

NACo National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

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3 percent withholding law gets House repeal

By MIKE BELARMINO

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 674 on Oct. 27 to repeal the 3 percent withholding requirement — a provision in Section 511 of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act (TIPRA). It was a rare moment of bipartisanship in the Republican-controlled chamber. The vote was 405–16.

The 3 percent withholding

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QuickTakes

States with Highest Debt Per Person

Debt Per Capita	
Connecticut	\$5,402
Hawaii	\$4,755
New Jersey	\$4,217
North Dakota	\$3,181
New Mexico	\$3,144

Source: State Budget Solutions • 2011



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Opponents of Alabama's new immigration law, which took effect Sept. 1, rallied at the Limestone County Courthouse to protest the law in Athens, Ala. on Oct. 16.

Alabama counties assess new immigration law's impacts

By CHARLES TAYLOR

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Alabama counties are coming to grips with the state's new toughest-in-the-nation immigration law, whose pervasive reach is causing some local government services to grind to a halt, according to several county officials.

"The legislature tried very hard to make it difficult if not impossible for local governments to deliver government services to persons who could not prove their citizenship," said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA).

The law, which took effect Sept. 1, has survived one legal challenge largely intact. A federal judge in Montgomery last month upheld most of its provisions, but more appeals are pending.

U.S. District Judge Sharon Lovelace Blackburn upheld a section of the law that renders business transactions between illegal immigrants and any division of state government — including counties — null and void. Another bars persons in the state illegally from receiving fee-free services, like garbage pickup — with the exception of emergency services. Lovelace also upheld a requirement that state and local law enforcement officials

attempt to verify a person's immigration status during routine arrests or traffic stops if they have a "reasonable suspicion" the person is undocumented.

"Clearly it will increase our law enforcement costs astronomically," Brasfield said. "[W]e may have people who come in contact with the law enforcement for the most mundane of violations—speeding, running a stop sign — that if they don't have identification then they may be in our county jails for months. And during that time they have to be fed, provided medical care

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EPA reverses stance on farm dust air quality

By JULIE UFFNER

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The EPA announced it would not change air quality standards for coarse particles known as Particulate Matter 10, or PM-10.

NACo was especially concerned about tighter regulation of particulate matter standards because regulating PM-10 — particles 2.5 to 10 micrometers in diameter — would include farm dust. Coarse dust particles are smaller than a human hair and typically come from crushing or grinding operations, and dust from paved and unpaved roads. NACo supports EPA's decision because increased regulation would have been burdensome to many counties, especially those in rural areas.

"This is an important issue for counties, especially rural counties who have dry climates or farming and ranching activities," said Kathy Bessette, Hill County, Mont. commissioner and vice chair of NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs

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NACo Western Interstate Region sets priorities

By RYAN YATES

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

NACo's Western Interstate Region (WIR) board of directors navigated several critical policy issues facing county governments in the West at its recent fall board meeting.

Members considered the impacts of an increasingly complex political landscape in Washington, D.C. and the continued financial hardships facing all levels of government.

For 2012, the WIR will direct its advocacy efforts in five key areas:

- educating lawmakers and the public about the unique policy challenges facing Western counties

- maintaining mandatory funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS)

- regulatory relief
- economic recovery, and
- opposing top-down federal land-use decisions.

"WIR will place special emphasis on educating new members of Congress about the unique challenges facing Western counties," said Ron Walter, WIR president and Chelan County, Wash. commissioner, "and will ramp up efforts to influence administration officials who are writing rules and regulations that may place significant burdens on, and further disadvantage, Western communities."

WIR plans to build upon the advocacy success achieved during the 2011 PILT fly-in, funded by the WIR Public Lands Trust. In September, the WIR brought two dozen elected county officials to Washington to educate and inform nearly 100 lawmakers and congressional staff about the PILT program and highlight the urgency to provide funding for continued mandatory payments to counties with tax-exempt federal land within their boundaries.

The WIR board cited numerous new regulatory burdens from the Environmental Protection Agency that pose significant problems, compounding the financial challenges

affecting Western counties from the ongoing economic downturn. At the forefront, the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' guidance on waters of the U.S. has implications for counties with public infrastructure such as roads, ditches, flood control channels and culverts. It also has implications for other Clean Water Act (CWA) programs beyond Section 404, the dredge and fill permit program.

Other areas of concern include stormwater runoff from logging roads, impact on upcoming pesticide permits, Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act, water quality designations

and total maximum daily loads. WIR will continue to pressure the EPA and the Corps to withdraw the draft guidance.

The meeting was held Oct. 6-7 and hosted by Kauai County, Hawaii. The agenda offered board members presentations from a host of key partners including the USDA Forest Service, Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Congressional Western Caucus, as well as state and local leaders including Kauai Council Chair Jay Furfaro, Mayor Bernard P. Carvalho Jr. and State Sen. Ronald D. Kouchi.

"The Kauai County Council was pleased to host the WIR board meeting," Furfaro said. "We shared our history and economic development challenges with the board, which also discussed priority concerns that will help direct future actions."

WIR is a NACo affiliate and is dedicated to the promotion of Western interests within NACo. Its membership consists of 15 Western states with membership funded through their individual state associations.

Carlson, Clift to speak at NACo Legislative Conference

Fox News' Tucker Carlson and *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift will provide their "inside the Beltway" insights at NACo's 2012 Legislative Conference March 5 in Washington, D.C.

Appearing jointly, Carlson and Clift will share their expertise and political perspective to analyze what lessons President Barack Obama and the newly empowered Republicans have learned and how both sides are gearing up for the 2012 presidential election.

Carlson is a veteran journalist and political commentator currently working for the Fox News Channel. He is also the editor-in-chief of *TheDailyCaller.com*, a news and opinion site. Carlson joined Fox from MSNBC, where he hosted

several nightly programs. Previously he was the cohost of "Crossfire" on CNN. A longtime writer, Carlson has reported from around the world, including dispatches from Iraq, Pakistan, Lebanon and Vietnam. He has been a columnist for *New York* magazine and *Reader's Digest* and currently writes for *Esquire* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Clift is a contributor for *Newsweek* magazine and The Daily Beast website. She writes on the Washington power structure, the influence of women in politics and other issues. She is currently assigned to follow the jockeying over policy and politics in a divided Congress. Clift is a regular panelist on the syndicated talk show, "The McLaughlin Group." She has appeared as herself



Tucker Carlson

in several movies, including "Dave," "Independence Day," "Murder at 1600," "Rising Sun" and the CBS series, "Murphy Brown."



Eleanor Clift

This year, the conference will return to the Washington Hilton following its \$150 million renovation. Registration opens Nov. 29.

Bipartisan farm bill proposal in the works

By ERIK JOHNSTON

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders sent a bipartisan letter on Oct. 17 to the deficit-reduction "supercommittee" recommending \$23 billion in mandatory spending cuts to farm bill programs over the next decade.

The letter contained no specifics regarding where the savings will come from, but promised a complete legislative package by Nov. 1. No deal was reached by that date, but at press deadline there were still ongoing efforts to create what is nearly certain to serve as the first draft of the next farm bill. The current five-year farm bill (P.L. 110-246) expires Sept. 30, 2012.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), the chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, and House

Agriculture Chairman Frank D. Lucas, (R-Okla.), have been wary that the deficit-reduction committee might propose specific cuts to farm bill programs. The timetable for writing the next farm bill is also linked to the broader deficit-reduction efforts, which will dictate the overall spending level for the bill.

Stabenow and Lucas were joined by Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) — ranking minority party committee members in their respective chambers — in this effort to take control of the process by making serious recommendations to cut programs under their jurisdiction.

The \$23 billion figure is more than the automatic cuts that would be sequestered if there is no deficit-reduction deal; however it is less than many other proposals including the president's recommendation of \$33 billion and congressional

proposals as high as \$40 billion.

According to press leaks, the likely package structure discussed by the leadership includes a \$14 billion to \$15 billion reduction to commodity program payments, a \$6.5 billion reduction to conservation programs, and a \$4 billion to \$5 billion reduction in nutrition programs including food stamps. Those cuts would translate to a 20 percent, 10 percent and less than 1 percent reduction for commodities, conservation and nutrition, respectively.

The major sticking point to a deal is reported to be disagreement about how to reform commodity program payments in such a way that all regions of the country are treated fairly.

The \$23 billion cut outlined by the agriculture committees will go towards deficit reduction. However, there are reports that the committee

will seek to cut an additional \$2 billion from mandatory programs in order to renew some of the 37 programs created in the 2008 farm bill that no longer have baseline funding and would cost about \$9 billion to renew.

Many of these programs support NACo's priorities in rural development, renewable energy and support for beginning and new farmers. This includes \$150 million in funding for rural development programs and \$1.1 billion in energy programs supported by NACo.

While the majority of NACo's farm bill priority programs are funded during the yearly appropriations process, NACo supports maintaining mandatory funding in the farm bill process. NACo also supports specific policy changes to authorized rural development programs that will make them more flexible for rural counties.

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NACo opposes increased EPA regulation of farm dust

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Steering Committee. "This is a win for NACo and the member counties who expressed concerns about increased regulatory burdens through more stringent standards. However, we must stay vigilant on this issue, because the administration may still increase standards for fine particles PM."

EPA indicated it still plans to move forward with changes to the PM-2.5 (fine particles less than 2.5 micrometers) standard. NACo will monitor any proposed changes to PM-2.5 and will oppose any attempts by the EPA to regulate

PM-2.5 at levels more stringent than current standards.

EPA's announcement was made in a letter from EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.). It states the decision was made after consultation with both EPA scientists and the Clean Air Science Advisory Council.

The reversal was decried by environmental and health groups who are worried about potential health risks associated with particulate-matter pollution. Some congressional Republicans and farm-state Democrats applauded the announcement, but others

remain concerned about regulation of PM-2.5.

NACo and its members expressed concerns to EPA and Congress over the last year about the potential for increased regulation to negatively impact regular activities such as cars driving down dirt roads and agricultural practices that sustain local economies. Even natural events such as wildfires or wind storms contribute to PM levels.

Particulate matter can include solid or liquid materials and comes from both manmade and natural sources.

Fine particles are produced by all types of combustion, including motor vehicles, power plants, residential wood burning, forest fires and agricultural burning, among other sources. PM-2.5 fine particles can only be seen with an electron microscope.

