

SPOTLIGHT ON: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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CountyNews



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COVERAGE OF NACo'S 2021
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

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BIDEN: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN KEY TO PANDEMIC RECOVERY



President Joe Biden speaks to NACo members during NACo's 2021 Virtual Legislative Conference.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

With the passing of the American Rescue Plan, President Joe Biden's message to county officials was clear: Help is here.

The \$350 billion allocation to state and local governments

is the most significant investment in county and local governments in the history of the country, Biden told NACo members March 24 during the 2021 Virtual NACo Legislative Conference.

"It comes with flexibility to address your specific needs," he explained.

County officials have a partner in his administration when it comes to fighting the pandemic, improving the economy, reopening schools, rooting out systemic racism, tackling the climate crisis, budgeting and continuing essential ser-

See **BIDEN** page 4

What's in the American Jobs Plan?

by Jessica Jennings

President Biden has unveiled the American Jobs Plan, a \$2.3 trillion investment in America's infrastructure that funds sectors from transportation to drinking water to public schools.

Alongside the plan, Biden also released his Made in America Tax Plan, outlining the revenue sources intended to fully offset the investment levels made in the plan over 15 years.

The proposal is part of a two-pronged approach being taken by the White House, with the announcement of a second "social infrastructure" package expected to follow later this month.

While the U.S. Congress still needs to draft legislative text corresponding to the proposal, many of the recommendations in the plan have the potential to impact county-owned or sup-

ported infrastructure, including all modes of transportation, water systems, broadband, public schools, community development and affordable housing.

Following bold yet unsuccessful infrastructure proposals by his two most immediate predecessors, Biden has continued the recent White House tradition of promising to make major investments in America's infrastructure during his time in office.

The president plans to pay for it through corporate tax hikes

See **JOBS PLAN** page 4

COOK COUNTY TREASURER HELPS REFUND MILLIONS

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

When the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum last year, Cook County, Ill. Treasurer Maria Pappas used her role in county government to put her own spin on it.

"I am the treasurer," she said. "I am responsible for the sale of homes and I am going to do my thing, which is Black Houses Matter."

Pappas launched her own show on a local radio station where she speaks with homeowners who have overpaid on property taxes.

"We tell them whether or not they are one of the people in Cook County who has double paid by \$79 million or has missed a homeowner senior or senior freeze exemption to the tune of \$48 million," she said.

Since March 2020, Pappas has given back \$50 million to the African American community and \$24 million to the Hispanic community through her Black Houses Matter campaign and outreach efforts.

The overall goal of the initiative is to put money back into the hands of homeowners by helping them find refunds, apply for property tax exemptions and avoid the sales tax.

From there, "it just became a titanic wave," she said.

"In most instances, these are people who are disenfranchised seniors.

Their tax bill was \$600 and they thought that the six was a four so they wrote a check for

See **TREASURER** page 2

County treasurer teams up with TV station to refund millions in property taxes

From **TREASURER** page 1

\$400 so now they're on the tax sale list for owing me \$200 — the potential of losing a home for taxes," she said.

Pappas wanted to take her Black Houses Matter initiative one step further.

She contacted local TV station ABC 7 Chicago to hold a Black and Latino Houses Matter phone bank to reach a wider audience and help Cook County homeowners.

ABC 7 Vice President of Community Engagement Diana Palomar said the station was aware of Pappas' efforts in the community.

"It seemed like just a really great opportunity for us to get our hands around something that could be really impactful for our viewership which are predominantly black and brown folks," she said.

Staff from the treasurer's office manned a phone bank during a program about the effort, answering calls in Spanish, Polish, Chinese and En-



Cook County, Ill. Treasurer Maria Pappas hosted the Black and Latino Houses Matter phone bank with TV station ABC 7 Chicago on March 11-17 and returned over \$10.5 million to property owners in property tax exemptions. Photo courtesy of Cook County Treasurer's Office

glish. Originally scheduled for one day, Pappas and the local news station decided to extend

the event a week.

