

# Karen McRunnel, friend to many NACo leaders, dead at 77

Karen McRunnel, who served as executive assistant to four NACo executive directors, died April 11 after a short illness. In addition to supporting the executive office, McRunnel also provided staff support to the association's board of directors and executive committee.

"Karen was always there to help the NACo presidents and executive committees, said



**McRunnel**

past NACo president and Tarrant County, Texas Judge Glen Whitley.

"I will never forget her saying 'One day you will find yourself in the middle of an empty parking lot with no idea of what to do next, and that's when you call me regardless of the time of day.' She always did whatever she could to help make our year as president successful. We will miss her."

McRunnel worked for more than 30 years at NACo, retiring in 2015. She first came to Washington, D.C. in 1976 as staff to a Minnesota congressman.

In her *CountyNews* "Profiles in Service" interview published in August 2014, she said the hardest thing she had ever done was train four executive directors.

One of those executive directors was Larry Naake. "All of us who worked and socialized with Karen — staff, officers, board members — will miss her dearly. She was the quiet force that moved and guided us through good and hard times for many years. Personally, Karen was a special friend and a mentor to me for 21 years. She was a very special person," Naake said.

McRunnel enjoyed meeting NACo board members over the years and built lasting friendships while attending 123 NACo conferences.

"Karen was the guardian and counselor for many NACo leaders. She was a great steward of the NACo flame," said Matt Chase, current executive director. "Our thoughts and prayers are with her family." **CN**



**Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) lays out some tenants of the House's Farm Bill during the Rural Action Caucus Farm Bill Summit opening reception at the Hilton Palm Beach Airport. Photo by Austin Igleheart**

## Summit offers hints on Farm Bill

**By Charlie Ban**  
senior staff writer

The political wrangling around nutritional programs will likely determine the future of the Farm Bill, which is due for markup by the House Agriculture Committee April 18, according to Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.), a member of the Agri-

culture Committee. The current Farm Bill, reauthorized in 2014, expires Sept. 30.

Yoho made his observation while addressing NACo's Rural Action Caucus (RAC) during RAC's Farm Bill Summit in Palm Beach County, Fla. April 4. He said the draft of the \$800 billion Farm Bill would not cut safety net programs, chiefly SNAP —

the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — but would include 20-hour work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents, ages 18-65. He also hinted at funding for job training.

States administer SNAP benefits, but 10 states, accounting for

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## Congress set to tackle opioid legislation

**Valerie Brankovic**  
legislative assistant

Congress is set to move forward on multiple pieces of opioid-related legislation as lawmakers return from a two-week recess.

On April 11, Senate lawmakers on the Health, Education,

Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee considered a discussion draft of the *Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018*, which contains wide-ranging measures to help federal agencies address the crisis by improving access to telemedicine, increasing treatment services in areas with health provid-

er shortages and establishing prescription limits on opioids.

Some of the proposals contained in the legislation follow up on programs originally outlined as part of the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016* (P.L. 114-198),

**See OPIOID page 8**



# Farm Bill impasse likely on SNAP benefit eligibility

From FARM BILL page 1

nearly one-third of SNAP recipients, share administration with county agencies.

"The goal is not to take anyone off of food stamps," he said. "The whole goal is to get people educated. We'll reeducate people, give them job training."

He also teased at increased flexibility in SNAP eligibility, including a three-month tapering off period when recipients' earnings rise too much.

"In the old Farm Bill, you could never have a car worth more than \$3,400, and that's been in there since the '70s," he said to attendees at the opening reception at the Hilton Palm Beach Airport hotel. "(Now) you can have a car worth \$12,000 and a savings account of up to

\$2,000. They want people to work to self-sufficiency and independence."

Set against a potential trade war with China that would affect U.S. agricultural exports, Yoho said of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, "They will not allow the American farmer, ranchers the producer of American agriculture to be held hostage in any of these trade negotiations."

But Yoho acknowledged that "the new Farm Bill doesn't do a lot for trade," but said "The big, important thing to remember if when we've got imbalances in trade, it's not good for us, it's not good for anybody who is on the short side of that, we've got a \$357 billion deficit with China. We've got to adjust these commodity prices via tariffs, whether

it's steel, aluminum or corn."

Yoho said the House Agriculture Committee's work on this Farm Bill dwarfs what was done in advance of the 2014 Farm Bill, which reduced SNAP funding by \$8.7 billion over 10 years.

## The other side

While the House may move forward with more work requirements, the Senate's version of the Farm Bill will likely take a more conciliatory approach.

That's what Ellen Vollinger, legal director for the Food Research and Action Center, sees happening. She said that Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts' (R-Kan.) desire for a bipartisan bill that would garner 60 or 70 votes would mean SNAP eligibility limitations and benefit cuts are non-starters.

"It's very unclear whether a Farm Bill will move, but if it does move, the more productive path ... can have bipartisan bill," she said.

SNAP is disproportionately important in rural areas, with more than 20 percent of residents receiving benefits in one-quarter of rural counties.

"It's an important support for rural economies," she said, noting that \$1 of federal SNAP funding ends up generating \$1.79 in local sales.

Like Yoho, Vollinger would like to see adjustments to SNAP that would allow for a more realistic account of a recipient's eligibility.

"We need to increase the gross income test," she said. "That will show if people have so many costs — child care, housing — that they have a net-income and can actually use SNAP benefits."

Vollinger warned counties about the consequences of erod-

ing federal support for SNAP.

"If the federal government removes some supports that they have, it would be a cost shift you would see," she said. "When the feds take themselves out of the equation and don't step up to the responsibility, it's not as if the people go away, it's just that they're left to state and local governments, to charities and to their own resources to fend for themselves. So, there's a lot at stake, but we're very hopeful that as the traditional Farm Bill coalition comes together around a bipartisan support, people will see a more productive path."

## Supports, not substitutes

The philanthropic sector is not suited to substitute for decreased SNAP benefits, Feeding Florida Executive Director Robin Safley said, pointing out that for every meal a charitable org provides, SNAP provides 12.

"We don't have all the points of service," she said, compared to network of businesses that accept SNAP benefits.

Programs that encourage healthier eating work, she said, when they help consumers afford that food.

"Individuals who are on SNAP — living in food deserts — are not going to avail themselves of the healthiest opportunities to eat, but when you give them an incentive, so that their dollar becomes two dollars to spend on healthy food, they really do purchase it."

Where they get it, however, is a problem.

"You can have SNAP benefits, but if you have nowhere to play that benefit, then you really don't have the benefit," she said. "When you look at rural Florida, we only really have Wal Mart

and Publix, we don't have that middle-sized grocery store with an extensive offering."

She touted the Farmers Feeding Florida program, which pays farmers for the picking and packing costs for food that is safe but would otherwise have gone to waste, a figure she pegs at 40 percent of all produce. Farmers receive a federal tax deduction for that produce.

Palm Beach County Extension Agent Cyndi Longely and Kelly Desjardins, from American Public Human Services, also addressed food access issues.

Ernie Barnett, executive director of the Florida Land Council, and Russell Morgan, the Florida State Conservationist at the Department of Agriculture, examined how local farmers use farm bill conservation programs consistent with local land use policies and controls.

## More than the seashore

Summit attendees saw a variety of Palm Beach County's agricultural players in the western part of the county, including a sugar cane growers cooperative and business that turns the pulpy residue from sugar cane into biodegradable plates and containers, Florida's only rice mill and the packing house for the largest rice grower east of the Mississippi.