Rep. Kristi Noem (R-S.D.) recently introduced the Farm Dust Regulation Prevention Act of 2011, H.R. 1633. This bill would prohibit EPA from proposing, finalizing, implementing or enforcing any regulation revising the national standards applicable to PM-10 under the Clean Air Act (CAA)



EPA backed away from imposing more stringent controls on dust like this, generated by farming activity.

for one year.

The bill goes on to exempt classification of "nuisance dust" as a particulate matter as long as it is not regulated under state, tribal or local law, and the benefits of applying CAA standards to the dust outweigh the costs. Under the bill, nuisance dust is defined as "generated from natural sources, unpaved roads, agricultural activi-

ties, earth moving, or other activities typically conducted in rural areas;" or "consisting primarily of soil, other natural or biological materials, windblown dust, or some combination thereof."

The bill currently has 112 co-sponsors. Noem is still pushing for adoption of her bill to ensure that the EPA follows through on its recent pledge to not regulate farm dust.

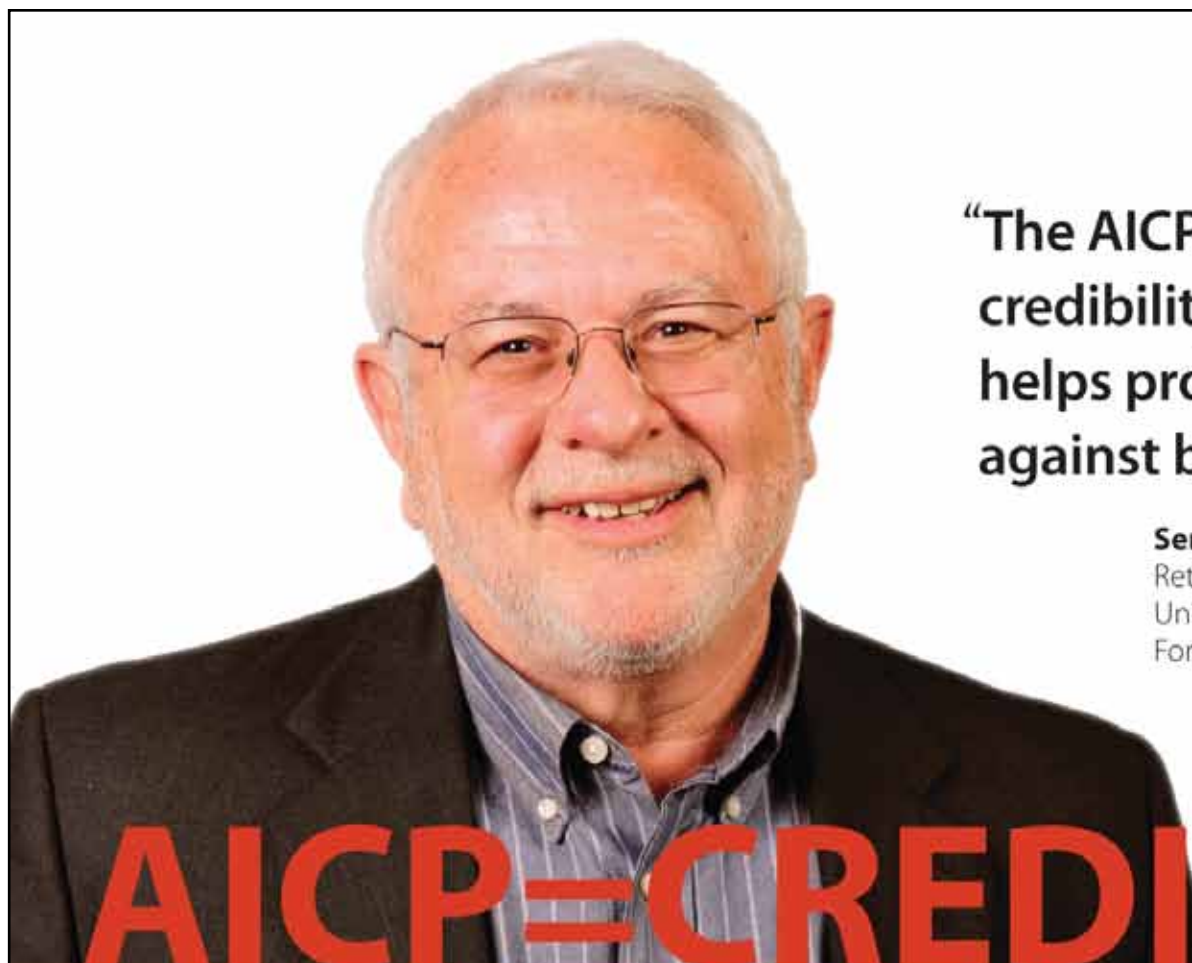
In Case You Missed It ...

News to Use from Past County News

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Did you miss a webinar? Have you viewed Webinars on Demand that highlight topics you might be dealing with? Viewing these webinars at your convenience is a great way to learn how other counties are dealing with issues and programs. Visit www.naco.org/meetings/webinars/Pages/WebinarRecordings.aspx.

Any questions, contact Amanda Odorimah at aodorimah@naco.org or 202.942.4225.




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Making Great Communities Happen

Photo by Joe Szymanski

Counties play role in creating health insurance exchanges

By ANITA CARDWELL
SENIOR ASSOCIATE

Counties are playing an active part in their states' efforts to create the insurance exchanges required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Despite unresolved legal challenges to the ACA, some states are moving forward with planning to develop exchanges. These will allow eligible individuals to enroll in coverage through Medicaid or qualified health plans in 2014.

States that opt to run their own exchanges — rather than allow the federal government to fully manage them — must demonstrate that by January 2013 their exchanges are on schedule to be operational. So,

there is a tight timetable to make key decisions regarding a number of complex issues such as exchange design and governance. The ACA provides states significant flexibility in how they structure their exchanges, as they can be housed within an existing state agency, or as a new independent entity, either public or nonprofit.

Many county officials are monitoring the status of their state's exchange planning efforts, and others are engaged in trying to anticipate how the exchanges will affect the overall health care system.

Yellowstone County, Mont. Commissioner Bill Kennedy is working with a group that is trying to create a health insurance co-op that could be offered as an afford-



able plan option through the state's exchange for small businesses and uninsured residents. The ACA allows for the creation of these co-ops — consumer-oriented and operated plans — and provides a pool of loan funding the co-ops can compete for to aid in their establishment.

Howard County, Md. Executive Ken Ulman is also spearheading efforts to create a co-op plan based on a group of clinics throughout the state focused on improving quality of care and coordination for participating individuals (featured in the June 6 edition of County News).

Other county officials are actively communicating with state leaders about developing exchanges and

are helping shape the debate about whether their states should operate their own exchanges. In Nebraska, Douglas County Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson was asked to participate in the Nebraska Health Care Alliance (NHCA), a nonprofit group that believes the state should operate its own exchange rather than have the federal government control the exchange functions.

Collaboration with States

Nebraska's governor, Gov. Dave Heineman (R), announced in early October he thinks the state should hold off on creating an exchange until all legal challenges to the ACA are resolved.

NHCA has contacted state officials — both the department of insurance and the governor's office — to advocate that planning for an exchange should continue and is also convening a number of local-level meetings to inform and engage community members. Borgeson plans to participate in these meetings, and has reached out to other local elected officials on the importance of being involved

in exchange planning discussions.

County Officials Should Be Paying Attention

"What I've discovered by talking to others about the exchange is that there is a general lack of public awareness of all that counties do in terms of health," Borgeson said. "County officials should really be paying attention to what is going on in their states as far as exchange planning to ensure that counties aren't left at a disadvantage and that any new arrangement instead helps strengthen county health care delivery systems."

States' progress on developing exchanges varies widely, with some like Nebraska undertaking limited planning efforts and others such as California, which has established exchange governing boards.

The ACA requires a coordinated eligibility determination and enrollment process for both Medicaid and plans offered on the exchanges to ensure individuals are enrolled in the appropriate insurance coverage

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Profiles in Service



» Bonnie Weber

NACo Board of Directors
Commissioner
Washoe County, Nev.

Number of years active in NACo: 6 with NACo; 9 with Nevada Association of Counties

Years in public service: 9

Occupation: own a sign and banner business with my husband. Also a mom and housewife.

Education: High school graduate, continuing education courses, Certified Public Official, 2008

The hardest thing I've ever done: running for office myself and asking for money

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: George and Laura Bush, Oprah Winfrey and Abraham Lincoln

A dream I have is to: be a size 14 again.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: have been raising my own children for 35 years and still have a couple of years to go.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: trying to hike to the Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii.

My favorite way to relax is: to be on a cruise ship to anywhere or on a beach in Maui.

I'm most proud of: being married to my husband Mike for 29 years, my two children Lori (of course Lori's husband Will), Matthew and two grandchildren Xavier, 8, and Zoey, 5.

Every morning I read: read my Bible as often as I can, my personal emails and the road signs on the way to work.

My favorite meal is: meatloaf and mashed potatoes.

My pet peeve is: people who think they know what they are talking or writing about but choose to ignore or have all the facts.

My motto is: "There is always another side to every story."

The last book I read was: *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin and *Finding It* by Valerie Bertinelli.

My favorite movie is: *Braveheart*.

My favorite music is: '70's and '80's music, but I love classical too.

My favorite president is: Ronald Reagan.

Bill faces uncertain fate in Senate

3 PERCENT from page 1

requirement was enacted when TIPRA was passed in 2005. NACo has strongly opposed the requirement ever since. It mandated many county governments, beginning in 2013, to start withholding 3 percent from payments for goods and services meeting specific criteria and then remit the withholdings to the U.S. Treasury.

For counties, the law applies to jurisdictions that make payments of more than \$100 million annually for property or services. It also provides a minimum threshold of \$10,000 regarding which payments are subject to the 3 percent withholding requirement.

The House merged H.R. 674 into H.R. 2576, also approved that day with bipartisan support by a vote of 262-157.

H.R. 2576 would essentially offset the \$11 billion in revenue that TIPRA was expected to net the federal government in the decade after its implementation by changing certain health care-related laws. For example, it would adjust the income qualifications for purposes of determining eligibility for programs such as Medicaid.

NACo does not have specific policy on H.R. 2576, and it appears unlikely that the adjustment would

have an impact on counties. The Obama administration has spoken favorably of H.R. 674 and H.R. 2576.

