

NACo National Association of Counties

# CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

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## Cuts in federal funding threaten public health emergency response

By CHARLES TAYLOR  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Bay County, Mich.'s health department was able to vaccinate only 10 percent of its population during the H1N1 flu pandemic of 2009. The effort took nearly its entire staff working overtime for six weeks, according to Barbara MacGregor, the county's health director.

"Let's say the pandemic was worse," she said. "Let's say it was a more virulent strain of influenza, and the demand was such that we had to vaccinate a far greater

percentage, it would have been very difficult."

Three years later, it might pose even more of a challenge as counties find their funding to detect and respond to disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies, at risk because of federal and state budget cuts.

That was the takeaway from the report, *Ready or Not? Protecting the Public from Diseases, and Bioterrorism* released recently by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). It found that after years of progress following the Sept. 11 and anthrax attacks of more than

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## Agriculture Department announces office closures

By ERIK JOHNSTON  
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a major reorganization that will close 259 domestic offices. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced USDA's Blueprint for Stronger Service Jan. 9 and emphasized that the reorganization is an attempt to streamline and cut costs, while maintaining services.

No employees will lose their jobs in the reorganization, but more than 7,000 USDA employees have announced plans to retire in the past 15 months, and most of those positions will be eliminated or subject to a hiring freeze.

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Photo by Tom Goodman

Deschutes County, Ore. Commission Chair Tammy Baney asks a question during a briefing by White House officials held in conjunction with the annual Washington, D.C. meeting of state associations of counties presidents and executive directors. Baney is Association of Oregon Counties president. The two-day meeting, Jan. 12–13, also featured updates and discussions about federal legislation, and state government budget and reapportionment trends, as well as a talk by Ezra Klein, a *Washington Post*, Bloomberg and MSNBC contributor and policy analyst. Klein spoke about the intersection of politics and economic policy, and its impact from Wall Street to Main Street.

## Healthy Counties, awards program highlight NCGM

By JIM PHILLIPS  
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER

National politics are sure to dominate the headlines in 2012 with the White House and control of Congress up for grabs. But county officials across the country can generate their own positive publicity at home through National County Government Month (NCGM) celebrations in April.

Since 1991, NACo has encouraged counties to actively promote county government services and programs. This year's theme is "Healthy Counties, Healthy Families," which complements NACo

President Lenny Eliason's Healthy Counties presidential initiative. Counties can link their own county government month activities to this theme by promoting local health services and wellness programs.

NCGM activities do not need to be limited to spotlighting health services. Does your county participate in the NACo Prescription Discount Card Program? If so, why not visit community centers and hold public events highlighting the success of the program? Tout the total money saved by local residents and how easy it is for anyone — regardless

See NCGM 2012 page 6

### QuickTakes

#### Best Run States

(Based on financial health, standard of living and state government services)

- 1 - Wyoming
- 2 - Nebraska
- 3 - North Dakota
- 4 - Minnesota
- 5 - Iowa

Source: 24/7 Wall St. 2011

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When you see the "web" icon in a story, there's more information available in the online edition

of County News at [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews). Check it out.

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# What federal budget cuts mean to your county

By EDWIN S. ROSADO  
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



With the 112th Congress set to convene, deficit reduction will be of primary concern even in the face of a presidential election year. Looking back at how Congress tackled (or didn't) the federal deficit can provide perspective as NACo works to protect county interests in this congressional session.

## Major Budget Actions in 2011

During February and March, Congress adopted a Continuing Resolution avoiding a federal government shutdown. The budget included approximately \$38 billion in reductions to 2011 domestic spending programs. The House Appropriations Committee originally announced cutting domestic discretionary programs by \$40 billion. Republican freshmen and other fiscal conservatives insisted on \$100 billion in cuts. The bill that was taken up by the House had approximately \$60 billion was cut from the president's FY11 budget request.

The bill targeted many programs of interest to counties for deep cuts or elimination, including adult and youth job training, the Community Development Block Grant, Community Services Block Grant, Juvenile Accountability Block Grant programs, and Community Health Centers. NACo lobbied hard to prevent draconian reductions as proposed, and the association and its allies worked to defuse the cuts. Legislative staff helped defeat an amendment to cut funding to the payment in lieu of taxes program (PILT) by 75 percent. The amendment was soundly defeated by a margin of 394 to 32.

The legislation also sought to eliminate hiring grants for law enforcement and emergency personnel; however, amendments to provide \$298 million for COPS

hiring, and \$510 million for SAFER grants restored funding for these important public safety needs.

Unfortunately, NACo has not been able to prevail in maintaining level funding. Over the past 12 months, Congress has reduced federal spending by about \$47 billion, spread over two appropriations cycles. It completed overdue FY11 appropriations (PL 112-10), reducing almost \$40 billion in discretionary spending from the previous year's levels, and then trimming an additional \$7 billion by the time it finished FY12 spending legislation (PL 112-74) in December.

During July and August, major debates on raising the debt limit led to passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (PL 112-25), which created the Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (aka: "super committee"). The legislation included \$900 billion in discretionary reductions. It also required action by the super committee to recommend \$1.2 trillion in additional reductions over 10 years to be reported to Congress

by November and enacted by Jan. 15, 2012 and authorized a trigger (known as "sequestration") to obtain those reductions in 2013 if they could not reach agreements.

By November, the super committee could not reach agreements and disbanded leaving Congress with the responsibility of finding the \$1.2 trillion in cuts required by the Budget Control Act before the 2013 sequestration kicks in.

In December, amid polarizing debates on Capitol Hill, a final two-month agreement was reached to extend a payroll tax break and the unemployment insurance fund.

## Breaking Down the Sequester

The Budget Control Act (BCA) requiring a sequestration of funds designed to reach the total \$2.1 trillion in reductions was enacted in August 2011. The first \$900 billion in cuts were enacted during the passage of the BCA. The remaining \$1.2 trillion must now be found or automatic sequester of funds is triggered to be evenly

split by domestic discretionary and defense accounts.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) assumes that of the \$1.2 trillion, \$216 billion (18 percent) will be saved by reduced debt service costs, leaving \$974 billion in cuts to be evenly split over nine years. In effect, this means a total cut of \$492 billion or \$54.7 billion per year from each side. This is approximately in the range of 8.5 percent to 10 percent in cuts per year to domestic and defense accounts.

## Final Actions, Effects on Counties

Congress reduced regular discretionary spending by 4 percent between FY10 and FY12. It more than halved the amount of money provided for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's equipment and training programs for state and local governments to \$1.3 billion. Just as hard on counties was a cut of \$1 billion, or 25 percent, over the two budget years for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

program, reducing it to \$2.9 billion in FY12.

Meanwhile, the debt limit law (PL 112-25) also set limits on discretionary spending through FY21, capping it at \$1.23 trillion in that final year. And many fiscal conservatives are pushing for deeper cuts in discretionary spending, arguing that the caps in the debt limit law represent only "ceilings," or the maximum amount allowed to be allocated. Given the rising concern over the nation's \$15 trillion debt, it is likely that Congress will not abandon its cost-cutting strategy.

The debates in 2012 will continue with major discussions on whether to raise revenues and if so, on whom and on controlling spending, while assisting an aging population and providing needed services. NACo supports a balanced approach to tackling America's debt.

## NACo Position

NACo has adopted four key principles which it believes should guide discussions as options are being considered. They have been

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On December 12, 2011, the United States Supreme Court granted *certiorari* in a case whose outcome could well result in the serious curtailment of the ability of county and local governments (and states) to pursue Administrative Procedure Act ("APA") challenges to final decisions of officials of the United States Department of the Interior granting tribal fee-to-trust applications pursuant to Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act. The case is *Patchak v. Salazar*, 646 F. Supp.2d 72 (D.D.C. 2009), rev'd and remanded, 632 F.3d 702 (D.C. Cir. 2011).

*Patchak* involves an APA challenge to the Secretary of the Interior's decision granting the fee-to-trust application of the Gun Lake Band (in Michigan) submitted for the purpose of establishing a casino. One of the principal alleged bases for this challenge is that the Band was not "under federal jurisdiction" in 1934, invoking *Carcieri v. Salazar*, 555 U.S. 379 (2009). The land at issue is now held in trust.

In its petition for *certiorari*, the United States contends that the Quiet Title Act ("QTA") bars Patchak's challenge because the land is now being held in trust, relying, in part, upon opinions of the United States Courts of Appeals for the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Circuits. By contrast, the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit held that the QTA does not apply to Patchak's lawsuit. If the Supreme Court ultimately rules that the QTA bars Patchak's suit because the land is now held in trust, that ruling will likely operate so as to significantly curtail the overall ability of county governments to pursue APA challenges to Interior decisions granting tribal fee-to-trust applications.