Mobile tours also included a regional hospital and the county's growing Glades Lake Region Water Treatment Plant, which has dramatically reduced the loss of treated water. That creates greater treatment capacity that allows for residential and agricultural use of western Palm Beach County land, which is inundated with brackish, non-potable water. **CN**



## SNAP/STATS

### MOST COUNTY-OWNED BRIDGES

County	State	#
Harris County .....	Texas .....	799
New York City .....	N. Y. ....	603
Sedgwick County .....	Kan. ....	598
Sumner County .....	Kan. ....	537
Indianapolis & Marion County .....	Ind. ....	523



# RAC mobile tour was a sweet success



**NACo First Vice President Greg Cox, a San Diego County, Calif. supervisor, examines a water filtration pipe.** Photos by Charlie Ban



**Farm Bill Summit attendees tour the Glades Lake Region Water Treatment Plant in western Palm Beach County.**



**That's 100,000 pounds of brown sugar back there. Mobile workshop tours included a look inside a warehouse at the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative, which owns and operates one of largest sugar mills in the world.**



**Mike Turbeville, Glades Lake Region Water Treatment Plant superintendent, shows off a water filter.**



**Palm Beach County, Fla. Mayor Melissa McKinlay moderates a panel on nutritional programs helped by the Farm Bill.**



**Shawn Tasset, Ford County, Kan. commissioner, chats after panel discussions.**



# Key county economic programs boosted under FY2018 omnibus bill

By Daria Daniel

associate legislative director

and

Sofia Ferber

legislative assistant

Several federal departments that deliver crucial housing and workforce and economic development programs to counties saw funding increased by nearly \$6 billion under the FY2018 omnibus bill recently signed into law by President Trump.

The three departments overseeing these key programs include Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Commerce (DOC) and Labor (DOL). Under the FY2018 omnibus, HUD was funded at \$42.7 billion for FY2018, a \$3.9 billion increase over FY2017; DOL was funded at \$12.2 billion, a \$129 million increase above FY2017 levels; and DOC was funded at \$11.1 billion, a \$1.9 billion increase over FY2017.

Some of the programs receiving an increase in funding under the FY2018 omnibus include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

## Department of Housing and Urban Development

**CDBG:** CDBG is funded at \$3.3 billion under FY2018 appropriations, an increase of \$300 million over FY2017 funding levels. Counties utilize the flexibility of CDBG funds to support projects addressing community and economic development priorities, including housing, water, infrastructure and human services.

*HUD's CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to more than 1,200 metropolitan city and county governments, as well as to state governments. Nearly 200 counties are "entitlement counties" — those counties with populations*

*exceeding 200,000, not including metropolitan areas — which receive CDBG grants directly. Non-entitlement communities must compete for funding through the state formula allocation. According to HUD, for every \$1 of CDBG funds invested, an estimated \$4.09 is leveraged in other public or private sector funds.*

**HOME:** The omnibus includes \$1.36 billion for HOME, an increase of \$412 million over FY 2017 funding levels. In addition, the bill extends the suspension of the HOME 24-month funds commitment deadline through 2020.

*HUD's HOME program, authorized in 1990, assists state and local governments in providing affordable housing for low-income families, with 60 percent of HOME funds being allotted to the nearly 650 participating jurisdictions in counties and cities. HOME funds can be used towards the acquisition and rehabilitation of housing, or towards tenant-based rental assistance, depending on a county's housing needs.*

**Homelessness Assistance Grants:** Another HUD program dealing with affordable housing, Homelessness Assistance Grants, were funded at \$2.5 billion, a \$130 million increase over FY 2017 levels. The omnibus bill allocates \$80 million of the \$2.5 billion to addressing youth homelessness.

## Department of Commerce

**EDA:** The omnibus provides \$301.5 million for the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), a \$25.5 million increase from FY2017 levels. EDA funding supports regional strategies and serves as a catalyst in helping communities achieve long-term growth. The omnibus also directs EDA to use funding provided under Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance accounts for the support of high speed broadband, espe-

cially in underserved areas.

*Under the Department of Commerce, EDA is the only federal agency with a mission solely focused on private sector job creation in distressed areas. EDA makes investments and builds partnerships to help regions and communities respond to shifts in international markets, address severe unemployment challenges and recover from plant closures, major natural disasters and other chronic and sudden economic hardships. EDA-funded projects are awarded on a competitive basis and typically require a 50 percent local match and significant private sector investment, helping ensure projects have local support and are part of a broader regional strategy.*

## Department of Labor

**WIOA:** The FY 2018 omnibus bill includes \$2.8 billion for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs, an \$80 million in-

crease over FY 2017 levels. Of this amount, \$845.6 million is included for adults, \$903.4 million for youth and \$1.041 billion for dislocated workers. WIOA Title I focuses on workforce development activities at the state and local level and establishes funding for three key formula grants: Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth programs. WIOA provides critical workforce training and career services to counties.

*WIOA was enacted in 2014, reauthorizing federal employment, workforce and training programs and formula funding to states and localities. WIOA is the largest single source of federal funding for workforce development activities, intended to help states and counties tackle and overcome workforce challenges. Over the last program year, WIOA employment and training programs assisted 7.3 million individuals. In 2016, 64 percent of WIOA participants gained employment, including 77 percent of*

*adults and 82 percent of dislocated workers who received training services.*

Congressional appropriators are already working on FY2019 spending levels, which must be set and passed before the current fiscal year ends Sept. 30. If legislators are unable to reach an agreement and pass a spending bill by Sept. 30, a continuing resolution will need to be passed to keep the government open.

In February, Trump released his FY2019 budget request, which outlined the administration's federal spending priorities for the next fiscal year. The budget request would eliminate or reduce funding for many community and economic development programs important to counties.

The proposal would eliminate funding for CDBG, HOME and EDA and reduce funding for WIOA and homelessness assistance compared to FY2018 levels. **CN**

# EPA taking WIFIA loan applications

By Julie Ufner

associate legislative director

and

Austin Igleheart

legislative associate

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is now accepting letters of interest for loans provided through the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program to support water infrastructure projects. The WIFIA program is a federal loan and guarantee program within EPA that aims to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure by providing long-term, low-cost supplemental loans for regionally and nationally significant projects, including many county water infrastructure projects. The new funding announcement is designed to provide up to \$5.5 billion in loans and leverage over \$11 billion for water infrastructure projects.

Prospective borrowers seek-

ing WIFIA credit assistance must submit a letter of interest (LOI) by July 6.

The funding announcement lists two major priorities for this round of funding: providing clean and safe drinking water and reducing lead exposure; and repairing, rehabilitating and replacing aging infrastructure and conveyance systems.

Nonetheless, WIFIA credit assistance can be used for a wide range of projects including drinking water treatment and distribution; wastewater conveyance and treatment; enhanced energy efficiency at drinking water and wastewater facilities; desalination; water recycling; and drought prevention or mitigation projects, many of which involve county-owned and maintained water infrastructure.

The WIFIA program received \$63 million in funding in the FY2018 omnibus appropriations package, more than doubling

the program's overall funding from 2017. In 2017, EPA invited 12 projects across nine states to apply for WIFIA loans totaling over \$2 billion.

Generally, the WIFIA program helps finance larger water infrastructure projects — primarily those with an anticipated cost of \$20 million or more. However, recognizing the need for investment in both large and small communities, Congress has stipulated that 15 percent of WIFIA funds be set aside each year for small communities serving fewer than 25,000 residents. Such projects have a lower-cost threshold for eligibility, only requiring an anticipated cost of \$5 million or more. **CN**

*To learn more about how to submit a letter of interest (LOI) for the current round of WIFIA funding, and for instructions as to what should be included in the LOI, go to <https://bit.ly/2qowSqa>.*

# Building its workforce: S.C. county recruits STEM students

By Amanda Ramage

Coming up short hiring new employees? You can discover a goldmine of future employees by collaborating on projects with local science, technology, engineering and math, (STEM) students.

The Charleston County, S.C. Transportation Development Department is taking a creative approach to expanding its future workforce to include innovative, passionate leaders who will serve the community for years to come.

One of the ways Charleston County works to develop its future workforce is by actively participating in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math or STEM events with local students. Women and minorities are commonly under-represented in STEM-related careers.

One of the essential ingredients to capturing a girl's interest in the engineering field is to create fun enriching opportunities at an early age.

In order for the county to achieve its goal of getting kids interested in STEM, the county teamed up with The Citadel and the Girl Scouts of Eastern South Carolina for an "Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day" event.