In a policy statement, the White House said repealing the withholding requirement would benefit government contractors by avoiding a decrease in their cash flow, allowing them to keep those funds to create jobs and pay suppliers.

House Small Business Committee Chairman Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), said, "I consistently hear about burdensome taxes and regulations that stifle small firms. This withholding tax is a perfect example of a burden that will impose significant financial hardships on our job creators."

Attention now turns to the Senate, where the most recent action was a failed vote to invoke cloture on a bill (S. 1726) introduced by Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). The measure is identical to S. 164, introduced by Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.), which calls for full repeal of the 3 percent withholding requirement.

While both sides of the aisle are

supportive of repeal, the disagreement in the Senate generally focuses on the designated offset, which calls for a rescission of unobligated, discretionary funds. The remaining questions now are how soon the Senate will act to repeal and whether the offset approved by the House will be accepted.

"I encourage the Senate to do the right thing and act quickly to pass this bill that will provide more certainty for the thousands of businesses who contract with federal, state and local governments," Graves said.

The last significant repeal efforts on the 3 percent withholding law occurred with the passage of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, where NACo was successful in achieving a one-year delay in implementation.

Given the current economy, the requirement poses serious fiscal and administrative implications on county governments because no funding was provided for federal, state or local government entities to assist with implementation.

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California counties see role in deciding health exchange eligibility

HEALTH CARE *from page 4*

option. States opting to run their own exchanges must decide how and where eligibility determination and enrollment will be conducted and whether to integrate exchange coverage options into existing Medicaid eligibility determination

systems or develop entirely new systems.

These systems will connect with a data services hub operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that will provide functions for exchanges such as verifying citizenship and tax information.

A Role for County Agencies

County agencies will likely play some role in helping individuals obtain coverage through the exchanges, and may be able to participate in the ACA's official Navigator program which will provide grants to entities conduc-

ing outreach and enrollment. In California, for example, county human services departments currently perform eligibility determinations for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the SNAP "food stamp" program, and hope to add the subsidized coverage

available via the exchange to the list of programs for which they can determine eligibility. State law requires the exchange to coordinate with county human services departments.

"We have been participating in the regular exchange board meetings, and providing public testimony and information to the board members and their staff regarding the current structure of county operations and how we see the post-2014 partnership potentially working," said Cathy Senderling-McDonald, deputy executive director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. "Because of the incredibly short time frame states are under, the main focus of the exchange in California up to this point has been on the possible options for an information technology infrastructure that can be up and running in time.

Her association is recommending that the exchange board build on the existing, working technology that counties use, which can serve as a platform for the eligibility determinations for these new programs, as well, she said.

NACo Urges HHS to Address Inmate Health Care

By PAUL BEDDOE

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Treasury Department released proposed rules in August on insurance exchange enrollment procedures and the eligibility determination processes for premium tax credits and cost-sharing subsidies. Comments on these rules were due Oct. 31, and NACo submitted official responses to all of these proposed rules.

NACo's submission included comments to HHS' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on how county jail inmates would be affected by two CMS-proposed regulations to implement health insurance coverage-expansion provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

The recommendations are designed to assure that individuals involved in the criminal justice system who may be eligible to enroll in a Qualified Health Plan from one of the new affordable insurance exchanges or for Medicaid coverage and payment are protected from unnecessary ineligibility for — or loss of — coverage.

NACo also encouraged CMS to ensure that Medicaid, exchange, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Basic Health Program rules are aligned so that the effects on eligibility or payment are coordinated — and restoration of eligibility and coverage is uniform — and that incarceration or institutional status does not bar individuals from applying for coverage.

Finally, the association wants the regulations to harmonize the terms "inmate of public institution" and "incarceration."

NACo specifically asked CMS to prohibit states from terminating Medicaid eligibility solely on the grounds that individuals are inmates of a public institution as defined by federal law (42 C.F.R. § 435.1010); to amend the definition of "inmate of a public institution" to provide that those who have not been convicted of a crime are not excluded from coverage, and to ensure that application and coordination policies enable jail inmates to apply for any relevant type of health coverage.

For more information visit NACo's health reform implementation page, www.naco.org/healthreformimplement and see "NACo Calls on HHS to Issue Regulations to Improve Health Care in County Jails."

How did Gaston County, NC,
save **28,500 hours** a year?

Since implementing Laserfiche in 2007, Gaston County has standardized enterprise content management across **8 county departments and processes, from finance and payroll to DSS and case management**, saving over 28,500 man hours—the equivalent of 14 FTEs—a year. Three more departmental deployments are planned this year.

"Standardization is vital to the long-term success of the whole organization," says CIO Brandon Jackson. "We know that once we start deploying to larger departments, savings will mount up into the millions of dollars."



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Counties weigh options for their nursing homes

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Many families deal with the emotional and sometimes uncomfortable issue of where aging parents will live. Counties are facing a similar dilemma as to what to do with the nursing homes they operate.

The rising costs of employee benefits, decreasing revenues from property taxes, state and federal reimbursements, and operating costs are prompting counties to look at privatizing or selling their homes. Those options, however, are often sore issues with residents.

Belknap County, N.H.'s commissioners considered selling its 94-bed nursing home, but backed down when public feedback was overwhelmingly negative. However, Lake County, Ill. commissioners met with a better fate, recently voting to privatize the county's nursing home as of Dec. 1 with little opposition.

Debra Shackett, Belknap County administrator, was surprised by the outcry. "It costs us \$4 million a year to run [the nursing home], and takes up 10 percent of our budget. With people after us to

cut costs, this was a logical step."

She said none of the 10 counties in New Hampshire has privatized or sold their nursing homes, and she was enthusiastically rejected when she suggested introducing a broker to other commissioners and administrators at the New Hampshire Association of Counties' annual meeting.

Lake County Administrator Barry Burton said a county advisory board was essential in finding the right solution and involving the public in their process.

"Back in 2000 we saw our population was aging but seniors had more choices where to live," he said. "With the trend pointing toward fewer seniors choosing a nursing home, we knew we probably wouldn't keep a high occupancy level."

The county had established an additional property tax to help pay for the facility, but the rising cost of salaries and benefits for the 175 employees, along with the costs of building a new facility, were making operating the home burdensome.

The advisory board invited a member of the Lake County



Photo courtesy of Lake County, Ill.

A Winchester House nursing home worker spots a resident as she exercises. As of Dec. 1, the worker will be a private employee, when Lake County, Ill. outsources the home to a management company.

United faith-based group to join the effort, which secured the trust and cooperation of the most organized citizens' group in the county.

"They did their own analysis and they concluded, too, that our situation was unsustainable," Burton said. "We've always wanted to make sure the county had an option for elder care, regardless of their ability to pay, and keeping

those workers as public employees would sink it. It made a world of difference to have the public involved."

He said by outsourcing operations to a private management company, the county retains the home's license and property, but the employees will now likely be paid closer to the rate for private nursing home workers.

Joshua Jandris is a real estate broker with Marcus and Millichap, which specializes in nursing homes. He explained some of the issues counties might face when attempting to sell or close nursing homes. "There's a major misconception that if a private company comes in and runs the facility, the quality will drop," he said. "At the end of the day, both for-profit and nonprofit facilities are monitored by the government by the same standards."

The distribution of county-owned nursing homes varies nationwide. Michigan has pretty strong publicly owned nursing homes, Jandris said, while Kentucky and Arizona counties are almost all out of the business.

Because nursing homes are funded partially through Medicaid and allowances for recipients vary by state, some counties get a little more help.

Things improved recently for nursing homes in New York. Increases in the state's Medicaid allowances gave each home a decent bump per resident, according

See NURSING HOME page 7

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"Contact Us" provides members with information and answers!

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NACo National Association of Counties
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County health inspection results go mobile

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Real-time access to Sacramento County, Calif. food facilities' health inspection results?

There's an app for that.

With their interest piqued by color-coded placards in restaurants' front windows representing the businesses' inspection status, residents started checking out the county's website that held the full reports. That site, though, did not show up well on smartphones.

"You could access the reports eventually, but it certainly wasn't convenient," said Environmental Information Technology Manager Geoff Marsh. "We took the functionality necessary to check the records and put it in a smartphone app."

County Technology Analyst Jerry Gray was pleasantly surprised by the traffic on the inspection database site.

"Yes, people look for restaurant reviews, but usually on Yelp! or somewhere that evaluates the food," he said. "Now I'm starting to meet people who won't go to a restaurant unless they've seen its inspection report."

Inspection data will also be

available for bars, grocery stores, school cafeterias and most facilities that dispense food to the public.

Marsh said the public interest in the county's inspections started in 2007, when it debuted the placard system, giving green placards to establishments that pass inspection, yellow for those with health code violations that don't pose an immediate threat to public health but must be fixed within 72 hours (usually storage and food temperature issues), and red for restaurants that are closed because of code violations. Marsh said more than 90 percent of the county's 5,000 facilities in which food is handled have green placards.

Those placards replaced a law requiring the businesses to display the current inspection in the front window, regardless of them being wrinkled, yellowed or tattered.



The app uses Google Maps, shown here, as an interface for inspection reports.

"The placards caught people's eyes and simplified interpretation of the inspection grades," Marsh said. "They made them more accessible and interesting, and that started a conversation in public about food safety."

What's even more accessible is the app's interface. It uses Google Maps, and each business evaluated is represented with a flag, the same color as the placard in its window. From there, a user can click on the flag to get the restaurant's details, including its most recent inspec-

tion report. The data is refreshed daily, Marsh said, in fairness to business owners whose placards might have been upgraded.

The regular Environmental Management department website still contains the businesses' full inspection history, which is left off of the mobile site to reduce loading time.

The app limits the map to the 50 businesses closest to the search address to reduce the data loading time. Although the county's development team created iPhone and Android apps, any smartphone that can use Google Maps can access the database.

Information Technology Analyst Reshi Jain said using the Google Fusion Tables database, which facilitates publishing data tables online, took a while to perfect. But now anyone in the world can import the data for any other use.

The app development took about four months alongside the programmers' routine work and cost \$125 in development fees.

To access the mobile site, visit: m.fli.saccounty.net. For more information, contact Brenda Bongiorno at 916.874.7798.

Thrifty supervisor helps charity, gets ideas

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Igor Stravinsky is reported to have said “Good composers borrow; great composers steal.” So, don’t blame Jan Rutherford for wanting to appropriate someone

else’s good idea.

The San Bernardino County supervisor recently participated in a benefit Hard Times Fashion Show. Now she wants to borrow the idea to help a senior citizens center in her district.

