoy a good cigar when they're on the links. Only one course is owned outright by the county and would enjoy the exemption.

► MICHIGAN

Citing cost, inconvenience and possible confusion, the **LENAWEE COUNTY** Commission rejected a plan to hold quarterly **meetings at rotating sites** around the county.

The public expects the commission to meet in the old courthouse, and moving the site could create confusion, said Commissioner Ralph Tillotson, who made a motion to hold any night meetings in the commission chambers at the old courthouse.

"Unless this room won't hold the people who will be here, any meeting we have should be right here," he said.

Another commissioner doubted moving the meeting location would attract more public attendance, according to the *Daily Telegram*.

► MISSOURI

Visitors to **JEFFERSON COUNTY's** courthouse will have to **surrender their cell phones**. The proliferation of still and video cameras prompted the ban, because recordings aren't allowed in most court proceedings, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported. **MADISON COUNTY** has the same rule in place.

► OHIO

FRANKLIN COUNTY and the city of Columbus and have agreed on how the **county's new land bank** will help the capital city to address some 6,000 vacant and abandoned houses, *The Columbus Dispatch* reported.

The City Council recently passed a memorandum of understanding that establishes a process for the city to exercise its priority interest in tax-foreclosures and other acquisitions of property within its boundaries. Under the agreement, the county could seize properties in the city before a sheriff's sale and almost immediately turn them over to the city.

"I think it's a good agreement because the county is focusing on property outside the city limits,



► NEW YORK

The **ORANGE COUNTY** Government Center will be **renovated, not demolished**. County legislators recently voted to remodel the 43-year-old county office complex, noted — some say notorious — for its Brutalist architecture, a style embodied in Washington, D.C. in the FBI Headquarters. The county building has in recent years suffered from leaky roofing, among other problems.

For several years, County Executive Ed Diana had pushed for the building's demolition, replacing with a new \$68 million government center. Opponents of that approach argued that the building, designed by Paul Rudolph in a modernist style that used lots of concrete, has historic value. The Legislature's vote authorizes \$10 million to design the renovations.

In 2011, the World Monument Fund placed the complex on its watch list of threatened cultural heritage sites in need of protection.

and we have property we want to address," said City Councilman Zach M. Klein, who helped draft the agreement.

► OREGON

- **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** will serve as a test case for a U.S. Treasury Department pilot to help **homeowners who are "underwater"** on high-interest rate mortgages.

Starting in April, borrowers who owe more than their homes are worth will be able to refinance to lower-interest loans. The pilot is similar to a proposal Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) outlined last summer, *The Oregonian* reported.

Under the plan, the state would buy existing high-interest loans and refinance them into new 30-year loans with a 5 percent interest rate. The borrowers will also have the option to refinance into a 15-year loan, lowering total borrowing costs and paying off the debt more quickly.

Financing for the pilot, \$10 million, will come from Oregon's \$220 million share of the treasury's Hardest Hit Fund, which provides foreclosure assistance to 18 states and the District of Columbia.

Ben Pray, a spokesman for the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department, said the hope is that the pilot will provide the evidence Merkley needs to get the program expanded nationwide. On that scale, it has the potential to help 3.7 million homeowners.

- Three of the state's timber counties **are asking voters to raise their taxes** to offset cuts to law enforcement caused by the expiration of the Secure Rural Schools Act. Voters in **LANE, CURRY** and **JOSEPHINE counties** will decide the question in May, the Associated Press reported. The counties experienced huge budget gaps after the safety-net payments for timber counties ran out in 2012 and were not renewed.

"If it fails May 21, come June 30 there is a very, very good likelihood Curry County won't exist as we know it today," Sheriff John Bishop said. "We won't have a jail; we won't have patrol; we won't have a sheriff's office, period. If it does pass, it will allow us to continue running until a permanent solution is found."

► UTAH

The **SALT LAKE COUNTY** Council has approved a measure that will cut in half the cost of daily passes to its recreation centers on **air quality alert days**. The discount will apply on "red air" days designated by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, when the air is unhealthy due to increased levels of pollutants.

Normally, residents are encouraged to limit outdoor exertion on red air days, especially individuals with breathing-related health issues.

The county sells approximately 1,000 day passes to its 17 recreation centers. While the price cut will result in an estimated \$80,000 in lost revenue, based on 30 red-air days, Councilmember Sam Granato hopes increased business will offset losses.

► VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX COUNTY's Economic Development Authority will open a **new office in Boston** to try to attract New England companies to the county.

The EDA, which is funded by the county's general fund, chose Boston for its similarities with Northern Virginia, said Gerald Gordon, the EDA's president and CEO. "With its concentration of IT companies, strong venture capital community, life-science initiatives and renowned academic institutions, the Boston area shares many economic similarities with the Fairfax-Washington area," he added.

This will be the authority's seventh office outside Virginia. It has an office in Los Angeles and overseas offices in Bangalore, London, Munich, Seoul and Tel Aviv.

► WASHINGTON

County Council members in **PIERCE COUNTY** say they won't ask voters to create a **metropolitan park district** as a separate revenue source for parks. Officials said real estate values have declined to the point that such a levy wouldn't raise enough money, *The News Tribune* reported.

"It's just the reality of the economic situation," County Councilmember Rick Talbert said. "There isn't enough taxing authority available to make it a worthwhile conversation right now."

(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.)

HR Doctor: Find a mentor, be a mentor to others

H.R. DOC from page 9

A temporary reduction in salary increases may also be part of a budget-cut mandate. That too may not be all that bad (unless you are the employee who has come to expect a structured every-year pay raise). Many public agency "merit" increases are based more on a past year of obeying the rules rather than how amazing an employee's contribution was to the citizens and the organization overall. Most of the raises will be

of an equal amount irrespective of contribution.

That "everyone the same" approach is a hallmark of most union contracts. While it certainly is much easier for our payroll friends to administer, does a one-size-fits-all approach really encourage exceptional performance to continue if it is essentially unrewarded?

What can a government leader do about this? It begins with a look in the mirror. It begins with a leader being brave and willing to honor innovation, and, in fact, insist on

it. It begins with a leader who appreciates the value of a hiring and promotion process that brings on board a diverse and talented pool of people with a mandate to look over the work processes regularly and show clearly how these processes have improved, rather than how they survived threats of change.

Leaders, who see the wisdom of mentoring, do it themselves and call upon every other employee to be a mentor and role model, will do well in a fast-change environment.

Mentoring for success may be the organization's best approach to employee education and development. Mentoring must include private and small group meetings to dream about what could be not what was, or is. Having the authority and top-level support to then try out the dream with a sound business change plan is very much part of an agency of creativity.

Give a small work group a major challenge, perhaps reporting to the top executive for the purpose of innovation, may result in a compelling case for change. Doing business differently should be a goal of every leader and an inspiration to the whole organization. That may mean interagency resource sharing, having more rational fire station locations to serve a multi-jurisdiction area, attacking the great waste of having many lonely senior citizens feeling abandoned by connecting them with many lonely latchkey children feeling abandoned, and perhaps using more private sector persons to provide some carefully selected strategic services.

Retirees and volunteers may offer the fruits of many years of wishing they could change things

while they were working. They could be involved in the small group business-improvement challenges called for by a great leader.

These concepts are only a few of many which can no longer be considered off limits for agency thought. Most of these ideas and many more can be fully explored and implemented with in-house staff leadership as long as the top leader sets the stage and inspires the result. This is not a one-time short commitment by the leader. It must be an ongoing nurturing.

This article asks whether bureaucracy kills creativity. The HR Doc's answer is that it often does, but it need not. The difference is a factor of one of a great leader's most vital asset. It is an asset that should be the principal criteria when appointing or electing a new leader. That asset is the ability to inspire others to do the very great work of creative innovation in government, to make them feel that it is safe and desirable to do so, and to recognize and reward the result.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor • www.hrdtr.net

NACo on the Move

» NACo Executive Committee and County Officials

• NACo President **Chris Rodgers** spoke about NACo and his Smart Justice presidential initiative at the Police Jury Association of Louisiana annual conference in Calcasieu Parish Feb. 20.

• DeKalb County, Ga. CEO **Burrell Ellis** was recently named one of the 100 most influential Georgians by *Georgia Trend* magazine. The honor marks the fourth time in five years Ellis has been included on the list of prominent figures in Georgia business, industry, politics, government, science, education, philanthropy and health care.

• NACo Executive Director **Matt Chase** spoke to New York State Association of Counties members at their Legislative Conference, Feb. 6, about NACo's federal advocacy efforts and new campaign, Why Counties Matter. Later in the week, Chase met with White House staff to discuss the President Obama's renewed focused on infrastructure and the role of state and local governments.