"It's very rewarding to see more than 100 girls come together, learn about engineering and be so happy and excited about it, said Dimitra



**Girl Scouts from the Eastern South Carolina Council show off their model bridge, constructed during Charleston County, S.C.'s "Introduce a Girl to Engineering." The county Transportation Department sponsored the event.** Photo courtesy of Charleston County, S.C.

Michalaka, civil and environmental engineering assistant professor at The Citadel.

Mackenzie Kelley, construction project manager at the Charleston County Transportation Development Department, introduced compression, load and tension engineering concepts to the Girl Scouts by constructing cable-stayed bridges out of PVC pipes, ropes and boxes.

"As a young girl in elementary school, my parents drove home the importance of education," she said. "I got involved with Odyssey of the Mind, Designation Imagination and Math Engineering Science Achievement commonly known as MESA. Expo-

sure to these programs fueled my interest in solving problems."

Now, years later, Kelley is paying it forward to the next generation of girls who, like her, like to solve problems.

"As a woman in a STEM field, I feel that it is important to encourage more young girls to be interested in math and science," she noted.

"We need to break the stereotype that all scientists look a certain way. I enjoyed challenging the Girl Scouts to think outside of the box to solve issues we face in the engineering field daily.

Helping them navigate through the process of designing wind powered cars and

piecing together all of the components of a suspension bridge was exciting. These girls have the potential to help us engineer a better world one day."

Working with partners such as The Citadel and the Girl Scouts of Eastern South Carolina allows Charleston County to become one step closer to reaching children at a young age and growing a local workforce.

Charleston County Transportation Development Department is managing a \$2.1 billion transportation infrastructure half-cent sales tax program.

Handling large-scale infrastructure projects and small-scale projects that include

drainage improvements, bike and pedestrian paths, and paving and resurfacing requires a team of educated and skilled individuals with a STEM-related background ranging from accounting, budgeting, inspection, project management and civil engineering. The department is excited about the future of the community's young children and how they one day might be instrumental in successfully maintaining and growing Charleston County for years to come. **CN**

*Ramage is a project officer for Charleston County Government's Office of Deputy County Administrator, Transportation/Public Works.*

## NACo policy process in action in 2018 omnibus bill

An example of how NACo's policy process can help change the direction of federal policy, is present in the 2018 omnibus legislation. The legislation provided counties with financial certainty across numerous sectors. This collection of appropriations bills that spread across the government saw a funds increase in numerous NACo priorities such as Payment In lieu of Taxes funding, the Community

Development Block Grant program and increased resources to combat the opioid crisis.

In the transportation realm, an increase in TIGER funds made headlines. What didn't make headlines, however, was a rider in the transportation section that could positively affect agriculture-producing counties across the country.

At NACo's recent Legislative Conference in Washington,

Montezuma and Rio Blanco counties in Colorado jointly sponsored a resolution addressing a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) provision that regulated the electronic logging of trucking hours.

Unlike other trucking sectors, agricultural and livestock transporting includes far more than just the physical transport of goods to market. The electron-

ic logging device does not take into account time spent loading and unloading livestock. The resolution requested an agricultural exemption to this rule and was adopted as an interim policy position by NACo's Board of Directors.

Representatives from FMCSA were also at the conference briefing members of the Transportation Steering Committee where they took notice of the

resolution.

In the final omnibus signed into law by President Trump, this agricultural exemption was included through FY2018. "While not permanent, it is without question the largest step the agency has taken to signal this rule could someday become permanent," said Kevan Stone, NACo's associate legislative director for transportation. **CN**

# MOU streamlines environmental permitting process

By Sofia Ferber  
legislative assistant

Environmental permits will be streamlined for infrastructure projects under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recently signed by President Trump.

The "One Federal Decision" MOU aims to accelerate the environmental review process for major infrastructure projects such as new highway construction and runway expansion or repair. Signatories of the MOU include the departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce,

Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Homeland Security and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The One Federal Decision stems from the administration's "one agency, one decision" environmental review procedure,

which is detailed in Trump's infrastructure plan released earlier this year. The memorandum aims to improve the current permitting process by consolidating decision-making, cutting costly delays and changing environmental review methods, according to the ad-

ministration.

Streamlining the environmental review process for a variety of infrastructure projects will significantly cut the amount of time it takes to process permits, the administration claims. In 2017, Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 13807, "Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects," to reduce the permit processing time of new major infrastructure projects to no more than 21 months, with actual permits issued within three months following a decision.

These changes would achieve the administration's goal of shrinking the permitting process to two years from what can sometimes be 10 or 20 years.

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The MOU also calls for one lead federal agency to work collaboratively with all other pertinent agencies to reach a final decision before signing off on their respective jurisdictional purviews of a project as opposed to the existing sequential process requiring permit applicants to go through a lengthy process of dealing with multiple federal agencies.

In addition to creating a shorter timetable, the One Federal Decision aims to cut back on unnecessary costs that delays can create. By working cooperatively, federal agencies can ensure important infrastructure projects are completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, according to the administration. **CN**

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If you have any questions, please contact **Carlos Greene** at **404.263.3656** or **[cgreene@naco.org](mailto:cgreene@naco.org)**





## BRIGHT IDEAS | WAKE COUNTY, N.C.

# Library Book-Purchasing Model Solves Collection Drain

### PROBLEM:

With a dwindling budget during an economic downturn, Wake County Public Libraries faced challenges with a decreasing book collection.

### SOLUTION:

Develop a data-driven model that ensures best use of resources.

By Mary Ann Barton  
senior staff writer

A library can be like the produce aisle in a grocery store — where some amount of product has to be maintained. Like fruits and vegetables, books — if left too long — begin to “rot” and need to be removed.

“What are the factors that determine how long a book lasts? How long does a children’s book last? How long does a children’s paperback book last?” said Michael J. Wasilick, library director, Wake County, N.C. Public Libraries. “As factors change, such as demographics and wear-out factor, it shows where you are.”

These are the kinds of questions the county library system looked at when budgeting for new books. Over several years, Wake County, N.C. Public Libraries faced challenges with its book collection decreasing at an alarming rate. Factors affecting the collection’s size included:

- A 50 percent budget reduction related to an economic downturn from \$2.8 million a year to \$1.4 million
- Higher disposal rates due to age, damage to and relevancy of the book inventory, and
- Spending plans based on circulation statistics and individual librarian experiences.

To keep its collection vibrant and relevant, Wake County Public Libraries reconsidered its approach to collection plan-



Wake County, N.C.’s solution to dwindling collections keeps the library’s youngest patrons reading on.

ning, budgeting and procurement, developing a comprehensive, data-driven model that ensured the best use of resources, Wasilick said. The new approach was a combined effort between Library Administration and Community Services Administration.

In the past, purchasing was based more on current circulation trends versus having a long-term strategy that takes into account expected life of materials and costs of materials.

In its new purchasing model, the library system personnel considered a number of factors:

1. The number of books purchased over the past four years.
2. End-of-the-year satisfaction surveys from residents to gauge popularity. The customer survey includes questions on whether the books the patron wants are available at the library and whether the wait time for reserved books is acceptable.
3. A comparison of its collection with libraries of similar size.

Additionally, the model helps improve communication with funders and supervising departments. The library system assembled a team of vary-

ing backgrounds to develop a book-purchasing financial model that generates a recommended spending plan for the fiscal year based on:

- demographics
- target collection size and composition
- cost inflation, and
- book disposal rates.

While the model was developed as a result of the economic downturn, the benefits are helpful in any economic climate. By using a business approach, the data generated facilitates greater involvement and planning of library administration, and communication with the supervising departments and funders. The library also began issuing RFPs in 2015 for both ongoing book purchases and for opening day collections, Owens said. “This helps ensure we get the best price possible.”

The county’s budget office rewarded the revised process with a significant jump in the library’s procurement budget. In FY2017, WCPL’s book budget was increased to \$3.8 million. **CN**

For more information contact Owens at: [eowens@wakegov.com](mailto:eowens@wakegov.com).