Rutherford recently walked the

catwalk for the local Rotary Club, wearing an outfit put together on a \$25 budget and purchased at Goodwill. She would “repackage” the event for a local senior center, to help make up for government funding it lost to buy meals. “It might be a fun activity for seniors,” she said.

She saw the Rotary fundraiser as a win-win.

“I think it’s a fabulous event for raising awareness, not only of the children’s charities that Rotary supports, but also for the untapped opportunity for shopping in our local thrift stores,” she said. “There are incredible bargains for high-quality stuff. I think people, myself included, are too quick to dismiss those kinds of shops.”

The fundraiser also included a Depression-era lunch of a “simple tomato soup,” finger sandwiches and celery sticks, she said.

Shopping thriftily, Rutherford outfitted herself in an apple-green jacket originally from Saks 5th Avenue — it cost about \$5.99 — over black dress pants and a white mock turtleneck blouse. She also found accent jewelry and a black-and-white clutch bag “that picked up the theme of the necklace.” Total cost: \$25.99.

Based on applause, the audience chooses a king and queen of the show. Rutherford said she



Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County, Calif.

San Bernardino County, Calif. Supervisor Jan Rutherford models her \$25.99 outfit, purchased at a thrift store, at a Hard Times Fashion Show, hosted by a local Rotary Club.

was a close second to someone who had packed their table with out-of-town friends and relatives.

Last year, however, San Bernardino County did take the crowns when Supervisor Gary

Ovitt and his wife won. He chose to go for the funny bone.

“I wore something that was pretty loud; it was orange colors. I put together quite a combination with a tie,” he said. “So I looked a little bit professional but at the same time kind of goofy as well. And I wore a pair of high-top Converse All-Star tennis shoes as well, so it was fun.” His wife want for a more classic look — a basic black dress. The couple didn’t participate this year.

Like Rutherford, he was more than happy to lend his name and fashion smarts to the event. “For me it was an opportunity for some of us who are in the public eye, and it was a chance for each of us to have some fun with it and to be a little more relaxed and let people to get to know us on a different level, a more social level, less professional, if you will,” Ovitt said. It was perfect, he added, for a guy who likes to laugh and doesn’t mind being laughed at.

Humor aside, the event also helped him relate to the less fortunate in his county. It drove home the fact that many people have no choice but to shop at Goodwill or Salvation Army stores.

“They don’t have a choice, based on the difficult economy,” he said. “I certainly sympathize with them in that regard.”

Rising staff costs, drop in revenue stress public nursing homes

NURSING HOME from page 6

to Stan Wojciechowski executive director of County Nursing Facilities of New York, though the state is also planning to change its reimbursement methodology at the beginning of 2012. It’s not apparent what will replace the current system.

SpeedRead » » »

» Some options for county-owned nursing homes:

- Sell property and license
- Privatize operations
- Close

Jandris said although counties could reconfigure operations at their homes, outsource operations or establish public benefit corporations to take ownership and responsibility of the homes, selling them often proves to be a multifaceted boon to the county.

In addition to moving dozens of jobs to the private management company—reducing county salary and benefit expenses—selling the property provides a one-time cash infusion, but also makes the facility taxable, adding annual revenue.

He said county-owned nursing homes are sometimes overstaffed, and that puts potential for-profit managers in a tough position.

“They often have the disdain of the community because people fear the change, but they end up with great incentives to make sure the staff and residents are happy,” he said. “Often these facilities are among the largest employers in the area, and word of mouth spreads quickly, especially with negative news, so it behooves them to do a good job.”

He said counties wield a lot of leverage when selling facilities, particularly in placing conditions

on sales, including mandating time periods with no staff reductions and no changes to employee-benefit structures.

“We vet the buyers with the counties,” he said. “They get to go see a buyer’s operations elsewhere, to see if they’re a quality provider. We don’t just put a ‘for sale’ sign out and sell to the highest bidder, which some people might expect.”

Wojciechowski said though some counties in New York are actively looking to sell their homes, the majority are just trying to stem their losses and are considering all their options.

“It’s good business practice to look at all of a county’s operations and figure out how to make them more efficient,” he said. “Examining the county’s role in the community health network is a prudent management decision.”

In Dutchess County, N.Y., rather than sell its nursing home, it closed the facility in the late 1990s.

“Part of it was the philosophical position that the county should focus on its core mission,” said County Executive Bill Steinhaus. “There are hundreds of privately owned nursing homes, so we didn’t need to be in that business. I saw it was going to be a growing cost that we as a county didn’t need to pay.”

Despite some public outcry and opposition from the nursing home workers’ union, the county assuaged opposition by timing the closing with the opening of a new private facility.

The former nursing home facility received a \$7 million rehabilitation and now houses several county departments.

“As elected political leadership, you need some backbone when you act on nursing homes,” Steinhaus said. “Most of the time, because it’s so emotional and unpopular, leaders take the easy way out, keep the home open—but meanwhile their finances are suffering.”

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National Association of Counties Staff Contacts & Directory



☎ NACo Staff Directory

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Staff Contacts

NACo staff members are at work providing county officials and staff with a full range of technical assistance, research and lobbying services. The following staff contact list has been prepared to assist with identifying the individual most knowledgeable in a given policy area.

Topics	County Ordinances, Programs, Operations	Federal Laws
Agriculture		Johnston
AIDS	Byers	Beddoe
Air Quality	Lang	Ufner
Airports		Fogel
Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)	Byers	Sanz
Arts	Byers	
Block Grants (general)	Byers	Rosado
Brownfields Redevelopment	Davenport	Daniel/Ufner

Budgets/Budgeting	Byers	Belarmino
Cable Television		Arnold
Childhood Development and School Readiness		Sanz
Civil Rights	Byers	Sanz
Climate Change	Lang	Ufner
Coastal Zone Management	Clingan	Ufner
Community Development	Byers	Daniel
Community Development Block Grants		Daniel
Community Service	Osborn	
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations	Byers	Ufner
Conferences/Meetings	Struble/Clark/ Wilson	
Congress	Rosado	Arnold
Consolidation (City/ County and Functional)	Byers	
County Government Week	Goodman	

County Reinsurance Limited (CRL)	Sawyer	
Crime/Criminal Justice/ Corrections	Hsieh	Harris
Devolution	Byers	Rosado
Disaster Preparedness		Harris
Diversity/Race Relations	Byers	
Dislocated Workers		Gardner
Downsizing	Byers	
Drug Abuse	Gilmore	Beddoe
Economic Development	Byers	Daniel
Education	Byers	Sanz
Elections	Byers	Belarmino
Election Reform	Byers	Belarmino
Emergency Management		Harris
Employee Benefits	Byers	Gardner
Employment and Training	Byers	Gardner

Topics	County Ordinances, Programs, Operations	Federal Laws
Empowerment Zones		Daniel
Endangered Communities		Yates, R.
Endangered Species		Yates, R.
Energy and Energy Conservation	Lang	Ufner
Enterprise Services	Torvik	
Environmental Protection	Davenport/ Lang/Clingan	Ufner
Ethics	Byers	
Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)	Byers	
Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	Byers	
Farmland Preservation	Davenport	Johnston
Federal Aid to County Government	Byers	Belarmino
Federal Facility Cleanups		Ufner
Financial Management	Byers	
Five Star Restoration Program	Clingan	
Flow Control		Ufner
Food Stamps (SNAP)	Byers	Sanz
Forest Health	Davenport	Yates, R.
Forest Service	Davenport/ Clingan	Yates, R.
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Jarreau	Arnold
Globalization		Daniel
Global Warming	Lang	Ufner
Grazing		Johnston
Green Government	Lang	Ufner
Groundwater	Davenport	Ufner
Hazardous Waste		Ufner
Health	Gilmore/ Cardwell/Byers	Beddoe
Highways/Bridges	Byers/ Davenport	Fogel
Historic Preservation	Byers	Daniel
Homeland Security		Harris
Homeless	Byers	Sanz
Home Rule	Byers	
Hospitals	Byers/Gilmore	Beddoe
Housing		Daniel
Immigration	Byers/Osborn	Sanz
Indigent Health Care/ Medicaid	Gilmore/Byers/ Murphy, K.	Beddoe
Indoor Air Quality		Ufner
Information Technology	Jarreau	Arnold
Infrastructure	Byers	Fogel
Insurance Services	Cole/Torvik	
Interlocal Agreements	Byers	
International Programs	Byers	
International Trade	Osborn	Daniel
Job Training	Byers	Gardner
Juvenile Justice	Hsieh	Harris
Land Use/Growth Management	Davenport	Ufner
Landfills		Ufner
Leadership Training Institute	Harden	
Legal Issues	Ferguson / Byers	
Liability	Byers	
Litigation	Ferguson	
Low-Impact Development	Davenport	
Mandates	Byers	Belarmino
Mass Transit		Fogel

Mental Health	Gilmore/ Cardwell/Hsieh	Beddoe
Methamphetamine	Byers/Gilmore	Beddoe
Migrant Workers	Byers	Gardner
Municipal Bankruptcy	Byers	Belarmino
Native Americans		Belarmino
Noise Abatement	Byers	Fogel
Nonpoint Source Water Pollution	Davenport	Ufner
Nuclear Waste		Ufner
Nursing Homes		Beddoe
Open Meetings	Byers	Belarmino
Open Records	Byers	Belarmino
Parks	Clingan/Byers	Yates, R.
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)	Byers	Yates, R.
Pensions	Cole/Torvik	Gardner
Performance Measurement	Byers	
Personnel	Byers	Gardner
Planning	Byers/ Davenport	Ufner
Pollution Prevention	Lang	Ufner
U.S. President	Naake	Rosado / Arnold
Privatization	Byers	
Property Rights/Takings	Byers/ Davenport/ Ferguson	Ufner
Public Finance	Byers	Belarmino
Public Lands	Davenport	Yates, R.
Public Safety	Byers/Hsieh	Harris, D.
Purchasing	Lang	
Radon		Ufner
Records Management	Byers	Arnold
Recreation	Clingan	Yates, R.
Recycling	Lang	Ufner
Reinventing Government	Byers	Rosado
Research	Byers	
Retirement	Cole/Torvik	
Rightsizing Government	Byers	Rosado
Risk Management	Byers	
Rural Counties	Byers	Johnston
Rural Development	Byers	Johnston
Rural Health	Gilmore	Beddoe/ Johnston
Rural Transportation	Davenport	Fogel
Salaries	Byers	
Senior Citizens	Byers	Sanz
Septic Systems	Davenport	Ufner
Sister Cities/Counties	Byers/Ferguson	
Small/Minority Business Development	Byers	Daniel
Smoking Restrictions	Byers	
Social Services	Byers	Sanz
Soil Conservation		Yates, R.
Solid Waste	Byers	Ufner
Sovereign Immunity	Byers	
State Aid to County Government	Byers	Rosado
State/County Relations	Byers	
Storm Water	Clingan	Ufner
Suburban Mobility	Byers	Fogel
Superfund		Ufner
Sustainable Development	Osborn	Ufner / Daniel
Taxation	Byers/ Murphy, K.	Belarmino
Technology	Jarreau	Arnold
Telecommunications		Arnold
Timber Issues		Yates, R.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	Byers	Sanz