"It was a very easy decision that day because we saw the lift that we were having and the impact that we were having at the county level and people were indeed taking advantage of dollars that were available to them," ABC 7 CEO John Idler said. "It was clear that we're helping to put dollars back in the pockets of our viewers."

Pappas' office sent out applications for refunds and missing property exemptions totaling \$12.5 million to homeowners who called into the phone bank.

The phone bank received over 300,000 calls in just the first two days and with the influx of homeowners inquiring about exemptions, Pappas said they directed many to her website.

"We know that this is successful because my website is hitting 1.2 million hits a

month," she said.

The website, designed in-house by the treasurer's office, includes information in 108 languages and brochures in 24 languages ranging from Albanian to Hindi to Lithuanian.

"The popularity of this site in these foreign languages goes to show how complicated the exemption and the tax system is," she said.

Users can see if they are eligible for an exemption by typing in their address which then displays a photograph of their property.

"The fact that the website was up 325,000 hits because of this phone bank is extraordinary," Pappas said.


"It also tells you that in the time of a pandemic, people simply aren't going out. They're going to stay home and do everything online."

Pappas is keeping up the momentum and success of her initiative. Idler said there

are future plans for a continued partnership between the county and the news station. The initiative will soon hit the road with the addition of two "Pappas Mobiles" that will visit communities and allow staff to help those who would otherwise have their homes zoned or who haven't received exemptions.

"We are restoring money to people's pockets in an extraordinarily unfortunate pandemic," she said.

Pappas, who reported live from the phone bank wearing a sequined jacket she purchased at a kid's store, had a simple message for others working in county government.

"Lighten up, get off your hind end and go do something for somebody. You'll feel better," she said. 

For more information, visit <https://www.cookcountytreasurer.com>.

SNAP/STATS



HOW OFTEN BROOD X APPEARS..... Every 17 years

WHERE THEY WILL APPEAR 14 states

**SURFACE TEMPERATURE
NEEDED TO APPEAR 64 degrees**

WHERE BROOD X LIVES 8 inches below surface

HIGHEST DENSITY..... 1.5 million cicadas per acre

Source: USDA Forest Service

BRIGHT IDEAS | BALTIMORE COUNTY, Md.

Financial Tool Increases Public Engagement with Budget Simulation

PROBLEM:

Baltimore County faced an \$81 million deficit in Fiscal Year 2020.

SOLUTION:

Create a tool that educates residents about the county's fiscal challenges and allows for increased public engagement regarding financial priorities.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Baltimore County, Md. Executive John "Johnny O" Olszewski was surprised by the severe fiscal challenges his administration inherited shortly after he took office.

The county faced an \$81 million deficit in Fiscal Year 2020 and as the 2020 budget submission time approached, Olszewski wanted to engage directly with residents in order to balance the budget and invest in new projects.

"Transparency and accountability are vital to an effective government," Olszewski said.

To increase transparency and public engagement, Baltimore County launched the Balancing Act tool to allow county residents to learn more about the budget and the difficult decisions that must be made during a budgeting process.

The tool launched publicly March 2019 and received 5,000 page views. It was created in partnership with the nationally recognized Balancing Act platform, which creates easy-to-use online budget simulations, said Sean Naron, a Baltimore County spokesman.

With the tool, residents are able to examine the county's projected budget situation for an upcoming year. The process



Baltimore County, Md. Executive Johnny Olszewski held a series of town hall meetings prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to engage with residents about the county's budget. Photo courtesy of Baltimore County

involves a simulation where users may reallocate funds and increase possible revenue streams to balance spending.

"Transparency and accountability are vital to an effective government," Olszewski said. "Empowering people to better understand where taxpayer dollars come from and where they go allows us to build trust, foster collaboration and helps us meet our shared goal to strengthen every community."

The tool depicts different scenarios of various project costs and allows users to see possible program cuts that may be needed or which revenue increases might be needed in property or sales taxes to fund a project.

At the time, a variety of projects were included in the simulation such as building two new high schools, road resurfacing, new libraries and new public safety facilities.