On Feb. 12, he briefed participants at the National Association of Regional Councils meeting — along with several other NACo staff — on the post-2012 election federal landscape. He also travelled to Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 13, to address the board of County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania on federal budget and policy issues such as sequestration and the potential impact of federal tax reform on counties.

» NACo Staff

• **Erik Johnston**, associate legislative director, presented an update on the farm bill and federal policy affecting rural counties at the Agricultural and Community Engagement Seminar co-hosted by the Wisconsin Counties Association in Portage County Feb. 20. Johnston also spoke on the challenges and opportunities facing rural counties at the European Union's gathering of staff from member states engaged in agriculture and rural issues in Washington, D.C. Feb. 11.

• **James Davenport**, program manager, spoke on NACo's role and some of the findings from the livability project conducted with National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and other partner organizations at the 2013 National Conference of Regions in Washington, D.C. Feb. 12.

• **Julie Ufner**, associate legislative director, spoke to NARC's Environment Committee on NACo's environment and energy priorities at the 2013 National Conference of Regions in Washington, D.C. Feb. 11.

• **Daria Daniel**, associate legislative director, briefed the NARC Economic and Community Development Committee regarding NACo's Community and Economic Development legislative priorities and partnership to advance common goals at 2013 National Conference of Regions in Washington, D.C. Feb. 11.

• **Dalen Harris**, associate legislative director, spoke to NARC's Homeland Security Committee Meeting, and outlined NACo's 2013 public safety legislative priorities Feb. 11.

• **Deseree Gardner**, associate legislative director, was the keynote speaker at the Black Caucus luncheon at the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) 2013 Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. Feb. 7.

• **Michael Belarmino**, associate legislative director, presented state and federal budget outlooks for the coming year on a panel for the Maryland Government Finance Officers Association 2013 winter meeting in Baltimore County Jan. 25.

» Coming Up

Kaye Braaten, past NACo president and membership consultant, exhibited on behalf of membership recruitment and retention at the Police Jury Association of Louisiana Annual Conference in Calcasieu Parish, La. Feb. 20–22. Braaten will also be exhibiting at the West Virginia Association of Counties 2013 annual meeting in Kanawha County March 10–12.



Chris Rodgers



James Davenport



Matt Chase



Deseree Gardner

Job Market & Classifieds

► SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR – BURLEIGH COUNTY, N.D.

Salary: \$74,464 – \$96,782 annually; DOQ.

Benefits: Burleigh County benefits, view the information at <http://www.burleighco.com/departments/hr>. Burleigh County together with the ND Department of Human Services is seeking qualified applicants for the position of County Director for Burleigh County Social Services in Bismarck, N.D. to administer, monitor, and evaluate services and programs in compliance with federal, state, and local policies, procedures, laws, rules, and regulations for Burleigh County.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree in business/public administration, counseling, child development and family science, psychology, social work or a related field and eight (8) years of experience administering human service programs that includes supervision of staff.

To Apply: Complete a State of ND application for Employment

(SFN10950). To view the full job announcement and access the application form to apply go to <http://www.nd.gov/hrms/jobs>.

Closing Date: Friday, March 22 by 5 p.m. (CT)

More information, assistance or accommodation contact: Renae Gall, 701.222.6536 or Sandy Smith, 701.222.6622. EOE.

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Research News

Lessons from 43 Years of NACo Achievement Awards

This year marks 43 years of the NACo Annual Achievement Awards program. The program, which started in 1970, recognizes innovative county government programs and employees that make a positive impact in their communities. NACo uses the awards to build a database of innovative programs and disseminate best practices to counties around the country.

Award-winning Programs Replicated

In 1990, King County, Wash. earned an Achievement Award for its approach to banning cigarette smoking in the King County jail. Soon afterwards, Kern County,

Calif. announced comparable “no smoking” policies for inmates and jail staff, following King County’s model. Today, while not all county jails have banned smoking, many more have implemented what NACo recognized more than 20 years ago with an Achievement Award.

Keeping Up with Technology

Remember when the Internet was a novelty in the 1990s? In the mid-’90s, NACo recognized a variety of counties for their innovative efforts to disseminate critical information in a timely fashion with the help of the Internet. Broward County, Fla.

won an Achievement Award in 1996 for its efforts to develop a website to share information about county programs and services.