Towers		Arnold
Transportation/ Transportation Finance	Byers / Davenport	Fogel
Urban Issues	Byers	Harris, D.
Volunteerism	Cramer	
Wastewater Treatment	Davenport	Ufner
Water Resources	Clingan	Ufner
Watersheds	Clingan	Ufner
Weatherization	Lang	Ufner
Welfare	Byers	Sanz
Welfare to Work	Byers	Sanz
Western Communities Stewardship Forum	Davenport	Yates, R.
Western Interstate Region Issues		Yates, R.
Wetlands Restoration	Clingan	Ufner
Workers' Compensation	Byers	Gardner
Workforce Development		Gardner
Workforce Investment Act		Gardner
Youth Employment		Gardner
Zoning	Byers / Davenport	Ufner

Affiliates/Board of Directors/ Caucuses/Steering Committees	Staff Contact
Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee	Johnston
Affiliate Council	
Arts and Culture Commission	Byers/Murphy, K.
Audit Committee	Houston-Smack/Keen
Board of Directors/ Executive Committee	Naake/Ferguson/ McRunnel
Community and Economic Development Steering Committee	Daniel
Deferred Compensation Advisory Committee	Cole
Environment, Energy, and Land Use Steering Committee	Ufner
Finance Committee	Keen
Financial Services Corporation Board of Directors	Torvik/Cole/Sawyer
Financial Services Advisory Committee	Torvik/Cole/Sawyer
Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee	Belarmino
Geospatial Subcommittee of Information Technology Committee	Jarreau
Health Steering Committee	Beddoe
Homeland Security Task Force	Harris
Human Services and Education Steering Committee	Sanz
Information Technology Committee	Jarreau
International Association of Emergency Managers	Harris
Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee	Harris
Labor and Employee Steering Committee	Gardner
Large Urban County Caucus	Harris
Membership Committee	Goldschmidt
National Association for County Community & Economic Development (NACCED)	Daniel
National Association of Black County Officials (NABCO)	Call NOBCO or Byers
National Association of County Administrators (NACA)	Ferguson/Byers
National Association of County Aging Programs (NACAP)	Sanz

Immigration law slows some Alabama county services to a crawl

IMMIGRATION from page 1

and all those things.”

He added that jail overcrowding in Alabama has long been a problem, and this could make it worse. “We have a 15-year lawsuit with the (Alabama) Department of Corrections to ensure that they remove their inmates in a timely fashion from our jails after they’re convicted of felonies and sentenced,” Brasfield said, “and so we have significant concerns about how this statute will impact that.”

The immigration law authorizes the state’s Department of Homeland Security to promulgate rules to enforce the act, and ACCA is trying to mitigate some of its negative impacts thru the rulemaking process, he added. That process was to begin early this month.

“Right now, as it relates to the issuance of licenses, paying of fees, those kinds of things, the state has issued some procedures that have gone out to the counties, Brasfield said. “There have been meetings statewide on the law enforcement issues....”

At county courthouses across the state, the new law has created long lines to renew license tags, vehicle

SpeedRead » » »

- » Law bans business transactions between government and illegal immigrants
- » Police must verify detainees’ immigration status if reasonable suspicion exists
- » Agriculture suffers in some counties as migrant workers flee

registrations and licenses, which previously could be done by mail or through the Internet.

“All of the counties that have moved to a place of being able to renew tags either by mail or internet-based have either stopped those are in the process of doing so,” Brasfield said. “Without some rules being adopted and some changes being made to help the administrative aspects of the law, it will change how government operates in Alabama.”

Stan Batemon is chair of St. Clair County’s Board of Commissioners and a former ACCA president. He said county offices have also been busy processing passport applications. “A lot of the illegal immigrants had children that were

born here that were legal and ... they rushed to our probate courts to get passports for their children, because if they did get caught and got deported, what would happen to their children?”

He said the law appears to be having minimal impacts in his county because any illegal immigration there might have been was taken care of by the sour economy.

“If our economy had been strong in our county, which it was up until the economy crashed for everybody, there was a lot of building going on in our county and that would have affected us,” he said. “The economy took care of a lot of that because there’s just not a lot of building going on.”

One industry that has been affected in his county is agriculture.

“The migrant farm workers and illegal alien community has policed a lot of it themselves by leaving. There’s an area of our county that has a lot of tomato farming,” Batemon said. “Their workers just started disappearing on them. They literally, right now as of today, are

losing crops in their fields because they can’t get people to do this work efficiently.”

Farther north, in Franklin County, the jurisdiction with the state’s largest Hispanic population — 14.9 percent versus 3.9 per cent for the entire state, according to 2010 census data — the consequences are more dire, according to Johnny Mack Morrow, the state legislator who represents that county. He said agriculture is a “multi-billion dollar industry” in Alabama.

“Many family farmers are facing disaster this year, with crops rotting in the fields and the very real possibility of losing their farms,” he said. “There simply aren’t enough migrant workers to pick time sensitive produce. Migrants have either fled the state or did not come here at all.”

Farmers have told him migrants workers have moved to North Carolina or Tennessee, rather than stay in a place where “fear is growing.” Alabama is also one of the nation’s leading poultry-producing states.

As bad as some say the law is, it

could have been worse, according to Brasfield. “We were able to get some things changed in the process, but we were quite honestly not as successful in mitigating the difficulties in this legislation as we normally are.” For example, he said, counties lobbied successfully to exempt public entities of liability for contracting with vendors who don’t verify the status of their employees, and clarified language that could have required incarceration after routine traffic stops that don’t involve an arrest.

Meanwhile, the situation in counties remains “fluid,” and protests continue in some areas, Brasfield said. The Southern Poverty Law Center had received more than 3,000 calls to a hotline it set up for immigrants affected by the law as of Oct. 20.

Morrow, the state lawmaker, had a metaphorical take on the situation — harkening back to the law’s effects on agriculture.

“We reap what we sow,” he said. “Sow fear and migrants leave, and then there is no one to reap when the harvest is due.”

Status of Alabama’s new immigration law

The following provisions of the Alabama immigration law, also known as HB 56 were in effect as of Nov. 4:

- Police are allowed to check the immigration status of people they stop and reasonably suspect are in the country unlawfully.
- All new contracts between an undocumented immigrant and another person are unenforceable in state court, with the exception of contracts for one night’s lodging, food purchases and medical services.
- It is a felony for undocumented immigrants to enter into a “business transaction” with the state of Alabama. The scope of this felony remains unclear, but includes applying for a driver’s license or a business license. The provision also includes transactions with subdivisions of the state, such as cities and counties.
- Beginning April 1, 2012, employers will be required to use e-verify to determine the immigration status of prospective employees.

These provisions were temporarily blocked by the courts:

- Requiring K-12 school officials to question students about their immigration status and that of their parents.
- Prohibiting residents from transporting or harboring undocumented immigrants.
- Making it a traffic violation for motorists who stop in the roadway to hire a day laborer.
- Prohibiting universities from enrolling certain immigrants — including persons granted asylum, refugees or those granted temporary protected status.
- Making it a misdemeanor for failing to complete or carry an alien registration card.
- Prohibiting employers from taking state tax deductions for wages paid to undocumented workers.
- Allowing employers to be sued for discrimination by people with U.S. citizen or legal immigration status when they are fired or not hired by an employer with undocumented employees.

Source: The Southern Poverty Law Center

Henry County helps streamline movie-permitting process

By CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Movie-making is a lot like real estate: What matters is location, location, location. So when filmmakers have to deal with numerous permits in order to shoot in a particular locale, it can become a challenge.

Henry County, Ga., pop. 203,922, has a new tool to help ease those burdens while capturing its share of film and TV production spending in Georgia, which amounted to \$1.2 billion in FY10. The county, along with the Henry County Convention and Visitors Bureau, jointly contracted with FLIPSFilm, a Web application tool that helps make communities more film friendly by streamlining the permitting process and eliminating delays and bottlenecks which often occur during filming production.

“With the recent boom in Georgia-filmed television and film productions, we have seen a dramatic influx of calls for location suggestions and guidance on local permitting requirements,” said Laura Luker, director of the Henry County Convention and Visitors Bureau. “I believe the partnership with FLIPSFilm means more



local goods and services being used, creating new tax revenue for the county not to mention tourism benefits.”

Where film producers once had to complete numerous applications for a single production, FLIPSFilm allows producers to apply for multiple permits within a community, all without duplicating application data. Requests are automatically routed to all key decision-makers — from police and fire to the transportation, planning and zoning departments—who can approve the film production, request additional information or deny it outright by email without the need for staff meetings or conference calls.

“Just one production can mean a major boost to our economy,” said Cheri Matthews, Henry County

planning and zoning director, who was responsible for acquiring all the film production approvals from various departments. “This tool makes it easier for departments to efficiently manage and fast-track permits by providing 24/7 access to information about Henry County.”

Last year in the county, production had to be delayed on a film because of a conflict with another event. FLIPSFilm helps avoid that situation by providing community event listings, which can be flagged for potential filming location conflicts.

Georgia ranks in the top five states for film and TV production with more than 274 projects being shot since July 2010. In addition to “The Walking Dead,” projects filmed in Henry County and around the state include “X-Men: First Class,” the remake of “Footloose,” “The Change-Up” starring Ryan Reynolds and Jason Bateman, and MTV’s “Teen Wolf.”

Henry County began offering the service on Oct. 24. The goal is a 48-hour turnaround for film and TV permit approval to insure filming will start on time.

For more information about FLIPSFilm, please visit www.flipsfilm.com.