"We introduced this opportunity to allow residents to better understand the challenges we faced, try their hand at balancing the budget themselves and share their priorities as

we collaboratively crafted a bipartisan budget that closed the inherited \$81 million shortfall," Olszewski said.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Olszewski hosted a series of town hall meetings to engage with residents and inform them of the county's financial challenges and the county budget.

During the town halls, Olszewski heard from constituents about what projects are important to them and how they would address the county's fiscal challenges. In addition to the meetings, the tool provided insight into county residents' priorities with a goal of increasing public engagement and education about the county's financial status.


"I ran for county executive committing to a more open, accessible and transparent government for the people of Baltimore County," he said.

By using the tool, county residents were able to submit fully balanced budgets to the county. Over 460 users completed fully balanced budgets.

Baltimore County also col-

lected data from those who didn't complete a fully balanced budget to see users' decisions on spending cuts and revenue increases.

The county reviewed the submissions and data to see how residents prioritized county services in the simulations and paired this feedback with community engagement efforts, such as the town halls, to hear directly from residents about budget priorities. These efforts helped inform the county's proposed budget.

"Through this transparent and collaborative process, County Executive Olszewski and the Baltimore County Council partnered to close an inherited \$81 million budget deficit and put the county on stable fiscal footing — which became especially critical amid the economic crisis created amid the COVID-19 pandemic," Naron said. 

Baltimore County's Balancing Act Tool is the recipient of a Best in Category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Financial Management category.



KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough seal was developed ahead of the borough's 50th anniversary, celebrated in 2013. An original "plain seal" was created in 1964, but the borough assembly supported the redesign of a new seal for the borough's 50th birthday or "semi-centennial." The assembly held a seal design contest and selected Alaska wildlife and landscape artist Terry Pyles' design as the winner.



The longhouse on the left side of the seal represents the borough's history and native culture.

Trees, the mountains and water represent the area's geography.

An eagle and salmon depict the borough's animal life and rich natural heritage.

A fishing boat symbolizes the borough's ties to the sea as well as its industry and dependence on nature.

The assembly requested a few modifications to the original design of the seal including the addition of the date the borough was established, fishing lines attached to the boat and a mining pick, shovel and float plane around the perimeter of the seal.

If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

‘I know we can do this together — Republican, Democrat, we can do this together’

From BIDEN page 1

vices, he said. “You’ve heard me say before as a former councilman that I know what a hard job you have,” he said. “Your work is often the basis on which people either have faith or don’t have faith in their government because you’re the direct con-

tact.” The American Rescue Plan puts the country on a path to reopen schools safely and quickly, support small businesses in counties and cut child poverty in half as well as provide the resources needed to beat the pandemic including for vaccines, vaccinators and vaccination sites to allow every

adult to be eligible for a vaccine by May. “So that on July 4, we can begin to declare our independence from this virus, a true Independence Day,” Biden said. Biden recently appointed economist Gene Sperling, who is experienced in implementing major government initiatives, to oversee the implemen-

tation of the American Rescue Plan. Biden said relief will arrive equitably and efficiently. He also referenced his Build Back Better Recovery Plan, which he said his administration will continue to work closely with counties on the long-term investments in infrastructure, broadband and in other areas.

“I know there’s a lot to do, I really do, but I know we can do this together — Republican, Democrat, we can do this together,” he said. “I want to thank you all for doing what your communities and your country needs so badly because you’re right there, you’re among the first government responders.” **EN**

How might the \$2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan affect counties?