The primary reason for the foregoing conclusion is that any APA challenge involving land already held in trust will be barred in all Circuits, not just the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Circuits, as is now the case. The second, and less apparent, reason relates to the impact of the shortcomings in how Interior handles tribal fee-to-trust applications (for example, Interior refuses to make public a list of the approximately 1,900 tribal fee-to-trust applications reportedly pending) upon county governments. The chief such impact is to make it probable that in some instances (perhaps a not insignificant number thereof) county governments will either be unaware of a tribal fee-to-trust application until the land is already in trust or will only learn about the application when it is too late to formulate an APA challenge before the land is actually put in trust.

The government's brief (in *Salazar v. Patchak*, No. 11-247) is due on or before February 7, 2012. Amicus briefs are due seven days after the government's brief is filed. To check the date of filing of the government's brief (it could be filed before January 26th) concerned county governments can Google *Salazar v. Patchak*, No. 11-247.

Sincerely,  
Dennis E. Fink and James M. Upton

*Dennis Fink is a former County Commissioner for St. Louis County, Minnesota. James Upton retired from the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the United States Department of Justice in the spring of 2011. Nearly all of his career as a trial attorney at Justice was devoted to the practice of federal Indian law.*

## CORRECTION

Chris Rodgers was misidentified as NACo second vice president in a "NACo on the Move" item in the Dec. 19 issue of *CountyNews*. He is the first vice president.

2011 marked the fourth consecutive year that Hanover County, Va. was designated one of the 100 Best Communities in America for Young People. An article in the Oct. 24 edition misidentified the county as a first-time winner.

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The Voice of America's Counties

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# County officials push Counties Work to the public

By CHARLIE BAN  
STAFF WRITER



With strong participant numbers following the summer 2011 release of the online game "Counties Work," NACo is hoping to build on that momentum and get the game into classrooms across the country.

NACo members and state associations are spreading the word to their school systems, about the game, which was developed for NACo by the iCivics Foundation.

Counties Work raises awareness of how county government functions, the focus of NACo Past President Glen Whitley's Presidential Initiative.

"I've heard a lot of positive comments about it, and I feel like it's provided the kind of insight into county government, which is what we wanted out of it," Whitley said.

A County Works player manages a small, but growing, county and along with referring concerned citizens to the departments that can address their issues, makes policy decisions that affect citizen

satisfaction and population. After four years, in the game's time, the player faces reelection.

As of Jan. 11, more than 100,000 students had played the game and more than 1,000 lesson plans have been downloaded, according to iCivics.

A lot of the work that must be done to spread the word is on the retail level, and can be accomplished the same way Whitley charged his colleagues during his tenure — getting out and talking to their communities about it.

Mattie Hatchett, a commissioner from Oakland County, Mich., is a strong evangelist for the game.

"People, not just children, are ignorant when it comes to county government—what it's all about and what (county officials) do," she said. "This game is an excellent tool for helping them find out what their county does."

She is advocating for the game's inclusion in the Pontiac School District's curriculum.

"Getting that game on the curriculum in Pontiac and other schools in Oakland County is on my agenda," she said. "The fact

that it is a computer game makes it a great way to deliver knowledge to students, because that's how they get a lot of their stimuli these days.

"I'm very excited about the program; I'll push it as much as I can."

Tanya Larriva, an eighth-grade civics teacher in Loudon County, Va. had a good reaction from her

students when she introduced the game.

"My students really enjoy the Counties Work game and they really get a lot of experience with the content in a way that I can't capture in my classroom," she said.

Many counties and state associations are promoting the game via links on their web sites,

and NACo and iCivics personnel have approached organizations that work in education, including the American Library Association and the National Schools Superintendents Association, to promote the game.

\* *Counties Work* is available at [www.icivics.org/games/counties-work](http://www.icivics.org/games/counties-work).

## Deficit reduction should not be cost-shifted to counties

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circulated to all relevant congressional committees, House and Senate leadership and the administration. They are:

- You cannot solve the budgetary deficit by only cutting domestic, non-military discretionary programs. It is well known that non-military, discretionary programs are only 12 percent, or approximately \$480 billion, of the annual federal budget of \$3.6 trillion.

- Federal assistance to state and local governments will help

mitigate further layoffs. More than 500,000 jobs have been lost over the last three years in the government sector, which has helped exacerbate the unemployment picture and contributed to the private sector's concerns and their lack of an increased investment strategy.

Federal investment in state and local infrastructure produces private sector jobs; and

- Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to counties, imposing unfunded mandates, or preempting county programs or taxing authority. State

and local governments, who must balance budgets annually, will need flexibility in dealing with unnecessary government regulations or mandates.

In discussing tax reform issues, NACo urges Congress to reject ideas that may limit local government's ability to seek new revenues in order to meet the balanced budget requirements and provide for constituent needs.

To learn more about NACo's key legislative priorities for FY12, access this story online at [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).



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# Guest Commentary: State forces local taxes higher

By JIM CAMPBELL

Enough is enough.

For a number of years, the Virginia General Assembly has boasted its success of “not raising your taxes.” But is this claim really true?

No, they haven’t recently raised your income tax. And they haven’t increased the sales tax. Nor the gasoline tax, which helps pay for your roads. They actually reduced or eliminated some taxes, such as the estate tax.

But your local property taxes have probably gone up. And while

state lawmakers beat their chests and brag about reducing taxes, they are actually vicariously causing local property taxes to increase.

How?

Devolution.

During the past decade, the state has devolved more and more services to local governments and even at times shunned its constitutional responsibilities to deliver — or pay for — services to our citizens.

In order to balance the budget and not raise taxes, legislators have resorted to gimmicks such as underfunding the Virginia Retirement Sys-

tem, or reducing statutory payments for law enforcement departments, or merely shifting the funding of state-mandated programs to localities. These actions have inevitably caused local taxes to increase.

According to the Virginia Constitution, the General Assembly “shall provide a system of free public elementary and secondary education.” Over the years, public schools have been supported by the state, with supplemental funding coming from local tax dollars.

Recently, however, the state has gradually reduced its proportionate

share of funding for public education, thereby shifting more costs to local governments. Again, the state has vicariously raised local taxes.

Recently, the state has been severely challenged to balance its budget without raising taxes. Without sufficient revenue to meet its expenses, the legislature simply reduced its contribution to a number of programs that are funded jointly from state and local sources — such

as libraries, social services and constitutional officers.

In effect, \$60 million of your local property taxes were remitted each year to balance the state budget.

*Jim Campbell is the executive director of the Virginia Association of Counties.*

*This column originally appeared in the Commentary section of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dec. 11, 2011.*

## Fleet management upgrade pays off in Wayne County, Mich.

By CHARLIE BAN  
STAFF WRITER



While working to upgrade its fleet management system, Wayne County, Mich. found a way to keep the public informed about road conditions during inclement winter weather.

Department of Public Services staff members visited a number of Canadian cities in 2010 and found promise in Webtech Wireless’ Interfleet system.

“It was immediately a huge upgrade over the aging system we had,” said Cindy Dingell, the department’s deputy chief operating officer. “Because the system runs through the cell phone towers, you can get real-time updates about where the trucks are, how fast they’re going, and if their plows are up or down.”

As the department waded through the flood of statistics now available, personnel from the county’s department of technology looked for a way to reduce the flood of information down to a manageable amount that laymen and residents could understand and appreciate.

“We’re always looking for more ways we can interface with the public, and the technology staff saw all of that information as a way to advance that,” she said. “It



was really a sidebar to our basic fleet management upgrade.”

The technology department developed Wayne County Compass, a variety of filters that can be overlaid atop a Google map of the county. They include traffic, county service trucks, a weather radar and road closings for events. It all contributes to a system that will help motorists navigate the county in snowstorms, not an uncommon event during Michigan winters. With 1,900 lane-miles of road under county responsibility, keeping track of the plowing and salting status can get hectic.

The map shows the locations of 149 of the county’s 158 salt trucks and the roads that had recently been plowed. Traffic cameras give users the option of viewing the road conditions in real time, as do 18 trucks equipped with dashboard video cameras.

The Interfleet system also gives the Department of Public Services a wealth of information to draw

upon when faced with complaints and inquiries from the public.

“We’ve gotten complaints about people driving too fast in county trucks,” Dingell said. “Now we can refer to that truck’s data to see just how fast the driver was going at the time. The same with complaints alleging that we didn’t salt roads. We know how long and where the trucks have their plows down and disperse salt.”

The system’s real-time qualities will make truck management a lot easier and faster. With instant truck tracking, public service department supervisors can redeploy nearby trucks to assist in problem areas and make direct contact with drivers, something that wasn’t possible with the old system.

The more precise measurement of how much salt is spread will also help eliminate waste and oversalting, saving money and wear on the roads. Installation of the Interfleet system costs approximately \$360,000, and the Compass development was done in-house by the Department of Technology.

Although much of Michigan was belted with a rapid snowfall early in January, as of the publication deadline, Wayne County had not seen a storm dramatic enough for the Compass to show off what it could do.

“I’m sure people will appreciate it a lot more after we have our first storm,” Dingell said. “They might not even realize it’s operating yet.”