Large Urban County Caucus selects new legislative agenda

By DALEN A. HARRIS

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The leadership of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) recently met in Palm Beach County, Fla. for the caucus' annual retreat and deliberated on the emerging legislative issues that will impact metropolitan counties in 2012.

At the three-day meeting, hosted by Palm Beach County Commissioner Priscilla Taylor, LUCC's leadership team selected four focus areas as legislative priorities for 2011-2012:

1) Restore the Partnership for American Health: Counties in a 21st Century Health System

- restore federal entitlement health benefits and VA benefits to jailed inmates before conviction
- influence the implementation of primary health care for all and protect the local safety net
- advocate for parity between federally qualified health centers and county health centers
- fund diversionary programs for the mentally ill in jail and substance abusers
- support adequate federal funding for Medicaid payments and SCHIP, including Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) programs, and



Photo by Reginald Todd

NACo Executive Committee members and LUCC leaders join NBA Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas (third from front left) who participated in the LUCC Retreat. Thomas has pledged to work with NACo and LUCC to promote community service projects and county governments.

- support efforts to promote wellness, and prevent chronic disease.

2) Support for the Nation's Transportation Network (Reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU)

- ensure adequate and equitable funding for transportation (mass transit, bridges and roads), includ-

ing support for an increase in and the indexing of the federal gasoline tax, and the reinvestment of interest generated by the Highway Trust Fund. Alternative sources of funding should be examined through pilot projects and research.

- The Surface Transportation Program's (STP) funding and the

federal Bridge Program must be increased with the goal of providing maximum funding to counties. The set-aside of the Off-System Bridge Program should change from 15 percent to 25 percent. Increased planning funds should be made available for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

- New federal programs should be created to reduce congestion in metropolitan regions and address incident management.

- implement reforms that will result in efficient delivery of transportation projects, and

- funding for mass transit should be increased either through its existing share of the Highway Trust Fund or through the general fund, and more flexibility should be given to the recipients of transit funding as to how the funds should be allocated.

3) Building Urban Communities

- support the Sustainable Communities Initiatives and the Livable Communities Act

- support comprehensive prisoner re-entry legislation and efforts to dramatically lower recidivism rates in county jails and state prisons by providing full funding for the Second Chance Act

- ensure adequate and equitable funding for water infrastructure

- sustain funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)

- combat gangs and assist at-risk youth by providing sustained

funding to the Department of Justice's Juvenile Accountability Block Grants (JABG) and Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) programs.

- support NACo's Green Government Initiative and alternative energy programs

- support mitigating the negative impacts of the nation's foreclosure and unemployment crisis

- continue support efforts to combat the sexual exploitation of children, child abuse and neglect, and

- support job creation and economic development.

4. Improving Government Operations

- support the Restore the Partnership efforts

- support the Withholding Tax Relief Act

- strengthen emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery

- support the Green Acquisition Act, and

- oppose efforts to reduce local government revenue sources and support repeal of unfunded mandates.

In each of these focus areas in 2012, LUCC members will monitor legislative and regulatory activities, engage in discussions with relevant stakeholders and advocate on these pressing metropolitan issues.

LUCC is working with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the White House, the U.S. House of Representatives' Congressional Urban Caucus and others in these advocacy efforts.

Twenty-seven elected county officials representing metropolitan centers from 15 states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Ohio and Virginia met to set the LUCC agenda. Also participating were NACo President Lenny Eliason, NACo First Vice President Chris Rodgers and NACo Immediate Past President B. Glen Whitley.

Throughout the three days of meetings, LUCC steering members and NACo leaders conducted panel discussions on prisoner re-entry, implementation of health care reform and the reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program.

All NACo members are encouraged to visit the LUCC website, www.naco.org/urbancounties, where regular updates on metropolitan legislative priorities, initiatives, events and other activities will be posted throughout the year.

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**NACo Prescription Discount
Card Program**

Model Programs From the Nation's Counties

Maricopa County, Ariz.

Program Keeps Ex-cons Out of Jail, into Jobs

By CHARLIE BAN
STAFF WRITER

Successful businesses often keep their dominant position by bringing upstart competitors into the fold. Maricopa County, Ariz. hopes its program for ex-offenders will keep them from competing with the goals of productive, law-abiding society — and from returning to jail.

The county's PASSAGES program, which stands for Pathways to Success, Security, and Gainful Employment Solutions, addresses recidivism by promoting employment and social reintegration of ex-convicts. The program has no time limit, so anyone previously incarcerated is eligible to participate.

For offenders who have served their time, finding a job is a pretty daunting challenge alone; a criminal record often serves as a major red flag on an application. But the conditions that led to many people's lives of crime — little education, substance

abuse, mental health issues and few marketable skills — are a more pervasive problem.

In 2008, Maricopa County Manager David Smith wanted a precise, focused and data-driven effort to reduce recidivism, and that's what he got in PASSAGES. The county had already contracted with Arizona Women's Education and Employment (AWEE), which also works with men, for job-training services. AWEE, however, did not provide "client" recruitment and various other services, including substance abuse and family counseling offered by other social service agencies.

Within the program's first 21 months, only nine PASSAGES participants out of 210 (4 percent) enrolled were arrested for a new crime or a probation violation, compared to the county's 40 percent overall recidivism rate. Additionally, 50 percent of participants kept their jobs for at least 90 days, an achievement in the face of a tough job market, including layoffs.



Photo courtesy of Maricopa County, Ariz.

PASSAGES participants attend a family-friendly social mentoring event focused on building healthy parent-child relationships.

For that first year and nine months, the county-run portion of the program cost approximately \$150,000, which included six staff positions, with other expenses covering tuition for training. Staff positions included a case manager, retention specialist and mentoring facilitator. The county pays AWEE based on participants' achieving various goals, including completing training, job placement and job retention.

"We needed a more comprehensive approach to crime prevention," said Erinn Herberman, a Maricopa County crime prevention analyst. "That started with more interagency cooperation and a focus on finding

the people who will benefit the most from our intervention."

The ex-offenders are referred to the program by the county's adult probation department and the Arizona Department of Corrections. In addition to direct referrals, the program also targets particular zip codes with high concentrations of ex-offenders. Because probation officers focus on geographic areas, those who work where ex-offenders live can make especially strong cases for offering a way out through PASSAGES, county officials said.

Herberman said fewer than half the people in the program completed high school. As a result, AWEE usually focuses on training them

for the skilled trades. Although construction work has been popular with ex-offenders, the slumping economy and Maricopa County's nation-leading housing vacancy rate have diminished demand for that kind of labor.

PASSAGES has used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money to fund alternative energy (mainly solar power) training, though many ex-offenders work in the food service or hospitality industries. One participant, named Daniel, apprenticed with the Sheet Metal Workers Union and is now working on the county courthouse tower construction project.

"We want to get [ex-offenders] into a position where they can get a job and build on a routine that will give them financial and social stability," Herberman said. "That kind of self-improvement theme helps address some criticism when people ask why we are helping ex-convicts get jobs." Without employment, they are more likely to return to crime or be a drain on social safety net programs.

Two major tasks for PASSAGES are motivating employers to take a chance on ex-offenders and spurring ex-cons themselves to change their lives.

"It's a lot easier for an ex-offender to get an employer to look past his record if he has the reputation of a program like PASSAGES to vouch for him," Herberman said. "Putting employers who encourage our workforce development efforts in touch (with one another) also helps build PASSAGES' reputation."

Tax breaks for businesses that hire ex-offenders also help, but that's a long-term enticement — their more immediate need is someone who can show up and do the work.

"Having a job isn't a cure-all, but when they're in a position to succeed, it makes failure a lot less-enticing option," Herberman said.

Now more than two years into the program, she said the county is starting to get an increasing amount of feedback and will review its benchmarks.

What's in a Seal?

» Pender County, N.C.
www.pendercountync.gov



Pender County was formed in 1875 from New Hanover County. It was named for William Dorsey Pender of Edgecombe County, the Confederacy's youngest general, who was mortally wounded in the Battle of Gettysburg. It is in the southeastern section of North Carolina and is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and New Hanover, Brunswick, Columbus, Bladen, Sampson, Duplin and Onslow counties.

The people of Pender were ardent patriots during the Revolutionary War, and it was at Moore's Creek where they defeated the Scottish Highlanders sent from Fayetteville by Flora McDonald, the Scottish heroine.

Still a part of New Hanover after the Civil War, Pender's prosperous plantation system was swept away during the Reconstruction years. However, it was out of Reconstruction politics that the county was born in 1875. Wilmington, overrun with carpetbaggers, was under corrupt rule. By popular vote, and despite strong Republican opposition, the county was created with the city of Watha as the first county seat. Burgaw, the present county seat, was chartered in 1879 and received its name from a local tribe of Indians.

The seal shows a barrel with a man extracting syrup from a maple tree at Maple Hill.

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

NACo on the Move

» In the News

• **Jacqueline Byers**, director of research and outreach, was quoted in the article "Counties in U.S. Employ Fewer Workers Than in 2010, Survey Shows" in *Bloomberg Businessweek* Oct. 28.

» NACo Officers and Elected Officials

• **Lenny Eliason**, NACo president, spoke about his Healthy Counties Initiative at the Missouri Association of Counties annual conference in Camden County (Osage Beach) Oct. 29.

» Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director of membership marketing, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo membership recruitment and retention at the Kansas Association of Counties Annual Conference in Shawnee County, Kan. Nov. 12–14.

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

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 ► Research & Publications ► Find Solutions.

News From the Nation's Counties

► CALIFORNIA

All candidates for county office in **RIVERSIDE COUNTY** now have to file **electronic campaign disclosures** for contributions over \$5,000.

They currently have the option of filing campaign finance statements with the Registrar of Voters' office via mail, fax or online.

Posting disclosures to the registrar's website is instantaneous, whereas sending information using more traditional methods can result in weeks-long delays, frustrating efforts to track the contributions that candidates are raking in ahead of Election Day, Supervisor John Benoit told *MyDesert.com*.



► OHIO

FRANKLIN COUNTY's new Common Pleas Courthouse is the first in Ohio to be awarded U.S. Green Building Council LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) **Gold certification**.

"Our goal was to deliver a significant public building that would be a downtown landmark. The project team delivered," Commissioner Marilyn Brown said. "The new courthouse serves as a model for green, sustainable and energy-efficient practices and is a state-of-the-art courthouse for our entire community to be proud of."