## New elements added to popular EPA program

By Valerie Brankovic  
legislative assistant

The Environmental Protection Agency’s Brownfields Program was recently reauthorized when President Trump signed the \$1.3 trillion FY2018 omnibus spending package.

The EPA’s Brownfields Program, originally authorized in 2002 through the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act, provides technical assistance and grants for local communities, including counties, to undertake brownfields redevelopment projects at old manufacturing and industrial facilities, abandoned mills and mines and areas with leaking underground storage tanks.

The FY2018 omnibus appropriations package provided \$80 million for EPA’s brownfields project grant program, which is level funding with FY2017.

In addition to providing \$80 million for the program through FY2018, the omnibus included a provision, supported by NACo, to reauthorize EPA’s Brownfields Program at a level of \$200 million from FY2019 through FY2023. The program expired in 2006 and was funded by Congress annually since its expiration due to its bipartisan popularity.

The omnibus also included policy riders geared toward improving the EPA Brownfields program to help more sites undergo cleanup activities, such as:

- Expanding liability protections for voluntarily and involuntarily acquired brownfields sites for state and local governments;
- Creating multipurpose brownfields grants up to \$1 million allowing communities to undertake multiple site brownfield projects under the same grant; Increasing funding for brownfields remediation cleanup grants from \$200,000 to \$500,000 per grant and allowing

EPA to waive that limit up to \$650,000 based on need;

- Classifying abandoned petroleum sites as brownfields if there is no viable responsible party, and if the EPA and the state determine the entity assessing and remediating the site is not liable to clean up the site. Close to half of brownfields are contaminated by leaking underground storage tanks like those found at unused gasoline stations;
- Increasing grant eligibility for non-profits and for publicly-owned brownfields sites acquired prior to Jan. 11, 2002;
- Capping administrative costs at 5 percent, while stipulating that administrative costs do not include investigation and identification, design of response plan or monitoring activities; and

- Providing small community technical assistance grants of \$20,000 to states for communities with populations under 15,000 or in disadvantaged areas where the annual median household income is less than 80 percent of the state-wide annual median.

NACo has long supported reauthorization of EPA’s brownfields program and stands ready to work with Congress and the administration to ensure counties have the resources necessary to successfully redevelop brownfields sites across the country.

Congressional appropriators are already working on FY2019 spending levels, which must be set and passed before the current fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.

In February, Trump released his FY2019 budget request, which outlined the administration’s federal spending priorities for the next fiscal year. The president requested \$62 million for the EPA’s brownfields program for FY2019, an \$18 million cut from the \$80 million appropriated in FY2017, though Congress will ultimately determine the final spending level for the program in FY2019. **CN**



# House measures would use Medicaid to provide more treatment

From OPIOID page 1

known as CARA, which passed into law with NACo's support.

On April 11 and 12, the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee held a two-day hearing focused on the opioid epidemic. During the hearing, members on the committee also considered a total of 34 legislative proposals to combat the crisis via changes to Medicaid and Medicare. Many of these proposals focus on expanding patients' access to Medicaid and Medicare-eligible addiction and recovery services.

NACo has endorsed two bills set for consideration by the Energy and Commerce Committee. The first piece of legis-

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Opioid Crisis Response Act  
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lation, H.R. 4004, the *Medicaid Reentry Act*, would allow jail inmates to receive federal Medicaid benefits for the 30-day period prior to their release, rather than becoming unenrolled

while they are in jail. The second bill, H.R. 1925, the *At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act*, would allow faster access to addiction treatment services for juveniles released from county correctional facilities, thereby reducing the risk of overdose death. These measures would help counties provide effective treatment and care coordination services pre-and post-release, allowing for smoother transitions to community care.

The bundle of proposals also contains a measure that would ease the Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion barring treatment facilities with more than 16 beds from receiving Medicaid funds. NACo has long supported and prioritized federal legislative or regulatory

changes that would alleviate the IMD exclusion.

It remains unclear whether the House will combine the separate bills into a broader legislative package or consider proposals individually. Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) indicated the House would attempt to pass opioid-related legislation by late May.

Congress' consideration of opioid legislation this week

comes shortly after lawmakers authorized approximately \$6 billion in funds to address the opioid epidemic over two years as part of the budget agreement approved in February.

The FY 2018 omnibus bill, which passed in March 2018, specifically allocated opioid funding across multiple federal agencies and programs and contained a \$2 billion increase in federal funds to address the epidemic above FY2017 levels. **CN**

COUNTY HEALTH DAY

APRIL 18, 2018  
#CountyHealth

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WORD SEARCH

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Created By: Mary Ann Barton

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

- BADGER:** The Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve is a hiking destination managed by the county that attracts 200,000 visitors annually.

**BENTON:** The county gets its name from Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. senator from Missouri from 1821-51 who was a major proponent of Western expansion.

**CAROUSEL:** A 107-year old Gesa Carousel of Dreams is still going strong at a county amusement park.

**COLUMBIA:** The Columbia River surrounds the county.

**COURTHOUSE:** An addition was made in 1957 to the county courthouse, built in 1926 and located in Prosser.

**IRRIGATION:** Irrigation came to the county in the 1890s and helped the agriculture industry flourish.

**KENNEWICK:** The largest city in the county.

**M McNARY:** McNary Dam is a 1.4-mile long concrete dam running the span of the Columbia River.
- NATIVES:** The county's first inhabitants were the Yakamas, Umatillas, Klickitats and Wallulas.

**PROSSER:** The county seat.

**PUBLIC:** Public lands total about a third of the county; the largest is the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site, where plutonium was manufactured.

**RATTLESNAKE:** The highest point in the county is Rattlesnake Mountain, at 3,527 feet.

**SACAJAWEA:** The name of a state park in the county, named for the Shoshone woman who helped the Lewis and Clark expedition during a stop in the region.

**WASHINGTON:** The county is located in the south-central portion of Washington state.

**WINE:** The county is home to a booming wine industry; the state's largest winery is Columbia Crest, located at Paterson on the Columbia River.



# Feds release \$380 million for election cybersecurity

By **Mary Ann Barton**  
senior staff writer

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission is notifying states this month about their allocation of the \$380 million awarded by Congress to shore up election security. The funds were part of a spending bill recently signed by President Trump.

States are required to match 5 percent of the funds within two years of their receipt. The funds can be used in the following ways:

- Replace voting equipment that only records a voter's intent electronically with equipment that uses a voter-verified paper record
- Implement a post-election audit system that provides a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the final vote tally
- Upgrade election-related computer systems to address cyber vulnerabilities identified through Department of Homeland Security or similar scans or assessments of existing election systems
- Facilitate cybersecurity training for the state chief election official's office and local election officials
- Implement established cybersecurity best practices for election systems, and
- Fund other activities that will improve the security of elections for federal office.

Counties administer and fund elections at the local level, overseeing more than 109,000 polling places and coordinating more than 694,000 poll workers every two years.

It's still up in the air how the money will be spent in each state, but some county election officials contacted by *County News* offered their ideas. To begin: Will counties see some of that money?

"I think it's very possible counties will see some of that money, especially larger urban counties," said Neal Kelley, registrar of voters, Orange County, Calif. "It's earmarked for hardening networks, hardening systems and additional

protections, so it can't just be at the state level. They need to pass that through and down to the counties."

For his county, Kelley said he would spend any funds on monitoring web traffic, upgrading firewalls, and enhancing the chain of custody and transportation of the ballots.

## Where are the security risks?

"A huge chunk of the risk, in the elections infrastructure, is with the voter registration databases, that's where the Russians hacked," said Weber County, Utah Clerk-Auditor Ricky Hatch, whose state recently OK'd funding for new voting equipment purchases.

"When they talk about the Russians trying to get into 21 states, it's the voter registration databases they were trying to get into," he said. "Most states are the managers and owners of voter registration databases and counties are participants, but it's hosted and led by the state." Hatch noted that another aspect of elections that needs to be shored up is election night reporting.