*\* If you’d like to see a sample map, go to this story on our online County News: [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).*

## Profiles in Service



» Kenneth Ulman

NACo Board of Directors

County Executive  
Howard County, Md.

**Number of years active in NACo:** 5

**Years in public service:** 9 – County Council for four years; county executive for five years running

**Education:** B.A. Government and Politics, University of Maryland-College Park; J.D., Georgetown University Law Center

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done:** watching my younger brother Doug battle cancer three times. He has served as CEO of the Lance Armstrong Foundation since 2001.

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** Diana Ulman (mother), Jim Rouse and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

**A dream I have is to:** demonstrate that public sector innovation is alive and well, and that some of our biggest challenges can be solved through better thinking and creative partnerships.

**You’d be surprised to learn that I:** have some serious acting chops. I played a TV reporter in two episodes of HBO’s *The Wire*.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** hike the *Cinque Terre* in Italy.

**My favorite way to relax is:** by spending time with my daughters Lily (6) and Maddie (10).

**I’m most proud of:** helping people each day through public service and smart public policy. I am particularly proud of our Healthy Howard program which has provided uninsured residents with access to primary health care and has linked hundreds of children and families to pre-existing programs.

**Every morning I read:** *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

**My favorite meal is:** Maryland steamed crabs.

**My pet peeve is:** ties — the one article of clothing that really serves no purpose except to make an outfit look more “complete.”

**My motto is:** “The only time success comes before work is in the dictionary.”

**The last book I read was:** *Start-Up Nation* by Saul Singer.

**My favorite movie is:** *The Shawshank Redemption*.

**My favorite music is:** anything playing at Howard County’s own Merriweather Post Pavilion.

**My favorite president is:** Teddy Roosevelt.

Keep up with NACo online ...

[www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)



# County News Survey ... What would you do with a 5% county budget surplus?



If Walter Mitty, literature's most famous daydreamer, were a county official he may have stepped back from the fray and wondered what he would do with a surprise 5 percent budget surplus. *County News* wondered too, and asked a random sample of county officials what they would use their surplus for. Here are some of their responses.

Restoring cash reserves in various funds, capital or other non-recurring expenditures, including one time pay incentives for employees that have not had increases in pay for 3 years.

— **Roman Abeyta**  
County Manager  
Santa Fe County, N.M.

Catch up on the many items postponed due to a prolonged period of budget cuts such as needed repairs to courthouse, public buildings, and

historic monuments. I would like to bring back the public safety positions cut over the past 5 years.

— **John Blum**  
County Chairman  
Stephenson County, Ill.

Employee raises!

— **Donald McDaniel**  
County Manager  
Gila County, Ariz.

Advance a capital project to an earlier start than proposed within the capital improvement plan.

— **Bradley Arnold**  
County Administrator  
Sumter County, Fla.

We would have to return all but 20 percent of the operating budget to the taxpayers.

— **Betsy Fitzgerald**  
County Manager  
Washington County, Maine

1) Extend centralized water and sewer lines to unserved neighborhoods across the county.

2) Restore cutbacks in social service, health, housing, and human service programs to special-needs populations across the county.

— **Don Brown**  
County Administrator  
Franklin County, Ohio

Reserve against anticipated losses in revenue over the next few years.

— **Craig Weinaug**  
County Administrator  
Douglas County, Kan.

First would be compensation for those who have performed for the last four years without raises; secondly for infrastructure repairs that have not been done due to the massive expenditures we have incurred from flooding.

— **Dennis Drake**  
County Chairman  
Washington County, Utah

Most of it would go back in our undesignated fund balance and the rest toward increasing staff in our Technology department and toward another sheriff's deputy on the road.

— **Dick Koeppen**  
Board Chairman  
Waupaca County, Wis.

Road improvement and road equipment purchases.

— **Marty Malone**  
County Chairman  
Park County, Mont.

A rainy day fund.

— **Kevin O'Malley**  
County Chairman  
Clear Creek County, Colo.

Personnel recognition — merit increases and performance bonuses.

— **Jesse Smith**  
County Manager  
Montrose County, Colo.

Putting more deputies on the street would be number one. Helping our local schools and improving infrastructure for economic development would balance out my wish list.

— **Steve Soeth**  
County Chairman  
Glenn County, Calif.

Wheel loader.

— **Mike Tuerk**  
County Chairman  
Keya Paha County, Neb.


• Catch up on Road resurfacing projects.

• Pay off high-interest debt currently outstanding.

• Upgrade analog radio communication systems to digital.

— **Michael Vandersteen**  
County Board Chair  
Sheboygan County, Wis.

\*Visit [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews) to view all the responses received.



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**Ralph Becker, FAICP**  
Mayor, Salt Lake City

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# Local health department funding declined by one-third since 2005

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10 years ago, health departments are losing ground.

“Some of the most elementary capabilities, including the ability to identify and contain outbreaks, provide vaccines and medications during emergencies, and treat people during mass traumas are experiencing cuts in every state across the country,” said Jeff Levi, executive director of TFAH. He said a number of programs that help detect and respond to bioterrorism and other health emergencies are “at risk for major cuts or elimination.”

The report usually assesses states’ preparedness. But this year, it focused on the future, he said. It projects, instead, how past and proposed budget cuts and funding levels will affect state and local governments’ ability to prepare and respond.

“While we don’t know precisely how the federal government will implement some of these budget cuts,” he said, “we do know from our analysis of budget documents and other sources that the fiscal ’12 cuts and the potential fiscal ’13 sequestration will impact every state in the nation in one way or another.” The sequestration is the automatic cuts that will take effect because of the failure of the congressional so-called supercommittee to agree on cuts to the federal budget.

Bobby Pestronk, executive director of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), said there’s been a loss of about one-third of the funding that was initially made available to public health departments since 2005. “Local health departments are part of a safety net for all people in their communities...it’s only a matter of time before the net lets the unsuspecting through,” he warned.

Bay County Health Department’s (BCHD) workforce is now 20 percent smaller than it was during the H1N1 pandemic and 40 percent smaller than it was six years ago. The department’s budget has shrunk by 10 percent since 2010, and it expects more cuts this fiscal year, MacGregor said.

BCHD received more than \$360,000 in FY09–10 for pandemic influenza response, funding that has since been eliminated, MacGregor said. Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expect state and local health departments to continue to maintain pandemic response plans, exercises and surveillance activities.

“It is my opinion that federal public health emergency preparedness funding is reactive and incident-dependent rather than being proactive and focused on surveillance, education, training and exercising,” she said. However, her beef isn’t with CDC, but rather with the Congress that funds the agency.

Los Angeles County lost about \$2 million in CDC public health preparedness funding last year, placing “public health protective capabilities” at risk, according to Alonzo Plough, director of emergency preparedness and response for the L.A. County Department of Public Health. “And in some counties, not only does it put them at risk, it is already causing some of those counties to have to really step back, dismantle programs.”

In an article included in the TFAH report, Plough, a TFAH board member and former health director for King County, Wash., wrote: “[T]here is a logic of preparedness and response that operates inside the Beltway that is sometimes divorced from what has been accomplished by and



Photo courtesy of Los Angeles County

Alonzo Plough (l), L.A. County’s public health emergency preparedness director, is in response mode during the H1N1 pandemic. Also pictured is Dr. Jonathan Fielding, the county’s director of public health and health officer.

what would happen in the rest of the country during a [weapons of mass destruction] attack.”

“I stand by that,” he told County News in an interview.

He said legislation that helps fund local public health prepared-

ness is up for reauthorization in Congress. The Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act of 2011 amends the Public Health Service Act to revise and reauthorize appropriations for public health preparedness

activities, including activities such as state and local public health preparedness and response, improving hospital surge capacity and expanding CDC’s capacity to respond effectively to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies.

“It’s very important, particularly for your target audience, county officials, to be very vocal in that reauthorization process — to see if there could be some restoration of funding for public health emergency preparedness as that bill is reauthorized,” Plough said.

Otherwise, the consequences could be dire, according to Bay County’s MacGregor. “One would think after Hurricane Katrina, we would have learned our lesson about ignoring our vulnerabilities,” she said. “Do we have to wait until another disaster occurs before this is understood? Unfortunately, I believe the answer is yes.”

You can read or download a copy of the TFAH report, *Ready or Not? Protecting the Public from Diseases, Disasters, and Bioterrorism*, by accessing this article in the online issue of County News at [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).

## NACo offers ideas for celebrating NCGM 2012

### NCGM from page 1

of income or health condition — to obtain and use the free discount cards.

Consider other county services and programs that are important to communicate to the public. Transportation, infrastructure, public safety, green government, housing, economic development, parks and recreation — the choice is yours, and the possibilities are countless to plan fun and informative community outreach efforts.

The best approach to NCGM is to plan ahead, and now is the time. A booklet full of ideas to celebrate NCGM is available on the NCGM page located on the NACo website. The booklet contains suggested community activities, a draft proclamation, a sample news release, media outreach strategies and much more.