The courthouse project cost \$105 million, and its green features are expected to save the county 25 percent on the energy costs, or ____ (over what period of time?).

LEED certification of the courthouse was based on a number of green design and construction features, including the building's east-west lengthwise orientation to reduce cooling loads and improve usage of natural light for interior illumination. Other green design features include low-flow plumbing fixtures, a rain garden and a green roof.

► GEORGIA

A **renewable gas processing facility** is on the way, as are plans to convert 70 percent of the **DEKALB COUNTY**'s Sanitation Department's vehicles to run on landfill gas.

Over eight years, projections indicate the county could save \$3 million compared to buying diesel fuel.

When completed, the facility will give the county the capacity to process more landfill gas than any other county in Georgia, county officials said.

The project is funded by DeKalb County and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

► INDIANA

Grocers in **PORTER COUNTY** may soon be able to dispose of their produce waste at a **compost site**.

Under the proposed plan, the county would allow grocers to dump approximately the amount of 17 wheelbarrow loads per week.

The industrial waste permit application is being reviewed by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. The application was submitted by the board a few months ago.

Board Chairman John Evans told the *Post-Tribune* he hoped the compost site would reduce the amount of material being deposited into landfills.

► IOWA

Newly paved roads are suffering damage from steel-wheeled tractors, and the **MITCHELL COUNTY** supervisors have had enough.

They've hired a private investigator to track down the vehicles causing the damage, and County Attorney Mark Walk recommended the tractors, most likely owned by Mennonites, be impounded and forfeited, the *Globe Gazette* reported. The Mennonite Church prescribes steel wheels on tractors to discourage

the vehicles' use for anything but field work.

A \$9 million county paving project laid a four-inch layer that is more susceptible to damage, county supervisors said. They also authorized advertising in newspapers to alert the public to take photos with their cellphones if they see a violation taking place.

► KANSAS

The **Kansas Coliseum Complex** is temporarily off the market, and on the way to being sold by **SEDGWICK COUNTY**.

County commissioners agreed to sign a letter of intent for the sale and take the property off the market for 60 days. A Wichita developer has offered \$1.5 million for the Complex's Britt Brown Arena and the Kansas Pavilions.

The entire property has been valued in the past at \$22 million, though that value probably has declined since the arena was closed last year, the *Wichita Eagle* reported. There has been little demand for the arena since it closed. The pavilions, which the county has committed to keeping open through 2016, require a county subsidy to operate. The pavilions are used for events like

horse shows, livestock shows, swap meets and dog shows.

► MARYLAND

Anyone hoping to visit Ocean City and smoke some **synthetic marijuana** is out of luck, now that **WORCESTER COUNTY** has banned the controversial substance "Spice."

Spice, also known as K2, and its substitutes are marketed as incense but ultimately smoked to provoke a marijuana-like high. The emergency ordinance went into effect immediately, and the Sheriff's Office visited local businesses to make sure the products were off the shelves.

The drug's complexity means small chemical alterations could make the drug technically legal while preserving all of the effects. A list of five classes of hallucinogenic drugs and 15 individual substances were presented to the commission to hit a broad range and make it harder for drug dealers to sneak mildly altered forms of K2 under the radar, *The Dispatch* reported.

► MINNESOTA

With "**occupy**" protests spreading to cities across the country, the

HENNEPIN COUNTY Board took no official action regarding a local protest, but commissioners made their opinion clear.

They didn't vote on a request from the OccupyMN movement to ask for tents to continue a 'round-the-clock protest against corporate America as the temperature drops, but Commissioner Mark Stenglein gave his advice.

"I just don't think it's a good idea for you all to be sleeping there at night," he said, according to the *Star-Tribune*.

Dan Rogan, an assistant county attorney, said a Minneapolis ordinance bars the use of a tent or other temporary structure for the purpose of living in it, except in cases of emergency. The county erected a large canopy without sides for the protesters.

The protest began Oct. 7, at the Hennepin County Government Center plaza, and the county had spent more than \$152,000 as of Oct. 18 for the sheriff's office to police the area and for the county's property services division to manage it.

Commissioner Jan Callison said she doesn't want to see "tent cities," particularly with no end date. "I don't think there's unlimited public patience for the consumption of public resources," she said.

► MONTANA

Local elk have gotten a big boost from the **RAVALLI COUNTY** Commission, which approved a plan intended to lead to the **killing of more wolves, cougars and bears**.

Wolves have been preying on Bitterroot elk herds and the *Ravalli Republic* reported that commissioners want to contact other groups who might back a position paper on large-predator control. Those possible groups include the Safari Club International, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association.

Commissioners also want suggestions from groups to help create what is being called a "living with wolves" policy.

State officials have said they intend to maintain viable wolf populations but want the predators' numbers reduced to curb attacks on livestock and big game herds.

Montana has a quota of 220 wolves for a hunting season that runs through Dec. 31. State officials have pledged to shut down the hunt as soon as that figure is reached.

► NEW MEXICO

BERNALILLO COUNTY will replace 172 voting precincts with 69 **Voting Convenience Centers**

(VCC) for the 2012 primary and general elections.

The Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the plan Oct. 25, making Bernalillo the largest county in the state to do so.

LOS ALAMOS and **DONA ANA counties** are in the process of implementing VCCs for the 2012 elections.

The VCCs will be strategically located throughout the county and city of Albuquerque, and be easily accessible. The change would result in potential savings of up to \$1 million dollars in manpower and supplies, according to Clerk Maggie Toulouse Oliver.

► NEW YORK

Joanie Mahoney, **ONONDAGA COUNTY** executive, is one of nine government officials — and the only county leader — named to *Governing* magazine's 2011 list of **Public Officials of the Year**. Other winners include the governor of Arkansas and the mayor of Atlanta.

The magazine cited her efforts to work cooperatively with the city of Syracuse, the county seat, including taking a greener approach to preventing sewage and runoff from spilling into Syracuse's Onondaga Lake.

"Most people will say that it's important to our region to have a healthy and vibrant city, but too often that's just lip service," Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner told the magazine. "Joanie makes decisions that reflect that."

► OREGON

Lawmakers couldn't accomplish it statewide, but **MULTNOMAH COUNTY** commissioners have succeeded in adopting a local restriction on the sale of baby bottles, sippy cups and water bottles used by infants, children and adults that contain the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA).

The **BPA ban** — the first by an Oregon locality — came after the commissioners, acting in their capacity as the Board of Health, reviewed the county Health Department's analysis of the chemical and heard overwhelmingly supportive testimony from local residents.

"Restricting the sale of products with BPA puts the health of our residents first and ensures they have access to affordable, safe alternatives," Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen said.

County health officials said BPA can leach into food and beverages and disrupt the natural activity of

The H.R. Doctor Is In

A Defined Contribution Life

There is great and growing worry in our country about long-term financial security. This worry is reflected in many parts of the world as well as in my neighborhood and in my wallet. The concerns will be with us for a very long time and could be the harbinger of an unprecedented worldwide crisis.

Great economic instability shatters dreams and imprisons one of America's greatest traditions — unbridled optimism about the future — behind walls of fear and depression.

Economic uncertainty means that my future, including my retirement and my health are at great risk. It also means that the steps I take to enhance the likelihood of a positive future for beautiful granddaughter Evie, such as investing in a Section 529 college fund, may not be productive a decade-and-a-half from now when the need would be there. It means that the worries of my children are also added to the already heavy backpacks of responsibilities and cares each of us carries around with it.

These are not simply the concerns that affect one individual HR Doctor. They affect the optimism and the ability to secure a positive future for all counties, cities, school districts and special districts

throughout America. After all, securing long term financing for capital improvements and repairs, properly funding pension commitments, avoiding tax increases, and the hundreds of other things that affect the public health, welfare and safety of all of us, is also built upon a foundation of optimism.

These are the concerns of the world, not just of the particular county in which I live. The "Tiger of Europe," Ireland, has now had its claws and fangs pulled out by this uncertainty. The same is true of other nations we consider friends and economic partners, such as Portugal, Italy and Greece. A simple content analysis of media reports about civic unrest connected to efforts at financial reform will bring up stories of picketing, strikes, rioting and threats of more to come. In short, risks to economic stability in an era of instantaneous communications must not be ignored and cannot be allowed to swamp generations of economic and social progress.

Of the two major schools of thought about how to resolve the risks, the one getting the most attention currently features forces demanding cutbacks in public programs, no new taxes, or reducing taxes and no new services. The

other traditional approach has been to increase spending in the hope that it will create a positive feedback loop to increase spending and productivity — even at the expense of greater long-term national debt.

The serious problems we face stem from a growing inability to appreciate the power of compromise ...

This author feels that neither of these approaches alone will solve the problems we now face. They will not stand up against the power and capability of worldwide instant social media that can cause a generation-long ruling family to suddenly be thrown out of office. Despite the apparatus of power built up over 30 years, the former president of Egypt was "twittered" out of office. The same may well happen in Sudan, Bahrain, Syria and other places. People we used to call friends or worked actively to create or prop up in the first place are now being replaced by

"reformers" with motives and goals we do not clearly understand.

A major part of the debate over which course of action is best has targeted the world of defined benefits. This is also known as the world of "entitlements." Defined benefits have come to mean, amidst the shouting and political threats, guaranteed pensions for public employees, along with other benefits, such as a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), retiree health insurance guarantees, and commitments to annual cost-of-living increases hedging against the inflation monster.

It is true that these are benefit covenants derived from decades of collective bargaining or often by state law or court decisions. However, it is also true that they are massively expensive and seriously underfunded by overly optimistic projections of investment returns and underestimated cost and demographic projections. Another major culprit has been the intense desire of elected officials, candidates for elective office and others to pose in front of American flags while standing next to firefighters and police officers to whom they have just made promises of future love and affection in trade for political support.

Many of the pundits shouting out "solutions," often while trying to do imitations of Stonewall Jackson during the Civil War, righteously claim that they have the sole answer to balancing the budget and reducing debt. That involves cutting entitlements while reducing taxes for those who may be the least likely to ever need entitlements due to substantial personal wealth.

The greatest threat to our economic stability, and therefore our political stability, does not lie in ugly crises like banking excesses or foreclosure epidemics. The serious problems we face stem from a growing inability to appreciate the power of compromise and be willing to engage in the kind of dialogue for democracy which was vital to the founding of the country in the first place. It is the righteous stands on every issue that will be more of a danger to the USA than a dozen Bin Ladens.