Technology has changed, but NACo awards continue to recognize the most innovative technology programs. Los Angeles County won an Achievement Award in 2012 for implementing a free iPhone application “The Works.” This tool provides a convenient way for the public to request services or report issues related to wind damage, graffiti, potholes, illegal dumping and building code violations. In the

first two months of the release, Los Angelinos downloaded the application 900 times.

Programs Adapt to Changing Times

The Children’s Network Council, now known as the Solano (Calif.) Children’s Alliance, earned an Achievement Award in 1983 for its initiative to develop an 18-member operations council to advocate for local children and families. The initiative not only survived, but also grew over the years. Now, the Solano Children’s Alliance is

a countywide, coordinated system of family support that does not rely on county funds.

Counties have changed significantly over the last 43 years, and NACo as well. NACo Achievement Awards are one constant in NACo’s relationship with its members; they have recognized and will continue to acknowledge the most innovative county programs nationwide. This will not change anytime soon.

(Research News was written by Katie Bess, research assistant.)

Financial Services News

Harford County, Md. Racks Up a Winner with Freezer Project

Jeff LaPorta, the supervisor of purchasing with Harford County, Md. Public Schools had a problem that was freezing out all of his attempts at a solution.

The school district owns a large warehouse as part of its food and nutrition program. Within the warehouse is a large 60-foot-by-60-foot wide by 25-foot-high freezer. The problem was it had no shelving or racks.

As a temporary solution, the district stored supplies on pallets, which were then stacked on top of each other. They found out quickly that this solution was not particularly efficient, and it even became hazardous, as the weight and height of the items being stored caused the stacks to start leaning.

LaPorta’s department was asked to order racks, and they investigated suppliers. “We found we could buy racks anywhere, but we couldn’t find any supplier that would install them,” he explained. The project dragged on for more than a year.

Then, Applied Industrial Technologies became a supplier partner through the U.S. Communities cooperative purchasing program. Applied Technologies is one of the largest industrial distributors in North America, with approximately 500 facilities, 4,900 employees, nine strategic distribution centers, and more than 40 specialty repair and rebuild shops. As part of the process of becoming a U.S. Communities supplier, representa-

tives from Applied provided an introductory presentation where they stressed they don’t just sell products, they provide solutions.

When LaPorta heard the presentation, he realized Applied could help with his freezer rack project. “I called my U.S. Communities program manager, who quickly put me in touch with the correct person at Applied. The representative came to visit me, and also brought the person who would be in charge of the installation. They knew the right questions to ask. After assessing our needs and taking the measurements, they promptly sent us a quote based on U.S. Communities’ contracted pricing,” LaPorta said.

“By virtue of the fact that it was a contracted price and I didn’t have to do a bid, it was a done deal. And here’s the interesting thing: I asked them to send me an itemized quote that separated the products from the installation, and it turned out the cost of the shelves—three rows, three stacks high—was actually less than the other companies we’d received quotes from. The installation cost was also very reasonable,” he added.

“There are two things that are great about using U.S. Communities. The contracts available through U.S. Communities have already been competitively bid by a lead public agency, so you save a lot of time because you don’t have to do the bid,” LaPorta said.

“Secondly, Harford County could not get the same level of pricing we receive through U.S. Communities. Using U.S. Communities and having the program managers as a resource enables us to do other productive work. The program managers are top-notch,” he added, “and when you reach out to them you get an immediate response, and they get back to you with an answer. Without U.S. Communities, we would need to add another staff member, and in this environment, that’s not a reality.”

When future projects arise, LaPorta plans to rely on Applied Industrial Technologies. “I was perfectly satisfied—I would highly recommend them and U.S. Communities,” he said.

U.S. Communities is the only government cooperative purchasing organization to be founded by NACo, the National League of Cities, the Association of School Business Officials, International, the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

For more information about U.S. Communities and the various products and services offered to local governments, please contact Jim Sawyer, NACo Financial Services Center at 202.661.8868 or jsawyer@naco.org.

(Financial Services News was provided by Jim Sawyer, director, NACo Financial Services Center.)

National Association of Counties

2013

Achievement Awards

Your county’s programs and the individuals making them successful deserve national recognition ...

Applications are now being accepted online for NACo’s Achievement Award program, our annual non-competitive awards program which seeks to recognize innovative county government programs. Outstanding programs from each category may be selected for the Best of Category Award.

Visit www.naco.org/achievementawards for complete guidelines and to apply.

If you’re planning to enter, join the event on NACo’s Facebook page and share the news of the Achievement Award opportunity with others!



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NACo National Association of Counties