Popular county government month events include holding public tours of county facilities; visiting students, community organizations and business leaders; holding student essay and art contests, and sponsoring “County Family Day” events on the courthouse grounds. Counties can hold media events, submit newspaper

articles or appear as a guest on local TV and radio shows. What’s important is to find effective ways to discuss new county services and programs, highlight existing ones or otherwise explain the roles and responsibilities of county government.

“I encourage every county to start planning now for National County Government Month,” Eliason said. “Counties and the

important services they provide are too often overlooked, underappreciated or unknown. It’s up to us as county officials to carry the flag for county government and champion what they do each day.”

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 is available on the NACo website to inform NACo

about your county’s NCGM plans. There you will be able to upload your photos, flyers, calendars, proclamations and other county government month materials so NACo can share this information 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](mailto:jphilipps@naco.org).

## NCGM Award Program Expands

For the second consecutive year counties will be recognized nationally for outstanding NCGM celebrations through the National County Government Month Award program.

But new for 2012 is that second place awards will also be presented.

Like last year, 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 could be used at any NACo conference. This prize is worth more than \$1,000.

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 purpose of the award program is to

encourage counties to participate in NCGM and to recognize those counties that sponsor outstanding programs to educate residents about county government during the month of April. A team of public relations professionals from the National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO) — a NACo affiliate organization — will judge the applications.

NACo’s 2011 National County Government Month Award winners were Bernalillo County, N.M., Manatee County, Fla. and Cape May County, N.J. The winning counties received two free conference registrations to any future NACo conference. Readers can review last year’s winning entries and all of last year’s entries at [www.naco.org/programs/countiesdo/Pages/ncgm](http://www.naco.org/programs/countiesdo/Pages/ncgm).

The online application form will be made available by the end of January. Deadline for submitting entries is May 25.

# What County Officials Want to Know ...

## Discretionary Funds

By JACQUELINE BYERS

RESEARCH AND OUTREACH DIRECTOR



On a regular basis, county officials contact NACo to find information and best practices about issues they are currently confronting. In this new feature, "What County Officials Want to Know," NACo spotlights the latest information it has compiled in response to your questions concerning at-home county issues.

A recent inquiry concerned county commissioners' discretionary funds.

Discretionary funds are dollars (sometimes as much as \$3 million in Los Angeles County) that are allocated annually to County Board members to use at their discretion, usually only in their districts, for various purposes. Initially, there were few constraints on how these funds were to be used, but many officials used them to match grants for local groups, provide final funding for a project or to make charitable donations to social service agencies. As some board members began using discretionary funds for projects that some county residents considered questionable, counties began establishing guidelines for these expenditures.

These guidelines come in several general forms:

- requiring that all expenditures be approved by the entire board
- establishing written guidelines for eligible programs or projects

- establishing public oversight procedures for discretionary funds expenditures, or

- addressing whether unspent funds can be carried over to subsequent years.

As the economy started to slow, and several charges of ethical violations in the use of these discretionary funds rocked counties, some counties are revisiting the notion of even having discretionary funds at all.

### Current Information Snapshots on Discretionary Funding in Various Counties

- **Los Angeles County** – The Board of Supervisors recently passed new policy guidelines on the use of discretionary funds that did not include a proposed public oversight requirement. Draft rules written by the county counsel recommended that any grant from a supervisor for more than \$1,000 to a social program appear on the Board of Supervisors' public agenda. The recommendation was not adopted.

Each supervisor is allocated more than \$3 million a year to spend at his or her discretion.

- **Miami-Dade County** – The Board of Commissioners is grappling with a proposal to abolish the practice of carrying over unspent discretionary office funds from one fiscal year to the next. For years, commissioners have stockpiled funds that were allocated to them for office expenses. They were then able to allocate these funds with

little oversight and few restrictions. The new proposed budget will no longer allow this carry-over of unspent funds but will return them to the general fund.

Prior to the adoption of this new proposal, it was possible for commissioners to allocate nearly \$2 million of unspent office funds already on the books. Opponents of the flexibility of the funding say that commissioners allocate these funds to gain political support since there is a perfunctory vote by the board once a commissioner has submitted

the allocations for approval. Nearly two years ago, Palm Beach County abolished the county commissioners' discretionary funds after several public corruption scandals. Nearby Broward County does not have discretionary funds for commissioners.

- **Knox County, Tenn.** – Knox County commissioners plan to increase their discretionary funds in FY13 after they cut them by half in FY12. Commissioners requested an increase for FY13 saying the cut was too great. Prior to the cuts in FY12 funding, each commissioner

received \$6,000. Most of the board members say the decrease was too drastic, so starting with the July FY13 fiscal year they have proposed to restore funding to the earlier level. Some commissioners, in fact, support bumping discretionary funding to \$10,000. Commissioner Amy Broyles has said, "I can see where people would call it a slush fund ... but I know, especially in the inner-city districts, the money is so vital to the communities that are made up

See **DISCRETION** page 11

## NACo joins in Supreme Court case

Through the State and Local Legal Center, NACo joined several of its sister organizations in filing an *amicus curiae* brief before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case that could affect state and local governments' ability to hire affordable, high-quality outside legal counsel. The issue in *Filarsky v. Delia* is whether an attorney hired by a local government to conduct an internal affairs investigation can be sued for violating someone's constitutional rights, when the same attorney could not be sued if he or she were the government's in-house counsel.

The U. S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit denied qualified

immunity to private attorney Steve Filarsky when his advice to the city of Rialto, Calif. in investigating a city employee led to an illegal search. NACo's brief informs the Supreme Court that local governments frequently hire outside counsel and that outside attorneys are likely to raise their rates or even refuse to represent governments if they can be sued for the legal advice they give to government clients on complicated constitutional matters.

Geoffrey Eaton, Jacob Loshin and John Stith of the law firm Winston & Strawn wrote the brief, which was also signed onto by the National League of Cities, the United States

Conference of Mayors, the International City/County Management Association, the International Municipal Lawyers Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National School Boards Association.

The State and Local Legal Center is another benefit of membership in NACo since it is funded partially through member dues. The center files *amicus* briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court in cases of importance to state and local governments. For more information about the case or the Center, contact Ed Ferguson at 202.942.4214 or at [ed.ferguson@naco.org](mailto:ed.ferguson@naco.org).

## In Case You Missed It ...

### News to Use from Past County News

#### ► Learn green infrastructure techniques with new NACo issue brief

##### Register for NACo's Legislative Conference

Now is the time to register for the 2012 Legislative Conference, scheduled for March 3–7 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. Register online before Jan. 20 and save up to \$50. For more information on the agenda, registration and hotel information, please visit [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org) ► meetings ► participate ► Legislative Conference.

#### ► NACo sets 2012 Legislative Priorities

NACo's Board of Directors has set the association's legislative priorities for 2012. They are: promote a balanced approach to deficit reduction; full funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT); reauthorize Secure Rural Schools; strong rural development title in the Farm Bill; oppose shift of Medicaid and social services costs to counties; reauthorize surface transportation and aviation programs; eliminate the federal health benefits "inmate exception" for persons detained in county jails pending disposition of charges; and oppose unfunded federal mandates and preemptions of local governing authority.

For more information, visit [www.naco.org/LEGISLATION](http://www.naco.org/LEGISLATION).

#### USDA from page 1

When fully implemented, the office closures along with other administrative changes will provide efficiencies valued at about \$150 million annually. USDA efforts to close offices have been met with strong congressional opposition in the past and have often been overturned.

However, this announcement comes on the heels of recent budget cuts and the likelihood of continued cuts in the future. Since 2010, Congress has reduced USDA's discretionary operating budget by more than \$3 billion — a roughly 12 percent cut.

The 2008 Farm Bill stipulated the criteria necessary to close an office. Therefore, many of the office closures have the blessing of Congress, because they have a very small staff of one or two people, and are often within 20 miles of

other USDA offices. Public hearings will be held in the locations where Farm Service Agency offices will be closed.

These actions and plans to close or consolidate facility, office and lab operations will affect USDA headquarters in Washington and in 46 states. Impacts include:

- **Farm Service Agency (FSA):** consolidate 131 county offices in 32 states; more than 2,100 FSA offices remain throughout the U.S.

- **Rural Development (RD):** close 43 area and suboffices in 17 states and U.S. territories; approximately 450 RD offices remain throughout the U.S.

- **Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS):** close two country offices; more than 95 FAS offices remain throughout the world

- **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS):** close 15 APHIS offices in 11 states and 5 APHIS offices in five foreign

countries; more than 560 APHIS offices remain throughout the U.S., and 55 remain throughout the world

- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):** close 24 soil survey offices in 21 states; more than 2,800 NRCS offices remain throughout the U.S.

- **Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS):** close five district offices in five states; 10 district offices remain throughout the U.S.

- **Agricultural Research Service (ARS):** close 12 programs at 10 locations; more than 240 programs remain throughout the U.S., and

- **Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS):** close 31 field offices in 28 states; 32 FNCS offices will remain throughout the U.S.