## Aging voting machines

Some counties are using election equipment more than 10 years old, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. The center recently surveyed 229 officials in 33 states who reported they need to replace their voting machines by 2020. But most do not have enough funds to replace them. The problems that can take place when using older machines include Election Day malfunctions resulting in longer lines and the possibility for hacks even if they are not directly connected to the Internet.

For counties considering new voting machines, the clock is ticking. Given the timeframe before the November elections, trying to use the funding to add new voting machines before then just is not doable, Cook

County Director of Elections Noah Praetz said. "We're seven months out from an election... the idea that you could turn around a procurement in that amount of time is exceedingly difficult."

"This money only covers a small fraction of what's necessary to upgrade," he said. "Just given an installation cycle, there's almost no way anybody could turn this money around to get equipment."

Praetz said there are plenty of other ways the funding could be put to good use. "It seems to be me the best use of the money in the next seven months is to get some real expertise into the local election officials' offices," he said, noting that Cook County has partnered with the Chicago Board of Elections to



hire a chief elections security officer.

"I think there's a significant amount of low-hanging fruit when it comes to these cybersecurity recommendations,"

Praetz said. "The overwhelming majority are operating with just a handful of staff. A great many outsource most of the

**See ELECTIONS page 11**

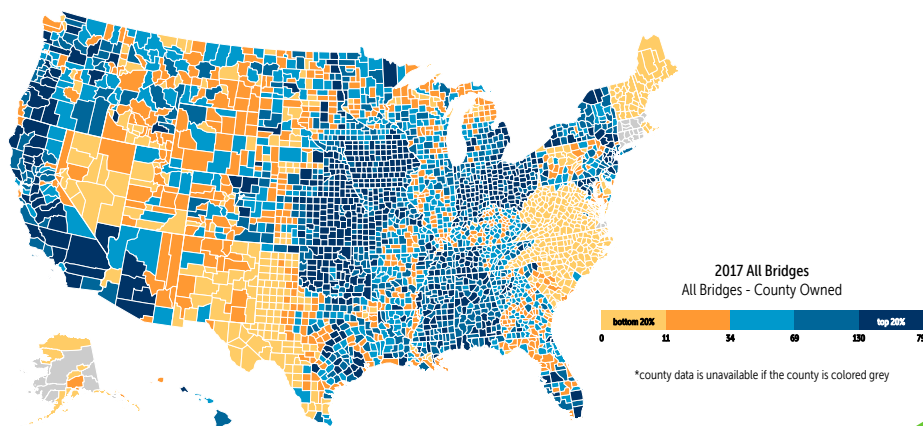
NEW IN APRIL FROM NACo's

# COUNTY EXPLORER

**50%** of all bridges across the nation are owned by local governments.

**77%** of public roads across the nation are owned and maintained by local governments.

**34%** of public airports are supported by counties.



Source: NACo Analysis of Federal Highway Administration - National Bridge Inventory, 2017

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# Environmental court dockets can be littered with alligators, hoarding, junked cars cases

By Mary Ann Barton  
senior staff writer

Rockdale County, Ga., expects to put a lid on trash violations by adding an environmental court to its justice system by June 1, according to County CEO Oz Nesbitt.

“We’ve had a major issue over the past several years in the area of code enforcement and littering, people just taking household waste and debris and just putting it all over the county instead of properly disposing of it,” Nesbitt said. “Our code enforcement team has just been inundated with so many calls and tracking people down, and by creating an environmental court it takes the stress, the strain and the pressure off our regular magistrate court that addresses county ordinances.”

The court will focus on violators who dump household waste and debris along the county rights-of-way or in vacant lots and fields, taking pressure off the code enforcement division so they can focus on bigger issues such as noise and ordinance violations. The new court will issue civil penalties ranging from a fine to jail time.

Although environmental courts are somewhat unusual, a few have been operating for quite some time.

Twenty-seven years ago, the Ohio General Assembly created an environmental court in Franklin County to deal with housing, and health and safety code-related issues such as nuisance properties and abandoned structures.

Why an environmental court? “It provides not only a fast-track to deal with these cases, but you also have a judge and staff who have expertise involving these issues, and it provides consistency as far as the process and outcomes,” said Judge Dan Hawkins, Franklin County Municipal Court, Environmental Division.

“It’s a problem-solving



An increase in litter along county rights-of-way prompted Rockdale County, Ga. to launch an environmental court.

court,” Hawkins said. Its roster includes three environmental specialists with backgrounds in environmental science, county parks, and experience as code or law enforcement officers. “They’ll go out and do inspections making sure people are making progress on their houses, check on animal or pollution-related cases, landlords, usually in the afternoons,” he said. “They might testify in court in the mornings.”

The difference between a typical court and the environmental court is finding solutions, Hawkins said.

In the Franklin County environmental court, “the problem is ongoing. I could send someone to jail for having a bunch of junked cars, or I can do that plus try to figure out what to do with the junked cars. It’s more of a problem-solving, outside-the-box-thinking kind of court.

“If you have someone with junked cars on their property, cars on blocks in the front yard or what have you, any other judge will give them a \$100 fine,” he said.

“My court has the ability to not only fine them, but to put them in jail for 10 days. I have the staff who can go out there

in 10 days and if the cars are gone, great. If not, they lock

them up for 10 days. It’s amazing how effective that is to have

that follow-up.”

## Helping those who can’t help themselves

Some cases involve elderly veterans or widows who aren’t necessarily committing a code violation but just are not up to fixing a problem, Hawkins said. His court has relationships with Habitat for Humanity and veterans’ and church groups that come in and “help paint that lady’s house or fix that guy’s fence,” he said.

“You feel bad for the property owners as well as the neighbors whose property values are affected by violations,” he said. “I read somewhere that there is an average 25 percent decrease in property value for those homes that are within 500 feet of a vacant structure.”

The court does a lot of public outreach education to help people stay out of court too, he said, educating them at an annual open house or at an Earth Day event or at the “Party for the Planet” at the zoo.

The environmental court handles from 800 to 1,000 cases per month, hearing everything from animal cruelty cases to wildlife trafficking, littering, open dumping and pollution cases. **CN**

## A SIX-FOOT ALLIGATOR IN THE BASEMENT

One of the more unusual animal cases that Hawkins has worked on involved an alligator.

“I think it was my first week on the job,” he said. “You can have them, but you need a permit. To get a permit, there’s a whole lot of things you need. It’s not that easy to get.”

“This guy bought the alligator when it was a baby, 6 inches big. He kept it in his basement, and it got bigger and bigger until the point where ... He lives across the street from a school, and he’s got this six-foot long alligator in his basement.

A code officer found it on some kind of inspection. The guy wasn’t a criminal, he didn’t know what to do with it,” he said. “We had to figure out what to do with the alligator — going back to problem-solving. He was going to have it killed and stuffed. And I said ‘Well, hold on buddy.’”

Hawkins’ chief environmental specialist at the time did some research and found a sanctuary down in South Carolina that would come up and get it.

Cases of hoarding “are the hardest to deal with,” Hawkins said, “because they clearly have mental health issues. You can give permission to clear everything out, and they do that and it costs a lot of money and it makes the neighbors happy for about a week until it gets full again.”

In the past, the court was “constantly dealing with the property but not dealing with the person. I reached out to our mental health board, so now in addition to dealing with the property we send them to court-ordered counseling,” he said.

“We just want to make it where it’s safe, get the outside cleaned up, make sure it’s up to code, there’s adequate egress,” he said. “We just want to make it safe for them while they continue their treatment.”

“It can be frustrating,” he said. “I’d hear some hoarders say ‘I’d rather go to jail than have you touch my stuff.’”

Learn more about the court on its website: <https://bit.ly/2DVGX1Z>



# Cybersecurity experts available for consultation

From ELECTIONS page 9

election preparation process.” Funding isn’t the only help on the table.