Conversely, turning around this situation to restore civil dialogue, and restoring a long-term vision of a positive future, are the characteristics of a solution to the sense of pessimism and the growing lack of stability. Neither of the major camps alone — the "cut everything" camp nor the "spend our way out" camp — offers the solution we need.

We are coming upon the greatest test our country will have faced since the Civil War. It is not a test of technology or of military power. It is a moral test that countries around the world are also facing. The test was best summarized by a wonderful quote from the late Hubert Humphrey. "... the real moral test of Government is how that Government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped."

Will we pass the test? The answer is yes if we adopt the respect and appreciation of compromise for the greater good mentioned in this article. No will be the unfortunate answer if we continue to wear blinders and pretend that only cutting or only spending while being confrontational will free us from our fears.



Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor • www.hrdr.net

Dallas County sues mortgage registry firm

NEWS FROM *from page 14*

hormones in the body. Scientific studies have linked low-level exposure of the chemical to heart disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer and reproductive issues.

► SOUTH CAROLINA

Look out, Akron, Ohio. That hot breath you feel on the back of your neck may be South Carolina coming after your Tire Capital title.

Two Palmetto State counties recently scored major tire company expansions: Continental Tire the Americas plans to build a new tire manufacturing plant in **SUMTER COUNTY** to meet growing demand at the retail level and from auto manufacturers. The \$500 million investment is expected to generate 1,700 new jobs in South Carolina over the next 10 years, *CoStar News* reported.

Bridgestone Americas also announced two major expansions in the

state. It will begin construction on a 1.5 million-square-foot tire plant this month in **AIKEN COUNTY**. The facility will manufacture tires used on large industrial vehicles. The \$1.2 billion capital investment is expected to create 850 jobs.

► TEXAS

DALLAS COUNTY has sued **Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems (MERS)**, its parent company Merscorp Inc. and others alleging that they acted as a shadow recording system to avoid county recording fees, *Housing Wire* reported. Three other counties, **BEXAR**, **HARRIS** and **HIDALGO**, are reported to be considering following suit.

Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins sued MERS in September, claiming the mortgage registry owed the county \$50 million to \$100 million in mortgage transaction filing fees.

MERS allowed financial firms to re-assign mortgages by making

updates to the system and foregoing new recordings at local counties. Merscorp Inc. is based in Reston, Va.

► WISCONSIN

• **DANE COUNTY** will host its first "**Veterans Night Out**" on Nov. 10 — the day before Veterans Day. The event aims to connect more local veterans to the government and community services they can access after returning home from service, said Joe Parisi, county executive.

"Dane County's veterans and their families deserve easy access to the assistance they are entitled to after their selfless service to our country," Parisi said. "Veterans Night Out is a great way for these men and women to get those services, learn more or simply reconnect with the veterans community."

• **OUTAGAMIE COUNTY** Executive Tom Nelson says his worst fears are being confirmed under a new state law that requires

counties to farm out certain highway improvements to private contractors rather than use cooperative agreements with other counties.

Nelson said contracting out a recent paint-stripping job to a private company cost the county about \$3,900 — more than five times what it would have cost for neighboring **CALUMET COUNTY** to do the job under a reciprocal agreement, the *PostCrescent* reported.

Supporters of the law passed by the State Legislature earlier this year said the plan would prevent counties from unfairly competing with private businesses and prevent county roads departments from becoming bloated. Opponents said the former practice kept costs down and saved taxpayers money.

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

Research News

Is That House Empty?

In October, the Census Bureau released the brief *Housing Characteristics: 2010*. The information, from the 2010 census, discusses the data on housing collected from two questions on the census form.

Of this data, the vacancy status is the most telling and reflects the tumultuous economy that led to the current housing crisis. The brief lists by state the percentage of the available housing units that were vacant on April 1, 2010. Although not the highest in total number of vacancies, Maine had the highest

percentage, at 22.6 percent vacant, of all states.

Other New England states also had high vacancy rates. Vermont had 20.5 percent vacant, and New Hampshire had 15.6 percent vacant. In other areas of the country Florida had 17.5 percent vacant, a 62.6 percent increase since 2000; Arizona had 16.3 percent vacant, up 61 percent since 2000; South Carolina had 15.7 percent vacant, a 53.1 percent rise since 2000; and Nevada had 14.3 percent vacant, a 119.6 percent increase since 2000.

Most people are familiar with the housing crunch, which is forcing people to lose their homes through foreclosure or to abandon them because they are upside down in their mortgages and are unable to make the mortgage payments, but the reality of the number of vacancies is best examined at the county level.

Maricopa County, Ariz. has the largest number of vacancies of any county in the U.S. at nearly 14 percent of the housing units. In raw numbers, this amounts to 227,696 vacant single-family homes or a number very close to the total number of housing units in Tucson. Maricopa County, Miami-Dade County, Fla. and Clark County, Nev. are all counties that saw overbuilding during the last decade. Maricopa saw its population grow by 24 percent between 2000 and 2010 but watched its housing stock increase by 31 percent. Similar growth patterns, building and declines existed in Miami-Dade and Clark Counties.

In Beaufort County, S.C. (Hilton

Head), more than 3,800 homes are for sale, but that does not reflect the actual number of vacant houses in the county. Calling it the "shadow inventory," local realtors say these properties, nearly all vacant, fall into three categories:

- repossessed properties that are not up for sale
- foreclosed properties, and
- properties where mortgage payments are in deep arrears (along with 2 million other homeowners across the country who have stopped paying their mortgages).

Mecklenburg County, N.C. saw its number of vacant homes increase by 87 percent between 2000 and 2010, and Union County, N.C. with just over 200,000 population, saw its vacancy rate increase 117 percent.

In Kentucky, there are 120 counties, 84 of which have vacancy rates of 10 percent or more. Lee County, Fla., home of Fort Myers city and one of the leaders in foreclosures in the early stages of the recession, experienced a 29 percent vacancy rate in 2010.

Anthony Sanders, a professor at George Mason University, said "there is no simple remedy" and leading experts in the field say that overbuilding, falling property values, rising unemployment and the new wave of foreclosures are pushing up the vacancy rates.

This trend is not only in the largest counties. Loving County, Texas, famous for being the county with the smallest population in the country (82) has only 50 housing units, and 22 percent of them were vacant according to the census. Stillwater County, Mont., pop. 9,000, which has just 4,800 housing units had a 20 percent vacancy rate. Bledsoe County, Tenn., pop. 12,900, which only has about 5,700 housing units, had a vacancy rate of 17 percent based on the 2010 census.

For additional information about this subject go to www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-07.pdf.

(Research News was written by Jacqueline Byers, director of research and outreach.)

Job Market & Classifieds

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – DESCHUTES COUNTY, ORE.

Salary: DOQ.

County Administrator, Deschutes County, Bend, Ore. Pop. 172,050. Annual salary range DOQ plus a competitive benefits package. Annual budget \$267 million, FTE 816. Deschutes County is one of the largest employers in Central Oregon. The County provides health and community services, public safety, economic development services, transportation and land use. Additional responsibilities include elections, assessment and taxation, human resources and employee relations. The County Administrator provides direction to department heads and is the first point of contact to independently elected County officials. The County Administrator is hired by and works under the direction of three County Commissioners. To learn more about the position, please contact Interim County Administrator Erik Kropp at 541.388.6584 or at Erik.Kropp@deschutes.org. Note: the Interim Administrator is not a candidate.

► ROAD DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR – DESCHUTES COUNTY, ORE.

Salary: \$93,900–\$126,200 annually plus a competitive benefits package; DOQ.

Road Department Director, Deschutes County, Bend, Ore. Pop. 172,050. Annual salary range DOQ plus a competitive benefits package. Performs

responsible administrative work directing the Road Department including road construction/maintenance, equipment maintenance, and civil engineering activities; directs the effective operation of each division through the management of supervisors. Bachelor's degree in civil engineering or related field with 8 years of progressively responsible administrative and/or managerial work associated with road department functions, OR equivalent combination of experience and training. Oregon Professional Engineer registration desirable. Contact Natalie Jones 541.617.4722 to request a complete application packet. Deadline: Friday, Nov. 18.

► COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – CLERMONT COUNTY, OHIO

Salary: DOQ.

Clermont County, Ohio (Population: 197,363), located 20 miles East of Cincinnati on the Ohio River is seeking candidates with proven executive management and leadership experience to be County Administrator. The County has a \$243 million budget (\$50 million General Fund). Position will be the Chief Administrative Officer of the County.

For more information and to download a mandatory application or to submit an application electronically; visit www.clermontcountyohio.gov (Careers in Clermont). Call 513.732.7110 with questions. Deadline to apply is Nov. 30. EOE.

Financial Services News

NACo Financial Services Center Welcomes New CEO

Peter O. Torvik has been named the new CEO of the NACo Financial Services Center, whose mission is to provide value-added services to counties and related entities, their employees, retirees and families.

The NACo Financial Services Corporation (FSC) approved the creation of a new NACo partnership in 1994 — the Financial Services Center. The center's mission also includes broadening the revenue stream for NACo, which lowers association membership dues.

Steve Swendiman has served as its managing director and CEO since 1995, but will be retiring from NACo in December.

Torvik brings significant experience to the center. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota (Business) and Dartmouth Tuck School of Business (M.B.A) and studied agriculture at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He grew up in Winneshiek County, Iowa and for 10 years operated a swine and crop farm across the border in Fillmore County, Minn.



Peter Torvik

He has spent the past 20 years in the investment and finance sector, working for several large financial institutions.

He is not new to NACo or county government. Torvik has served on the Financial Services Center and Financial Services Corporation boards of directors for more than 15 years and has been a part of the NACo family for the same period of time. He has presented at NACo conferences and to

NACo-affiliated organizations and state associations of counties. In addition, he has consulted with NACo on a variety of issues and has most recently acted as lead consultant for the NACo Deferred Compensation Program as it works through a number of key issues in a new regulatory environment.

Torvik and his wife, Julie Holland, have four sons and reside in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. He is active in his church and the local Boy Scouts and is a director of the Peter Morton Cure Paralysis Fund and the International Foundation for Retirement Education (InFRE). He also served for six years as a director for Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity.

For more information about the Financial Services Center and the Financial Services Corporation, visit www.naco.org or contact Peter Torvik at ptorvik@naco.org.

(Financial Services News was written by Steve Swendiman, managing director/CEO, financial services center.)

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