\*For more information and a map of the office closures, access this story online at [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).



# Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Charles County, Md.

## 'Once In a Lifetime' Buyout Balances Budget

By CHARLIE BAN  
STAFF WRITER

Buyouts, by their very nature, are startling and generally give the impression that unless some sacrificial lambs step forward, unpleasant layoffs are going to follow.

Charles County, Md., however, developed a voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP) that drew a lot of interest and helped the county prevent budget trouble.

What makes the program even more of an accomplishment was the short time frame in which it was developed and executed — a little more than a month from when the county commissioners approved the plan's details until the informational packages were in the employees' hands.

Human Resource Director Steve Brayman said the time eligible employees needed to hear their options and make their decisions necessitated quick action. That meant a lot of work over December 2009 from the county's pension plan provider — Prudential Retirement. Each employee could meet one-on-one with retirement advisors.

"They were looking at the (buyout offer) from both a financial and human resources perspective — how much would their payroll decrease and how would it benefit employees who participated," said Patrick Landry, the Prudential actuary who handled Charles County's account.

Out of 200 eligible employees, the county placed a premium on reaching 55 takers, which would relieve budget pressure with plenty

of room to spare.

"It was our first time putting something like this together, and we thought it was extremely attractive," Brayman said. "We're pleasantly surprised at how successful it was."

What made the difference was an extra three years the county would credit the retiring employee with in terms of both pension and health insurance subsidy.

"If they don't need their whole salary, it was difficult not for them to take it," Brayman said. "It wouldn't enhance their pension to work longer, and in some cases, people said the health care subsidy was more important anyway."

In the end, 47 employees took the offer, which still yielded a 10-year savings of \$2.8 million.

Few of those positions have been filled, though Brayman said the county departments that lost employees have gotten more efficient and kept their services intact.

"We're thankful so many people took the offer, but just as important, the people who are still there doing the work when we haven't replaced the positions have helped us not have to reduce services," he said. "It's been a real team effort."

Executing the plan cost a \$272,751 contribution to the pension plan, and \$50,000 for the actuarial and administrative costs to design the plan and consult with the personnel.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime offer," Brayman said. "Some people come up and say they wish they had taken it, but I'm not aware

of anyone saying they shouldn't have taken it. That's a pretty good measure of success.

"Prudential was key in insisting we didn't want to make a second offer that was too lucrative, otherwise you'd have people waiting around for something better to come along."

The plan was named "Best in Category" in the 2011 NACo Achievement Awards for Personnel Management, Employee Training and Employee Benefits.

*Model Programs from the Nation's Counties highlights Award-winning programs. For more information on this NACo Achievement Award winner, visit NACo's website, [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org) Research & Publications Find Solutions.*

## Yellow Dot programs help first responders save lives

By CHARLES TAYLOR  
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



Yellow dots are showing up in counties nationwide, and first responders couldn't be happier to see them.

The canary-colored spots are appearing on the rear windows of vehicles, signaling that life-saving medical information can be found in the driver's glove compartment.

If a traffic accident or sudden onset of a medical crisis renders the driver unable to communicate, the information can help him or her receive the proper treatment.

Nassau County, N.Y. is among the latest jurisdictions to launch a Yellow Dot Program, the first of which can be traced back to Connecticut in 2002. Orange County, Va. has had its program since 2004; Lee County, Ala. for about a year, and Erie County, N.Y. just approved one. Illinois has a statewide program. The programs are free to participants.

"The first moments of a first responder's time in care are the critical moments, they're called the Golden Hour," said Edward P. Mangano, Nassau County executive, when announcing the program late last month. "Think about it when you drive, if you were unable to communicate, how would someone be able to contact someone that could help you with that vital information?"

Information such as medications a person is taking, allergies, emergency contact phone numbers, recent surgeries and a photograph of the driver are kept in a packet or on a card in the glove box. Nassau and other counties offer the program in addition to File of Life or Vial of Life programs that consolidate similar information that is placed in the home on a refrigerator door.

Some counties tailor their programs mainly to the elderly, but virtually all are open to anyone wishing to participate.

In Alabama, about 18,000 of Lee County's 124,000 residents have signed up to participate, according to Maj. Tommy Carter of the Sheriff's Office. "We have really pushed this hard and heavy; it doesn't take but just a few minutes to sign up," he said. There are six locations throughout the county where residents can join the program, including the sheriff's office, a local business and two fire departments. Costs to the county are minimal as the state provides most program materials.

The program has already proved its value in its first year. Carter said there have been two instances of first responders arriving at accident scenes where the drivers were unconscious, but they had yellow dots. "The paramedics were able to tell the doctors the kinds of medications they were on, so obviously that was a tremendous help."



Photo courtesy of Nassau County, N.Y.

Edward P. Mangano, Nassau County, N.Y. executive, is flanked by county officials and dignitaries as he announces the county's new Yellow Dot Program on Dec. 21.

Alabama has one of the most robust programs in the nation, with about half of its 67 counties participating. There is no national umbrella organization sponsoring the programs, but Alabama officials are a good point of contact to learn more about the program, based on their experience. Lora Weaver of the Northeast Alabama Traffic Safety Office at [lweaver@etowahcounty.org](mailto:lweaver@etowahcounty.org) is the statewide contact.

Erie County Legislator Lynne M. Dixon has aging parents with health issues, and she proposed

the Yellow Dot Program to her colleagues after a senior citizen constituent asked her if the county had such a program or would consider starting one. It passed unanimously.

"It's not a very expensive program to implement," she said, "but it still does cost a few thousand dollars. And in these tight budget times, I think every level of government is playing it pretty close to the vest right now."

The county's Department of Senior Services will implement the program, and the county hopes

to fund it through public-private partnerships.

"We hope to begin a pilot program this coming year, where we can start off small and grow the program," Dixon said.

While having a yellow dot on one's rear window lets first responders know to look for medical information inside, doesn't it also advertise that fact to everyone else?

"I want to stress that having that yellow dot on the rear windshield does not signify that there are medications, prescriptions, that sort of thing in the glove compartment," Dixon explained. "So I think that's an important point to make."

Carter said residents also wonder whether his department keeps a record of the information. It doesn't. Carter and others are quick to point out that there is no data that puts the driver at risk of identity theft, and the programs are voluntary.

Elaine Anderson coordinates Orange County's program. She has been contacted from states as far away as Washington, Florida, Minnesota and Missouri. "I've recommended it all over the United States, she said, and they've been happy with it."

\* You can learn more about Orange County's Yellow Dot program or see an Illinois Department of Transportation video on the program by going to [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).



# News From the Nation's Counties

## ► ALABAMA

The **sewer system** that was the source of so much financial turmoil in **JEFFERSON COUNTY** is back under control of the County Commission.

A bankruptcy judge gave authority over the sewers to the commission for the first time since September 2010, along with responsibility for figuring out how to raise the system's revenues.

If the five-member commission doesn't find ways to raise money, Judge Thomas M. Bennett warned that he could turn control of the system back over to the state court-appointed sewer receiver, the *Birmingham News* reported.

Bennett ruled on Friday that Jefferson County's record-setting bankruptcy meant that the receiver no longer had autonomous authority over the sewer system, and could no longer impose rate increases at any time he chose.

Though he continues as receiver appointed by a state circuit court judge, just what role the receiver maintains was not clear in Bennett's ruling. Also, unclear is whether the receiver will appeal the ruling.

The commission will consider rate increases. There haven't been any since 2008.

## ► CALIFORNIA

• **LOS ANGELES COUNTY** may **restrict advertising** for Lap-Band weight-loss surgery and could even propose a billboard campaign warning consumers about the risks of the procedure, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said he wanted to work with county public health officials to determine steps the county could take to "ensure serious health problems are not trivialized."

His comments follow accusations by the Food and Drug Administration that ads by a marketing company and affiliated surgery centers were misleading about the safety of the procedure.

If the county gets involved in the Lap-Band issue, it would join state and federal regulatory agencies examining the high-profile "1-800-GET-THIN" marketing campaign and affiliated surgery centers.

• A legal battle between **NAPA**

and **SONOMA counties** and a local Indian tribe over its bid for federal recognition could lead to an **Indian casino**.

The Mishewal Wappo tribe of Alexander Valley scored a major victory in that battle in October, when a federal judge denied the counties' attempt to dismiss the tribe's lawsuit against the U.S. government, which seeks federal recognition.

The counties are attempting to push back, asking U.S. District Court Judge Edward Davila to allow them to appeal his ruling before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. If the counties' appeal succeeds, it may mean the tribe's lawsuit could be tossed out.

Wappo Tribal Chairman Scott Gabaldon has called the possibility of an Indian casino taking root in the North Bay "an option," though the tribe has not made a decision on it, according to the *Napa Valley Register*. If granted recognition, the tribe would be exempt from local zoning laws, meaning it would not be subject to land use restrictions in the county's agricultural preserve.