The Department of Homeland Security’s cybersecurity advisors (CSAs) are trained personnel assigned to 10 regions throughout the country to help private sector entities and state, local, territorial and tribal governments prepare for — and protect themselves against — cybersecurity threats.

CSAs engage stakeholders through partnership and direct assistance activities to promote cybersecurity preparedness, risk mitigation and incident re-

sponse.

CSAs also introduce organizations to various cybersecurity products and services through DHS at no cost, along with other public and private resources, and they act as liaisons to other DHS cyber programs and leadership.

CSAs also offer education and awareness briefings and perform cyber assessments including the Cyber Resilience Review, the External Dependencies Management Assessment and the Cyber Infrastructure Survey. **CN**

For more information or to reach your local CSA, contact: [cyberadvisor@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:cyberadvisor@hq.dhs.gov).



**BENTON COUNTY, Wash.**  
Introduced in: 2018

**B**enton County was formed in 1905 and was named for Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. senator from Missouri.

The county recently unveiled a rebranding campaign in which they redesigned the county seal. The new Benton County seal was developed with input and guidance from county employees through various surveys and focus groups.

The end result emphasizes the traits and characteristics that the county is most known



for: the confluence of three major rivers and the beautiful natural landscapes and sunshine of the region.

Would you like to see your county’s seal featured? Contact Charlie Ban at [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org).

## PROFILES IN SERVICE

### WILLIAM E. CHERRY

Board Member

Treasurer  
Schoharie County, N.Y.



Cherry

**Number of years involved in NACo:** 22

**Years in Public Service:** 35 years- at the county, town and village levels

**Occupation:** Chief financial officer of Schoharie County

**Education:** B.S in public administration (finance and economics)

**The hardest thing I’ve ever done is:** Be a parent. You want to do everything perfectly, but it is a ‘learn-as-you-go’ experience. In the end though...the hardest challenge in life also brings the most joy in life!

**Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:** My mother,

who passed away in 2005: She was my best friend as well as my mentor; President Franklin Roosevelt: for being one of the leaders of the ‘Greatest Generation’ that saved the world; 60 Minutes correspondent Mike Wallace: I always admired his honest journalism.

**I dream I have is to:** Travel across the U.S. in a motorhome with my wife to visit national monuments like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Park.

**You’d be surprised to learn that I:** Spent 12 years operating a printing press. When I wake up dreaming about a crisis at my job, it’s not about being a county treasurer: It’s usually a panic about running out of ink.

**The most adventurous thing I’ve ever done is:** Become a certified Search and Rescue scuba diver

**My favorite way to relax is to:** Sit on a beach with a good book and look at the ocean.

**I’m most proud of:** My family: I have five terrific grown kids and seven wonderful grandchildren. I’m proud of each and every one of them.

**Every morning I read:** My daily local newspaper and then analyze stock market futures online.

**My pet peeves are:** Aggressive drivers and tailgaters.

**My motto is:** “Adversity builds character.”

**My favorite meal is:**  
Plain old New York-style pizza.



Photo by Hugh Clarke

### Welcome, Catoosa County, Ga.

Catoosa County, “The Gateway to Georgia,” was founded in 1853 and named after the Cherokee word for “obscure.” **The 1863 Battle of Chickamauga**, the second largest engagement of the U.S. Civil War, was fought at the Chickamauga Battlefield

in Catoosa County. The battlefield is the oldest and largest military park in the United States. Visitors to the county can also tour

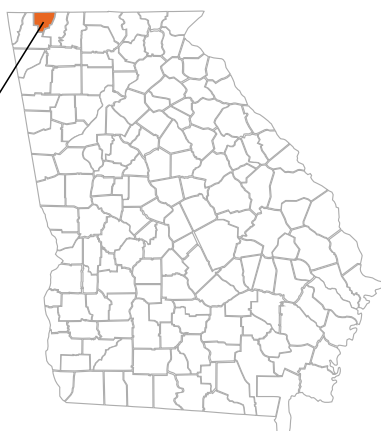
**Barnhardt Circle in Fort Oglethorpe**, said to be the “largest and finest” Cavalry Post in the United States when completed in 1904.



New NACo★ Member

GET TO KNOW...

Catoosa County, Ga.





## the HR DOCTOR

with Philpot & Winkler

It is a calming thought when you wonder if you are in over your head. Such a thought calms the mind and heightens self-confidence. It is also found on bumper stickers and coffee mugs. It is intended to refocus the mind, thus avoiding feeling overwhelmed, upset, exhausted, stressed and self-doubting. It is the newest version of self-care — a thought to help you know that you can accomplish it all.

Previously, self-care's motto was to take care of yourself before you take care of others, or the airplane example. Every time you board an airplane, the pre-flight safety presentation includes instructions to put the oxygen mask on yourself before assisting any other passenger. You must take care of yourself before you can help someone else.

Oxford dictionaries.com defines self-care as "the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health; the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress." How often do we stop to employ tools or other techniques to lessen stress and focus on our own well-being?

Close your eyes and imagine you are 9 years old. It is a pleasant summer day. The sun is shining and you have two hours to play before dinner. No responsibilities or chores at the moment, and you don't even know what a to-do list is.

There is no car payment, no bills, no carpool, no errands to think about. What do you do? Do you color? Swim? Ride your bike? Read a book? Jump rope? Skate? Play football? Are you alone or with others? Inside or outside? Whatever you pick makes you glow with happiness. You are elated. Remem-

# Self-care and Mindfulness: You Are Enough

ber the feeling. Now imagine that same level of happiness today. What are you doing to give yourself that same feeling of pure joy?

Just going through this visualization exercise can lower your stress, and some also believe that the activities that you chose when you were young will still bring you contentment today, hence the rise in adult coloring.

In a 2014 article in the *New York Post*, "Society's self-destructive addiction to faster living," author Dr. Stephanie Brown describes our society as a "chaotic, frenzied spiral of a new addiction" where Americans boast about juggling "10 plates while you brag about your 90-hour week." Phones, instant information, constant motion and endless commitments create a hectic pace.

According to a 2015 *CNN Money* article, in America, "nearly four in 10 workers report logging 50+ hours on the job." Then add kids, errands, exercise and there is barely enough time to sleep. Does this describe you? Do you enjoy the pace or are you caught up in it? If someone were to look at your calendar, would the manner in which you spend your time reflect your values and give the most accurate reflection of your priorities?



### Clear your head

Where did the down time go? It used to be that when you stood in line at a store, sat at a traffic light, waited for a meeting to begin, you had five minutes of down time to clear your head or let your mind wander. Maybe that time was spent people watching, organizing your thoughts, looking out a window or talking to a passerby. But now, that time is spent texting, checking email or returning a phone call. The term "taking a break" used to mean taking a brief moment away from whatever work you were doing to relax or close your eyes or just stop "doing."

Now, taking a break means just doing something other than what you are present-

ly doing. You take a break from watching this presentation to answer an email.

You take a break from revising that policy to fill out those forms to send to Human Resources. The relax is gone. Forget finding shapes in clouds. Instead, we don't relax unless that is on the schedule in our Outlook calendar.

Public service is a calling, a calling where many employees assist their fellow citizens through the sometimes overwhelming paperwork and procedure of government regulation. Other employees assist the most vulnerable populations in the community, working to provide essential services so that these citizens can meet their basic needs.

These customers are our neighbors, struggling and seeking help. Taking care of them, assisting them, is rewarding; yet it also can be emotionally draining.

Employee Assistance Programs provide counseling, but employers and supervisors can offer more to employees in the areas of stress relief and balance, more than just alternative schedules and telecommuting. They can encourage mindfulness.

*Psychology Today* describes mindfulness as "a state of active, open attention on the

present. When you're mindful, you carefully observe your thoughts and feelings without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to your current experience, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future."

More and more employers are spending time in meetings, trainings and newsletters discussing mindfulness. Employers are dedicating space for quiet rooms or meditation.

Some employers are offering classes on sleep, nutrition, meditation, exercise and time management to begin conversations about mindfulness and stress reduction. As good stewards of mindfulness, employees should also consider asking for help, volunteering, laughter and hobbies as ways to lessen stress and improve mindfulness.