From JOBS PLAN page 1

and new taxes on international commerce and a repeal of the previous administration’s 2017 tax cuts, and other sources. By the end of the month, the Biden-Harris Administration is expected to have released a fully funded infrastructure proposal that would send what is likely to be nearly \$4 trillion in federal funds to a wide range of areas, the majority of which Republicans argue is not actually infrastructure and should not be included in future legislation. The president’s plan includes funding for the following:

- Workforce development
- Manufacturing and small business
- Research and development and job training
- Home healthcare workers
- VA hospitals
- Public schools and community colleges
- Public housing
- Clean energy
- Broadband deployment
- Water systems
- Transportation and resiliency

The Made in America Tax Plan

The plan to fully fund the American Jobs Plan does so over 15 years via a series of proposed changes to the federal tax code that include the following:

- Increase the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent
- Establish a global minimum tax on U.S. multinational corporations
- Encourage a global corporate minimum income tax through financial disincentives for country’s who do not participate
- Require corporations locat-

ed in America who have merged with a foreign company to pay federal income taxes

- Remove tax incentives for offshoring jobs and provide credits for onshoring
- Enact a 15 percent minimum tax on profits from large corporations, likely defined as those with “book profits” of or in excess of \$100 million
- Eliminate tax preferences for fossil fuels and reinstate the requirement that polluting industries make payments to the Superfund Trust Fund to cover the cost of remediation
- Increase enforcement of the tax code and audits for corporations and high-earning individuals to ensure compliance

County impacts

Through the American Jobs Plan, Biden has issued recommendations to Congress, who are now tasked with developing legislation that may be eventually enacted into law. For America’s counties, parishes and boroughs, these recommendations include:

Workforce development | \$100 billion total

- \$48 billion for workforce development infrastructure and worker protections, expanding registered apprenticeships and supporting community college partnerships that facilitate job training programs
- \$12 billion for disadvantaged workers and job training for formerly incarcerated individuals and justice-involved youth, and establishing a new subsidized jobs program

Congress and the administration should support legislative and regulatory efforts that would provide additional resources to create, support the development of, and fund pilot/

demonstration programs for innovative delivery of federal social services and workforce training programs that are offered through local governments.

Manufacturing and small businesses | \$300 billion total

- \$20 billion for regional innovation hubs and a Community Revitalization Fund to build social infrastructure that supports innovation
- \$31 billion to create a national network of small business incubators and innovation hubs and to invest in programs that provide financial resources to small businesses

Counties encourage state and federal governments to provide incentives that support entrepreneurs and small business growth. Counties believe local governments should work to bolster the development of entrepreneurial and business talent within their communities and emphasize the expansion and retention of local businesses.

Home health workers | \$400 billion

- \$400 billion to expand access to quality, affordable home- or community-based care for aging relatives and people with disabilities and to expand access to long-term care services under Medicaid and increase wages and benefits for caregiving jobs

Since counties provide and otherwise support long-term care and other community-based services for the elderly and disabled, state and federal regulations and funding programs should provide counties the flexibility to support the full continuum of home, communi-

ty-based or institutional care for persons needing assistance with activities of daily living.

Public schools and community colleges | \$137 billion

- \$100 billion to build new and upgrade existing public schools, with \$50 billion distributed through direct grants and \$50 billion leveraged through bonds
- \$12 billion to address physical and technological infrastructure needs at community colleges and develop strategies to improve access in education “deserts”
- \$25 billion for a new Child Care Growth and Innovation Fund that would increase the availability of childcare services for infants and toddlers through facility improvements and new construction in high need areas
- Expanding tax credits for employers that would refund 50 percent of the first \$1 million of construction costs for on-site childcare facilities

Local education systems affect all segments of the community and are critical to the success of many programs operated by counties. Regardless of the specific funding arrangements between counties and school districts, they share a common tax base and are both faced with limited resources.

Further, according to the American Association of Community Colleges, there are 986 public community colleges nationwide and local funds provide 17 percent of their revenues.

Several local governments also fund four-year colleges.

Public housing | \$213 billion total

- \$40 billion to improve the infrastructure of America’s public housing system
- \$27 billion to establish a Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator to mobilize private investment into retrofits of residential, commercial and municipal buildings
- Establishing a new competitive grant program that awards flexible funding to jurisdictions that take steps to eliminate exclusionary zoning and land use policies that create barriers to affordable housing
- Producing and retrofitting over one million affordable, electrified housing units through targeted tax credits, formula funding, grants and project-based rental assistance

Counties support legislation that makes funding available to state and local governments to address affordable and workforce housing needs.