## ► FLORIDA

• **PINELLAS COUNTY** celebrated its **centennial** on New Year's Day, and the Pinellas County Historical Society sponsored two observances: Pinellas by the Decades and the Pinellas Folk Festival.

The first, a yearlong lecture series, focuses on a different decade in the county's history, and the struggles and achievements that took place then. The folk festival will feature dozens of musicians specializing in traditional folk, gospel, country and bluegrass music.

• State wildlife officials have proposed a pilot project for **bear-proofing garbage cans** in neighborhoods across **OKALOOSA COUNTY**.

If approved by county commissioners, the program, funded with a \$30,000 grant from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, could pay for 700 to 1,000 reinforced garbage cans.

"We're trying to create a demand for it," Warwick told the *Destin Log*. "This is a seed project that will hopefully grow."

He said the six-month pilot program would show the public that bear-proofing trash cans can be successful.

## ► GEORGIA

Local businesses in **COBB COUNTY** got some help from a **local-preference provision** in the county's purchasing policies that

went into effect with the new year.

The "Keep It In Cobb" initiative gives local companies an extra five points in the county's bidding and evaluation system on contracts between \$50,000 and \$100,000. For contracts over \$100,000, local companies will receive an additional three points. It applies only to professional services, because county code requires bids for typical product purchases to be awarded to the lowest bidder that is both responsive and responsible, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported.

Cobb's local preference is one of the first in the metro area, but follows **PAULDING COUNTY**, which established a local-company policy in early 2010.

## ► ILLINOIS

**COOK COUNTY's** new **vacant building ordinance**, very similar to Chicago's, requires a property's mortgagee to pay \$250 to list buildings as vacant on a countywide registry.

The county ordinance, which will take effect in mid-February, will apply to all areas of unincorporated Cook County, but its reach is expected to be significantly greater because municipalities can enter into agreements with the county to enforce the ordinance within their own boundaries.

Meanwhile, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, has filed a federal lawsuit against the city, charging that the city's rules encroach on its role as the sole regulator and supervisor of Fannie and Freddie, which own about 258,000 mortgages in Chicago. Almost 10 percent of residential buildings in the county are vacant, one commissioner said.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Chicago, seeks to exempt all those mortgages from the ordinance. County officials were eager to pass an ordinance at the county level, despite the legal challenge to the city's measure, the *Chicago Tribune* reported.

## ► MAINE

Counties would get **more say over land use decisions**, like their counterparts across the country, under proposed changes to the agency that oversees zoning and planning in Maine's North Woods.

In 2011, the State Legislature set up a special commission to review the Land Use Regulation Commission's (LURC) operations, which agreed on a series of changes to LURC. Some of the changes all but give counties sole control over

land use regulation, Maine Public Broadcasting reported.

Counties would be able to oversee permitting decisions, now handled by LURC, for small projects like renovations and new buildings. And counties would also have the option of withdrawing from the LURC process completely, if they create a planning board, come up with a comprehensive blueprint for development and meet other criteria.

## ► NEVADA

An ordinance proposed by **CLARK COUNTY** Commissioner Chris Giunchigliani would ban panhandlers from taking pets on the Las Vegas strip. Increasingly, beggars are using their animals to get sympathy donations, according to Fox 5 News.

**Panhandlers' animals** would not be allowed on public or private sidewalks and pedestrian bridges on a portion of Las Vegas Boulevard. There are several exemptions, including service animals and the pets of residents of the street.

"I got calls and I got emails from the Las Vegas Humane Society... from tourists that were here complaining about itty bitty kittens and itty bitty puppies being used for the purposes of panhandling," Giunchigliani said.

## ► NEW JERSEY

**BERGEN COUNTY** is considering **selling its nursing home**, joining the growing list of New Jersey counties that have done so.

It cost about \$13.5 million to run the 110-bed Bergen County Health Care Center in 2010, while it brought in about \$9.7 million in revenue, operating at a \$3.8 million deficit, *RiverDellPatch.com* reported.

Figures for 2011 aren't final yet, but early estimates put last year's operating loss at \$4.5 million, officials said. The gap could grow larger this year, especially since the state has reduced Medicaid payments.

"We're looking into whether the county should be in the nursing home business," said Jeanne Baratta, chief of staff for County Executive Kathleen Donovan. "We're analyzing that right now. We don't know what the answer is yet."

## ► NORTH CAROLINA

**JOHNSON COUNTY** has joined neighboring **WAKE COUNTY** in requiring **permits for panhandlers**. Johnson's Board of Commissioners approved rules earlier this month that require anyone asking for money on the street to obtain a

## What's in a Seal?

» **Charlotte County, Fla.**  
<http://charlottecountyfl.com>



On April 20, 1921 the Florida Legislature voted to carve four new counties out of what was then DeSoto County. The local newspaper, *The Herald*, held a naming contest and residents chose Charlotte as one of the new county names.

Charlotte County is located on the southwest Gulf Coast of Florida, between Sarasota and Naples, about 100 miles south of Tampa. The diverse landscape of cities, towns, barrier islands and mangrove forests surrounds the convergence of the Peace and Myakka rivers at Charlotte Harbor. Charlotte Harbor includes one of the world's largest protected marine estuaries, encompassing 270 square miles with 219 miles of natural shoreline.

Until 1969, Charlotte County used an outline of the county courthouse as an identifying graphic. At that time, the Board of County Commissioners held a contest asking citizens to design an official county seal — the winner was an art student at Charlotte High School.

The design shows the location of Charlotte County on a map of Florida and highlights the great tarpon fishing for which this area is known. Around the outside of the seal are two orange blossoms, a sailboat and an airplane. The seal was modernized in 2007 and retains the original components.

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



# The H.R. Doctor Is In

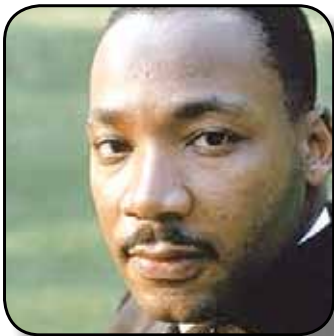
## God Save the 'King'

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would have been 83 years old this year. Were he still with us, he would have lived through decades of amazing technological changes, and continuing progress in America's search to close gaps and narrow inequalities between races, between genders, between persons of different sexual orientations, and between persons of different language and national origins.

He would have seen tens of millions of immigrants continuing to come to America to realize their own versions of the American dream. What would he think of the memorial to him erected on the National Mall? It's hard to even imagine how much more progress would have been made in creating a great and equitable society if he had been able to continue as a passionate advocate.

Conventional wisdom recounts that his great contribution to the world was in the advancement of civil rights through nonviolence. The HR Doctor, however, will focus in this article on another lesson from Dr. King that all of us as managers and administrators, not to mention as parents, community members, and friends need to learn and practice every day. That is the importance of creating a vision and enlisting others to share in that vision to help make it a reality.

The greatest weakness in public service, in this writer's opinion, is the narrowness of our vision. We spend too much time counting paper clips and not enough time looking at the long-range vision of what our city, county, or community could be like. We focus on the memo of the day and not on the momentous changes which could happen in our world



if we only created the opening in thought and action to make these changes happen. Dr. King was able to speak with amazing eloquence of what he saw in his own mind when he went to a metaphorical mountaintop and looked at the "promised land."

That land could be a county or a country in which all children had health care coverage. It could be a place in which senior citizens are not prevented from enjoying their final years in dignity because of the cost of prescription drugs, or the lack of health insurance, or the scourge of loneliness. It could be a society in which no one dropped out of school or in which the unemployment rate was statistically insignificant.

The only hope for visions like the ones above to become real is to create a vision of the future that is so compelling and so articulately presented that persons throughout the society agree to put aside lesser divisions to focus on a higher loyalty and a common vision.

We have done this historically in times of war, and we have done this historically in times of other national opportunities, such as the mass polio vaccination program of the 1950s. We do it every day in a sense in commercial America when we create cultural icons or heroes or products which sell in the millions. If only we could do this in a "micro" way in terms of the way we live and practice public administration day-to-day.

The HR Doctor received a gift of the book, *If I Live to be 100...* by Neenah Ellis. What common characteristics do people with extraordinary longevity share? Based on the interviews in the book, the overriding common theme is not diet, occupation, genetics or fish oil. The common characteristic is optimism. This is also the endearing legacy of Dr. King. In his case, the optimism was focused on closing racial and economic divides.

However, his legacy can also be profoundly positive for us as individuals. It can mean a commitment to career development and personal growth on the job, or it can mean looking at a vacant lot filled with litter and imagining a new senior citizen's health and recreation facility. It can mean a personal commitment to stop smoking, begin exercising or finish that college degree.

There is no end to the number of positive visions that can turn into reality if we learn to move with commitment and optimism to make the changes happen.