### How can supervisors encourage mindfulness and self-care?

First, role model mindfulness and include the topic as part of the conversation within the culture. At staff meetings, each person can mention something for which they are grateful. Quotes, articles and



# Managers should model positive self-care behavior

From MINDFUL page 12

books can be shared on mindfulness topics. Leadership may want to give journals to staff to encourage reflection. Take time at staff meetings for employees to thank one another for providing assistance.

Second, encourage employees to schedule time to recharge by using their sick time. Employees who come in to work when they are ill only spread illness to others. Recently, a department director had over 50 percent of her staff out ill. The staff was working on a stressful project and came into work sick, spreading the germs to other staff.

Third, encourage employees to leave their desks at lunch. Office desks, phones, keyboards and the mouse are some of the areas that attract the highest concentrations of germs in the workplace. Don't eat there too. Taking a break at

lunch can also make employees more refreshed to take on tough tasks.

Fourth, recharge by scheduling and using vacation time. According to a 2010 study published in the *Journal of Applied Research in Quality of Life*, and reported by the *Huffington Post*, planning a vacation can make you happier than taking the trip itself.

Fifth, don't require employees to work while they are on vacation. Fair Labor Standards Act aside, they need the time to recharge. A department director said her previous boss required her to check her email each day and to watch the streaming of the board meetings, even when she was on vacation.

Sixth, as we all know, sitting is the new smoking. Make time to walk to the printer, stand when you talk on the phone and stretch at meetings. In your organization, is it acceptable to



Recharge by scheduling and using vacation time.

stand during a meeting or is it considered disrespectful?

Seventh, allow flexibility for employees to use leave time so they may volunteer in the community. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, "volunteerism improves health by strengthening the body, improving mood and lessening

stress in participants." Employees who are called to public service are also often called to volunteer in their community, so flexibility can be a recruitment and retention strategy.

## The payoff

Coconino County Chief Adult Probation Officer Sarah Douthit has been bringing the mindfulness and self-care conversations to her staff to improve employee well-being for over a year.

Douthit says, "I believe that we must model the way when it comes to self-care. If our staff members see that we are emailing on our off-hours or coming to work sick, we are tacitly relaying our expectations for their conduct. If we appear stressed out and overworked, that negativity seeps through the organization.

"Mindfulness starts with our personal reflections and our own self-care. We can't expect

to care for other people if we don't start with ourselves."

Her efforts and those of her leadership team have paid off; in FY2018, her probation officer positions had zero turnover when looking at employees who left employment for a reason other than advancement or retirement. And lowering employee turnover is something that makes everyone calmer.

Healthy, happy, less-stressed employees communicate more effectively and have better customer service. They are more motivated to dive into tough problem solving and are invigorated to do the work. They are more engaged. They are more likely to stay with an organization. A culture of mindfulness and self-care can make departments and organizations thrive.

The Dalai Lama said: "When our mind is calm, we're better able to find peace of mind and live a joyful life." **CN**

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# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

## CALIFORNIA

• A federal judge **approved new boundaries** for the **KERN COUNTY** Board of Supervisors, creating two Latino-majority districts, after the court concluded that “Latino voters were deprived of an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.” County leaders and the plaintiff, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, recently agreed on a new district map. The group had argued that a redistricting plan adopted seven years ago by supervisors violated the federal Voting Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or language.



• **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** will soon embark on its second annual **online auction** of properties after their owners failed to pay property taxes. Bidders must first register online for the sale, hosted by the county treasurer-tax collector’s office. Last year’s first online sale broke records, topping out at \$7.8 million for 648 properties.

## FLORIDA

• **LEON COUNTY** commissioners are moving forward with an ordinance to close the **gun show loophole** for background checks and impose a five-day waiting period

for private gun sales. Gun control advocates have packed commission meeting rooms to support the change.

Commissioner Mary Ann Lindley introduced the ordinance in 2013 but withdrew it after opposition from the NRA and others, the *Tallahassee Democrat* reported.

She introduced it again after the Feb. 14 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. “I wish that the counties had more authority,” she said. “I would like to be able to see Leon County ban assault weapons.”

• **MANATEE COUNTY** is changing a policy after a woman was forced to sit with her **husband’s dead body** for 90 minutes in a public park while waiting for a funeral home to pick him up. The man had been walking his dogs when he dropped dead of a heart attack. Deputies and emergency management responders quickly arrived but when life-saving attempts did not work, they left the scene. Family members wondered why the ambulance did not transport the body to a funeral home or morgue. The county is now changing policy — paramedics will now put a body in the back of an ambulance until the funeral home arrives when someone dies in a public place.

## GEORGIA

Counties in the Peach State are celebrating passage of HB 751, a 911 bill that will help counties implement **next generation 911 service**. The legislation creates the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority and streamlines the process of distributing fees for 911 centers.

## INDIANA

Three family members were booked into the **BROWN COUNTY** Jail recently after 142 birds — roosters and hens — were removed from a home after a months-long investigation into an alleged **cock-fighting** ring, RTV-6 reported. The birds were seized by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.



Most of the fights were taking place in a large barn the family owns nearby in Kentucky. Undercover agents from the Indiana Gaming Commission were able to get inside.

## IOWA

• The **POLK COUNTY** Board of Supervisors recently approved a reorganization of Sheriff Department staff, creating a two-person team to be in charge of a new **online database of weapons permit numbers**.

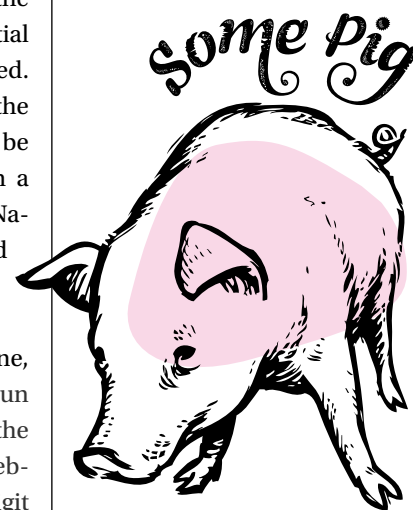
• Dealers can check if the permit numbers of potential buyers have been revoked. County supervisors say the new online database will be more easily accessible than a lengthy phone call to the National Instant Background Check system.

With the new program, expected to go online in June, any individual selling a gun would be able to go to the Sheriff’s Department’s website, punch in an eight-digit

gun permit number and find out if it’s valid. Polk County has 40,000 active five-year gun permits.

## MICHIGAN

It sounds almost like a real-life version of *Charlotte’s Web*, a story that features a pig named Wilbur who is saved from slaughter. In this case, a **MIDLAND COUNTY** resident called 911 recently to report a **300-pound runaway pig**, according to MLive.com. Jacob Fink, a county sheriff’s depu-



## IOWA

• A proposed **wind farm** in **BLACK HAWK COUNTY** with flashing red lights that will only turn on when aircraft is detected, is supported by local environmental activists, but is also drawing opposition from neighbors due to its proposed site. The turbines will be 312 feet tall at the hub and 492 feet tall at the highest point of a blade. A group of land owners is registering their concerns about the impact the 35 turbines will have on property values. Others are also concerned about their quality of life due to the noise or shadow flickers from spinning blades.





ty and animal control officer, reported the pig fell out of a trailer while being transported to slaughter. But after someone found the pig and tied it up, it had chewed through its restraints and was once again on the lam. No report yet on whether the swine was recaptured or is still roaming free.

## OHIO

• The Geauga Trumbull Solid Waste Management District Board will either lease or build a household hazardous waste, appliance and electronic **recycling collection facility** in **GEAUGA COUNTY**.

The district has been able to divert over 395,178 pounds of material from landfills a year, *The News-Herald* reported.

• With more than 100 drug-related cases awaiting testing by the state, **LICKING COUNTY** is looking into establishing its own **forensics lab**. Its goal would be to return test results in days, rather than weeks or months.

"They have cases; they have evidence they're ready to bring in for indictment, but they can't get the testing results back in a timely basis to make arrests," Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb told the *Columbus Dispatch*.

Commissioners are creating a fund within the county budget to account for contributions and expenses for the lab and plan to seek private donations to cover initial startup costs, including the purchase of lab equipment and the hiring of a certified chemist.

## OREGON

• **CLATSOP COUNTY** has partnered with the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, Bonneville Power Administration and three private property owners to bring more than 60 acres of the swamp back for salmon and **wildlife habi-**

**tat**, a reversal of the nearly 80 percent of the habitat lost to development over 90 years. Contractors will remove about 2,000 feet worth of levees and restore meandering tidal inlets this summer.

• **JOSEPHINE COUNTY** officials are suing the state of Oregon in federal court, saying **federal restrictions on marijuana** trump its legality in the state. The county had tried to ban commercial pot farming on parcels of 5 acres or less, but the state Land Use Board of Appeals ruled last month on the side of the growers, and put the restrictions on hold, KDRV News reported.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Parking** in Harrisburg will soon be free after 5 p.m. thanks to a resolution by the **DAUPHIN COUNTY** Board of Commissioners. The city and county are both contributing \$110,000 and the Harrisburg Downtown Improvement District will pay \$50,000 to the parking authority for the first year of a trial program.

The hope is that more visitors will park, and shop, downtown with free parking to attract them on weekday evenings, PennLive reported. The county is using funds from a portion of the hotel tax to pay the cost and the city is using money owed to it by the parking system.

## TEXAS

Several months after Hurricane Harvey, **HARRIS COUNTY** is looking into building **underground tunnels** to spare homes and businesses from flooding, at the cost of billions of dollars.

Commissioners are negotiating a contract with Fugro USA Land, Inc. to study the idea over several months. The tunnels would transport water underground from flood-

prone watersheds diverting it away to areas where it can safely drain, the *Houston Chronicle* reported. Harris County Judge Ed Emmett said after the unanimous vote that the Harris County Flood Control District "decided that they would be remiss if they didn't at least look at the idea."

Emmett says other cities like Austin, Dallas and San Antonio have built similar tunnels, over shorter distances.

Russ Poppe, executive director of the Harris County Flood Control District, said the tunnels could span 30 to 40 feet wide and travel 100 to 200 feet underground.

## VIRGINIA

• In a different variation on local-state tension, West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice (R) owes **ALBEMARLE COUNTY** \$148,000 in property taxes dating back several years.

The county assessor said Justice has until Dec. 31 to pay the taxes, or the county will foreclose and auction off his 16 parcels of land in early 2019, CBS 19 News reported.

• Police in **FAIRFAX COUNTY** now have guidelines for how they conduct high-speed chases. Chief Edwin Roessler told WTOP that officers and supervisors have three criteria for pursuing any suspect in a fleeing vehicle:

The officer has reasonable, articulable suspicion that a driver and/or passengers have committed, have attempted to commit, are committing, or have threatened to use violence to commit a violent felony against a person; other criminal offense; or a traffic infraction.

The driver refuses to stop when given the signal to do so.

The need for immediate apprehension outweighs the danger created by the pursuit to the public, officers and of-

fender, including passengers.

## WASHINGTON

Counties with populations over 400,000 will need to change to a **district-based county commission structure** beginning in 2022, after Gov. Jay Inslee (D) signed the Responsible Representation Act. The bill only applies to non-charter counties, and as a result, will only apply to **SPOKANE COUNTY**. The County Board will grow to five seats, from the present three, Spokane Public Radio reported.

## WISCONSIN

After state legislators failed to close the **dark stores loophole** for big box stores, **OUTAHAMIA COUNTY** is trying by itself, by putting an advisory referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot asking the Legislature to do it.

The dark store tax loopholes allow big-box retailers to obtain lower commercial property assessments, saving them millions of dollars in property taxes, a tax burden that is shifted to homeowners and small businesses.

An analysis by *USA Today Network - Wisconsin* found that of 67 open dark store cases filed against municipalities, if settled, would mean \$774 million in taxable property value lost.

"We want to use the Fox Cities as a springboard for this," Board Chairman Jeff Nooyen said. "I'm going to be contacting the board chairs...anywhere there's a large concentration of urban population and big-box operations." **CN**

*News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.*

## ON THE MOVE

### NACo STAFF



**Baig**

**Sanah Baig**, program director, travelled to Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), Pa. April 9-10, for the Pennsylvania Automated Vehicles Summit where she spoke on a panel titled "Planning for Automated Vehicle Infrastructure."



**Ufner**

**Julie Ufner**, associate legislative director, participated in a panel discussion, "Opportunities to Address Long Term Challenges to Defining Clean Water Act Jurisdiction," held during the 2018 Association of State Wetlands Managers Annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting April 11-12 in Silver Spring, Md.



**Langston**

**Linda Langston**, director of strategic relations, spoke at the U.S. War College in Cumberland County (Carlisle), Pa. April 6 about disaster response and recovery at the county level.





# Counties meet to discuss the arts as economic drivers

By Jenna Moran  
project manager

A group of county and local arts leaders from communities of 250,000 or fewer met in Polk County (Des Moines), Iowa in late March for the Creative Counties Training Workshop. They came together to share ideas and learn about strategies to integrate the arts into solutions to local community and economic development challenges — a practice known as creative placemaking.

To be invited to attend the workshop, part of NACo's Creative Counties Placemaking Initiative, counties were asked to form multidisciplinary teams and apply through a competitive process. Haines Borough, Alaska; Pottawattamie County, Iowa; Lafayette Parish, La.; Sullivan County, N.H.; McKinley County, N.M.; Athens County, Ohio; and Iron County, Utah were selected.

Overall, the workshop focused on building collaboration between each local team, as well as the group as a whole, and explored the topics of leadership, data and tools, neighborhood revitalization, funding, mapping assets and social networks, and community engagement and development via facilitated discussion. Attendees were able to directly experience creative placemaking efforts across Polk County through mobile tours of the city of Clive, Iowa's Public Art Program, Mainframe Studios and the Des Moines Social Club.

In between sessions, teams met to refine their ideas and map out their short-term goals and paths for achieving those goals.

As they strategized action steps, several themes quickly emerged, including: building consensus around community or regional identity; mapping

## SPEEDREAD

In conjunction with the event, NACo updated its Creative Placemaking Toolkit for Counties ([www.naco.org/creativecounties](http://www.naco.org/creativecounties)), with team presentations, workshop sessions recordings and a section on additional resources

assets and social networks; stakeholder engagement; rebranding; and encouraging local creative entrepreneurship.

McKinley County's plan is to build an open air cultural center in their courthouse square. To achieve that goal, they plan to develop a culturally relevant business model that leverages and expands successful cultural programming.

This will include:

- Identifying key partners and inviting them to help define a value system and core

values that will then be used to help shape the business plan

- Evaluating the space to determine how to turn the courthouse square into a true cultural center
- Creating complimentary cultural and educational programming; and building capacity and interest through the schools and the nightly Indian dances that already take place in the courthouse square throughout the summer.

Once the model is in place, they will then work to improve their internal and external marketing of the programming at the square by rebranding and create local, regional, national and international marketing campaigns.

McKinley County, N.M. Commissioner Bill Lee said, "It is amazing what happens when you have great community leaders around a table to discuss an idea. What we found is that we actually flipped the

whole thing on its head, and it evolved into something much bigger and more sustainable than what we could have imagined coming into the process."

Skyra Rideaux, assistant to the mayor-president of Lafayette Consolidated Government, closed by saying, "We want to go back and find our 'lighthouses' — things that will attract people into areas of our community which do not normally see a lot of activity — and bring the people in our community who are already doing place-keeping and place-making to these 'lighthouses' to start making our community and culture a true attraction that is representative of every single person that lives in our community."

NACo launched its Creative Counties Placemaking Initiative last fall in partnership with Americans for the Arts and with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. **CN**

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