Here are several of the HR Doctor's favorites:

- Make a commitment as a manager or executive in government to be a mentor to subordinates at work and children in the community. Be a Big Brother or Big Sister or a high school mentor. Be a teacher and a champion of the career development and success of others.
- Find a teacher as well as being

one. Commit to learn new skills. Learn to speak Spanish, Chinese or some other second language. Learn to take up hiking or photography, or one of the HR Doctor's favorites, music. Review the previous HR Doctor article "Learn as Though You Were Going to Live Forever" to be reminded of the importance of this concept.

- Commit to personal health improvement by getting a checkup and following through on actions to reduce health risks by regular exercise, weight loss, smoking cessation, and other steps to help you live longer and live happier. Do these things and do them soon. While you're at it, take someone with you such as a colleague at work or a member of the family. It is easier to succeed in a plan if you have support from an understanding friend.

Make a major difference in the community. Be the catalyst to

See H.R. DOC page 11

### Financial Services News

## Our Troops Are Coming Home from Iraq – Are We Ready?



Dear County Leaders:

We've seen the news stories — our troops are coming home to our counties after admirably serving our country in Iraq. Many will be looking for jobs, some will seek counseling services and others will need assistance with child care. You can use NACo's *Network of Care for Service Members, Veterans and their Families* to help our troops successfully transition back into our communities.

As county leaders, we celebrate our troops coming home and know that even though they are leaving the war, the war doesn't necessarily leave them. NACo's Network of Care program is a county-based Web portal to help active military, veterans and their families access services, caregiver support, job searches, record storage and a comprehensive library of information they need in the counties where

they live. Started in California and Maryland, and rapidly spreading throughout the nation, the Network of Care is a highly creative use of Internet technology to help serve those who have served us. It is extremely affordable, and it works.

To learn more about NACo's *Network of Care* program, I invite you to contact Jim Sawyer, NACo Financial Services Corporation, at 202.661.8868 or [jsawyer@naco.org](mailto:jsawyer@naco.org). You can also contact our supplier partner, Bruce Bronzan, Trilogy Integrated Resources, at 415.458.5900 or [bbronzan@trilogyir.com](mailto:bbronzan@trilogyir.com).

Our troops have given their best, now it's our turn.

Sincerely,

*Lenny Eliason*

Lenny Eliason, president  
National Association of Counties

### Word Search

#### Counties with the Most Pizzerias

N O T L U F L M J B B X E D B L Y U U S  
W L F O W O M X T E N M E H C J E L X N  
N N U D V Y Q K Q O F N Q H J I J U C E  
B R O W A R D G R B V F J W Z E L L L E  
U F T D S T L B I E N F E N Z N I O A U  
Y V G F J S K J R C E F S R E K X N R Q  
I H F P P O L K B A K Z F W S D F O A U  
F P V I A J B B P G T K C A N O W H M X  
L O S A N G E L E S D A L C I X N G I N  
E E K U A W L I M A S U C K O R U L E R  
X B G W V D F O N T P I K I P O F Y J N  
E T I G F D A A L O C O D N H O K A C K  
X G P Q W J I E Y P I G C G S C S T X G  
R P A L O Y R O L B C I T I S Y U R C C  
K Y F P K X F M X S B X C U R Y C C M I  
Z W F D U P I B T O N W Z D H A J H A J  
Z Y U F H D E T G M B D N T J E M O F I  
G S Y T N Q L A A B C L F V C B V Y E W  
S R D R P O D A R U Q F C U A X P Q R V  
J Y J F A A R A Y H Z C Z K C O G C Y Q

- |                |                      |                   |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| ADA (Idaho)    | FAIRFIELD (Conn.)    | MARICOPA (Ariz.)  |
| BRONX (N.Y.)   | FULTON (Ga.)         | MILWAUKEE (Wisc.) |
| BROWARD (Fla.) | HONOLULU (Hawaii)    | NEW CASTLE (Del.) |
| COOK (Ill.)    | JEFFERSON (Ky.)      | POLK (Iowa)       |
| DENVER (Colo.) | KING (Wash.)         | PULASKI (Ark.)    |
| DUPAGE (Ill.)  | LARAMIE (Wyo.)       | QUEENS (N.Y.)     |
| FAIRFAX (Va.)  | LOS ANGELES (Calif.) |                   |

Source: [www.pizzashops.info/Counties](http://www.pizzashops.info/Counties) • Created by: Christopher Johnson



## Martin Luther King Day a time for reflection

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turn that vacant lot into a senior health center. Be a United Way champion. Be a go-to person for charities so that your own reputation is enhanced and your own leadership skills are developed. What better way to improve these personal elements in your life than by also helping other people on the way. There are no shortages of charities in the neighborhood, in the county, or in the world that need your help.

- Spend time with people you care about, including private time with yourself away from the excessive intrusions of the modern world. The HR Dog Kamala and I make time almost every morning for this purpose by taking walks together. It's harder and harder to find privacy, meditation—call it what you will—but the more our lives are intruded upon by cell phones, horns honking, telemarketers and loud neighbors, the more we lose some part of the essence of our individuality.

- Spend more time away from the television and away from the computer to pursue some personal passion.

- Plan ahead for what your own life may be like after retirement. Invest energy in not only saving for financial security but also taking steps to increase your long-term “intellectual security” as well. Think about things like where and when you might retire, and what active steps, including other employment, you will take to keep alert, alive and contributing.

Do all these things and you will have a significant set of New Year's Resolutions. You will also be walking in the pathway of Dr. King. Each of us individually can make the choice of whether to live our lives surrounded by large piles of paper clips or surrounded by a legacy that will make our children look back at us and say that we stood for something wonderful.

The HR Doctor wishes Dr. King a very happy birthday and hopes that you will spend some time reliving the great “I Have A Dream” speech and remembering the power of those words.



Phil Rosenberg  
The HR Doctor • [www.hrdr.net](http://www.hrdr.net)

## Multnomah County to kids: 'It gets better'

NEWS FROM from page 9

free permit that's good for one year. Wake County approved panhandling regulations last November

The American Civil Liberties Union has contacted both counties with its concerns that the permit requirements violate free speech rights, *WRAL.com* reported.

### ► OREGON

- **LANE COUNTY** will reorganize departments for health services, families and juvenile justice as it pursues employee suggestions on how to improve from top to bottom, the *Register-Guard* reported.

County Administrator Liane Richardson recently asked the county's 1,400 employees for ideas to boost the effectiveness of county government. Dozens of suggestions are being pursued, the county said.

Among the immediate changes, the county plans to create an expanded Health and Human Services Department that absorbs the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Youth Services.

Both departments are currently independent of Health and Human Services.

- A message from **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** commissioners to kids who've been bullied because of their sexual orientation, or other reasons: “It gets better” — times five. The commissioners recently “tweeted” a link to a YouTube video in which each of the board's five members, including Chairman Jeff Cogen, addressed the problem of bullying. The national “It gets better” campaign began in 2010 in response to a growing number of suicides among gay teens.

“Reach out to friends, to family, to counselors, to someone and just talk, because talking makes it better,” Cogen said in the 5-minute video.

Commissioners Deborah Kafoury, Loretta Smith, Judy Shiprack and Diane McKeel also are featured. Cogen mentioned the resources the county has that can help teens, such as a 24-hour mental health crisis hotline. The video is at <http://youtu.be/N8BvIyVvu30>.

### ► PENNSYLVANIA

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY** Executive Rich Fitzgerald told

Pittsburgh officials to disregard the **court-ordered property assessment** numbers they were mailed last month and instead use 2011 assessed values for 2012 taxation purposes. The 2011 values are based on the 2002 tax year, with adjustments made for new construction and appeal results, which are done each year.

Characterizing the court-ordered reassessment as chaotic and disastrous, he said some of the numbers were disturbing. This is the first update of values in a decade, and he said the increases for some property owners “are simply terrifying.”

“We've all seen the stories about the large numbers, substantial increases, and shocking values from just the 119,000 residential properties (affected thus far),” he said. “Imagine what the rest of the county may look like if we continue down this road.”

“We cannot continue to allow Allegheny County to be singled-out,” he added, “while counties around us have gone for decades without a reassessment.” He called

the court-ordered reassessment discriminatory and a threat to the county's stability.

### ► TENNESSEE

The **HAMILTON COUNTY** Sheriff's Office soon will have an **underwater robot** to scour waterways for missing persons, discarded weapons and explosive devices, thanks to a \$110,794 grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The submersible robot also can take photographs and recover items weighing up to 90 pounds from a depth of 250 feet.

The Board of County Commissioners recently approved receipt of the grant. “I think it will be highly useful to the sheriff's department,” Commission Chairman Larry Henry said. “To me it's a no-brainer.”

Commissioner Mitch McClure said it gives law enforcement another tool, noting the presence of the Sequoyah Nuclear Plant in the county, on the banks of Chickamauga Reservoir, which could be a terrorist target.

### ► VIRGINIA

**CHESTERFIELD** and **DINWIDDIE** counties will be home to fulfillment centers for an **Amazon.com**, Inc. affiliate. The company will invest \$85 million and create 1,000 jobs in Chesterfield County, and invest \$50 million in Dinwiddie County, creating 350 new jobs.

“This is a great day for Dinwiddie and Chesterfield,” Dinwiddie County Administrator Kevin Massengill told the *Progress-Index*. “There will be some life-changing opportunities for people who are underemployed or who have no job at all.” He said the prospect of 350 new jobs is the most jobs created in Dinwiddie in more than 14 years.

Chesterfield County Administrator Jay Stegmaier said, “We are pleased to be a part of their dynamic growth.”

(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](mailto:ctaylor@naco.org) or [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org).)

## Policies vary from county to county

DISCRETION from page 7

of people who cannot pay (dues) for the homeowners associations, and they're just grateful that we can pay for a newsletter,” adding that she also gave \$500 to a youth basketball league to buy uniforms.

**Deschutes County, Ore.** — Each of the three Deschutes County commissioners is authorized to recommend approval of discretionary grants to qualified nonprofit agencies for projects or activities that benefit the economic health of the community. Discretionary grants are made available through the Video Lottery Fund, which is supported by state lottery proceeds. The intent of these discretionary grants is to assist eligible organizations with specific, short-term projects or activities that positively affect the economic health of either a specific community within Deschutes County or the county at large. Many of the grants relate to economic development, including, job creation, education and training, cultural tourism and natural resource management. The county discourages requests for ongoing operational funding that cannot be sustained beyond the grant period.

**Butte County, Calif.** — The allocation of discretionary funds is made by the entire board upon receipt of applications from eli-

gible recipients. The county board reserves a certain percentage of its annual revenue for this program and works to see that programs and projects that are funded align with the county strategic plan.

Proposed projects can receive up to \$2,500 or a one-time grant of up to \$75,000. This program was created so the County Commission could have flexibility to respond to needs and opportunities that arise during the budget year that are consistent with the goals of the county's strategic plan. The county's Strategic Plan and Evaluation Committee reviews all proposals that are submitted and makes funding recommendations to the full commission.

**Hamilton County, Tenn.** — Some departing commissioners have not spent all of their discretionary funds (some have in excess


of \$200,000 remaining) and have raised the question of what happens to unspent funds once they are no longer in office. Commissioners annually gain access to some county money — \$100,000 from bond issues in 2001, 2004 and 2006, and \$100,000 in 2008, 2009 and 2010 for capital improvements — to spend on projects of their choosing. They largely direct their discretionary spending to local schools, civic organizations and religious groups.

The question of the carryover was not immediately resolved since other commissioners were making plans to allocate their funds.

\*To access media accounts or county policies mentioned in this article, see the story in the online edition of *County News* at [www.naco.org/countynews](http://www.naco.org/countynews).

# CountyNews

## PAPERLESS OPTIONS

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# Helping County Employees Shape Up

With the beginning of a new year comes one of the top resolutions for Americans: lose weight and become healthier. To support county employees in achieving this goal, counties across the country have created their own wellness programs that not only can improve the lives of staff but also save the county money.

Richland County, Ohio created a program to provide a variety of wellness opportunities so that there was something for all county staff. From Weight Watchers and gym memberships to Healthy Living Skills and grocery store tours, the comprehensive program provided information and access to help make better decisions to become healthier. Through participating in the program, 99 county employees lost more than 1,400 pounds in

four months.

"Our wellness program controls cost through good health," Richland County Commissioner Ed Olson said. "Weight loss, diet, exercise and not smoking prevent many problems from happening, and through that we have healthier employees and cost avoidance in health care."

The program in Pender County, N.C., started three years ago beginning with free yearly screenings for employees. The program also sponsored a variety of activities at different fitness levels from walking to training for a 5K race to kayaking. County analysis reveals that the net county savings is \$74,576 in health costs for just the 83 employees who have participated all three years. Results for participants include weight loss, reduced need for medications



such as high blood pressure medicines, and quitting smoking. The past year the program expanded to more than 325 employees.

The fitness and wellness initiative in Henrico County, Va. lays the path for improved health by encouraging participation in daily fitness and wellness activities. In addition to weekly nutritional classes, employees are also assigned a personal trainer at no cost. This trainer works with each county employee to create a routine tailored to his or her needs and is available for

one-on-one sessions. The trainers also offer a variety of fitness classes for all participants. In 17 weeks, a select group of 72 employees lost a total of 580 pounds and 780 body inches.

The Optimal Health and Wellness Program in Riverside County, Calif. is an integrated benefits program offered to county employees, their covered family members and retirees. The program provides employees the opportunity to work with a team of professionals in designing a customized plan to improve their personal health and well-being. Lunch and Move sessions, for example, are activity-based classes designed for both 30- and 60-minute lunch breaks.

Employees who participate in the program also earn monthly reductions in health benefits depending on the level of participation. In 2010, the program reported an annual employee participation increase of 111 percent.

Through the Be Hip-Get Fit Health and Wellness project in Gloucester County, Va., representatives from various county departments work collaboratively to help identify needs, organize fitness and health-related activities, and provide incentives. County employees were surveyed to gauge overall interest in the program and determine the topics employees were most interested in.

The program provides a variety of activities from wellness webinars to a Fun Golf Challenge and family softball games. Most importantly, it granted participants paid time off based on the amount of points gained through participation. It has helped employees become more active, increased employee morale and spurred individual departments to create their own fitness challenges.

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

## NACo on the Move

### » NACo Officers and Elected Officials

• **Keith Langenhahn**, one of NACo's longest serving steering committee chairs, resigned from the Marathon County, Wis. board Dec. 31. Langenhahn most recently served as head of the Rural Action Caucus and as Central Region representative on NACo's Executive Committee. Linn County, Iowa **Supervisor Lu Barron** will replace Langenhahn as RAC chair.

Langenhahn resigned his board position to sign on as a field representative for the Wisconsin Counties Association. He will remain a member of NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee.



Keith Langenhahn

### » NACo Staff

• **Mike Belarmino**, associate legislative director, spoke on a panel "Election Landscape — A Review of Where We Are for 2012 and Beyond" during the National Association of Election Officials' Joint Election Officials Liaison Committee Meeting Jan. 5-6 in Washington, D.C. Additionally, Belarmino served as moderator for "U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Voting Systems, Plans and Programs" during the committee's meeting.

*On the Move is compiled by Christopher Johnson.*

## Job Market & Classifieds

### ► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – CAROLINE COUNTY, VA.

Salary: DOQ.

Caroline County, Va. (pop. 28,245) is seeking qualified candidates for the position of County Administrator. The County, which is located along the I-95 corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Va. occupying 549 square miles. Caroline received All-America City recognition from the National Civic League in 2009.

The County Administrator reports to a 6-member Board of Supervisors and is responsible for the overall administration of the county government, executing the policies of the Board and the day-to-day operations of local government.

The County employs approximately 180 full-time employees with a budget of approximately \$135 million in FY11/12. Additional information about the county is available on the county website at [www.visitcaroline.com](http://www.visitcaroline.com).

Salary is negotiable based on the candidate's qualifications and experience and is supplemented by a generous benefits package.

Interested candidates should submit a current resume, completed county application, salary history and five (5) work related references to the Caroline County Board of Supervisors, c/o Alan Partin, Interim County Administrator. Applications may be submitted via mail at P.O. Box 447, Bowling Green, Va. 22427, by email at [apartin@co.caroline.va.us](mailto:apartin@co.caroline.va.us) or by fax at 804.633.4970. Applications may be obtained on line at

[www.visitcaroline.com](http://www.visitcaroline.com) or by contacting the County Administrator's Office at 804.633.5380. The closing date for the position is Jan. 27. Caroline County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

### ► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – HORRY COUNTY, S.C.

Salary: DOQ.

Job Position: Full-Time. General statement of job: Directs the County's organizational, operational, management, budget, and administrative operations and activities in accordance with the policies and procedures set forth by County Council. For more details, please visit [www.horrycounty.org](http://www.horrycounty.org) and detailed information will be listed under Employment Opportunities.

### ► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY, MICH.

Salary: \$100,000 – \$130,000 annually; DOQ.

Grand Traverse County is seeking qualified applicants for the position of County Administrator. This position is appointed by nine-member Board of Commissioners, elected by district, on a partisan basis for 2-year concurrent terms.

The County government is comprised of 35 departments with approximately 500 employees and a budget of \$138 million. Departments may have either an elected or appointed department head. Grand Traverse County is Michigan's premier resort community and tourist destination and is located in the northwest part of the Lower Pen-

insula of Michigan. Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree in public administration preferred. Significant executive-level experience in a complex county/city organization and/or private organization required. Strong financial management and interpersonal skills required.

Candidates should submit resume and cover letter to: Jen Seman, Human Resources Director, [JSeman@grandtraverse.org](mailto:JSeman@grandtraverse.org). Deadline: February 25, 2012. Complete recruitment profile and additional information can be found on county website: [www.grandtraverse.org](http://www.grandtraverse.org). Final interviews will be conducted in person. EOE.

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