Clean energy | \$100 billion total

- \$5 billion to remediate and redevelop Brownfield and Superfund sites
- Establishing clean energy block grants for local governments to support clean energy, worker empowerment and environmental justice
- Transitioning to a 100 percent carbon-free power sector by 2035

Counties support the redevelopment of abandoned or under-utilized industrial and commercial sites, which are frequently contaminated due to past practices, through programs designed to allow these sites to once again be economically viable. Counties also support federal funding for environmental cleanup of these areas.

NACo 2021 | VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



NACo Second Vice President Denise Winfrey, a Will County, Ill. commissioner, speaks with Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg March 26 at NACo's Virtual Legislative Conference.

BUTTIGIEG: LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE, ACCESSIBILITY KEY TO PATH FORWARD FOR U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Despite facing a \$1 trillion deferred maintenance backlog, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said March 26 a national infrastructure plan now in the works must do more than just fix what's broken.

"We have to transform our infrastructure for the future, a future that's going to include technologies that would have sounded fanciful a few years ago but are now very much upon us," he said.

In a General Session discussion with NACo Second Vice President Denise Winfrey, Buttigieg detailed his priorities for the package, which many hope will accompany the surface transportation reauthorization due Sept. 30.

"The number one reason why a project doesn't get done is lack of funding and that's the

thing we have a huge opportunity to do something about at a moment when we have bipartisan interest, demonstrated need, public attention, congressional attention, and I can tell you, a very supportive president to do something big this time around," he said.

"I believe American competitiveness depends on us making a generational investment, a once-in-a-lifetime kind of investment in American infrastructure," he said.

"From things we see every day like roads and bridges to things you don't hear about as much like our national airspace," he said.

"And things that have become every much a part of our infrastructure like digital infrastructure and the need for broadband."

Those investments will emphasize safety, boost economic competitiveness of all communities, be responsible

to climate needs and provide benefits in an equitable way, he noted.

He said the \$30 billion in transit funding included in the American Rescue Plan, designed to stave off service and staffing cuts, could also help systems pivot toward being a means of choice for residents.

"What county officials are in a unique position to educate the public and Congress about is that transit is not only a concern for our biggest metropolitan counties and coastal cities," he said.

"As you know well, because you're responsible for guiding this, it is in our mid-sized, small and rural communities that transit is often a lifeline for marginalized and minoritized groups that have been too often left out of transportation decision-making in the past."

The Department of Transportation has a responsibility

to be user-friendly for local governments, he said.

Local grant programs could offer that opportunity.

"We're trying to make the process as straightforward as possible," he said.

"Even if you don't get a competitive grant, we want to work with you to talk about how your application can be stronger for the next time around," he noted.

"We want to be transparent and consistent about what it takes in order to succeed in these discretionary grant programs as well as how to work with us on those formula funds that go out on a mandatory basis," he said.

He said he recognized that states don't often share local government's perspectives on their own priorities.

"The most bipartisan perspective I know is that of being on the ground," he said.

"I do want to make sure that as a department, we don't always require you to go through multiple layers of government to get our attention," he noted. "Yes, there are some things that flow through the states, but we also want to make sure there's a direct relationship, because I think that's a very important part of federalism.

"You'll never catch me assuming that if we're interacting with states then the concerns of counties or communities are taken care of."

He has instructed DOT personnel to look for permit streamlining opportunities that might expedite various reviews and eliminate redundant processes.

"If you've even been considered for a full environmental impact statement or even if you're just pursuing an EA [environmental assessment] or a categorical exclusion, you know how much complexity is involved in those permitting processes," he said.

"They exist for a good reason and I'm not talking about wanting to cut corners on any of the environmental or community or worker protection or other concerns that are written into the law, but there have got to be more efficient and user-friendly ways to make sure that those goals are met.

"I know most counties aren't in a position to have a federal relations expert on staff to figure out how to navigate these processes," he said, "which is why I feel a responsibility to make them as straightforward as possible." **CN**

INFRASTRUCTURE BILL WILL GROW FROM BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR FAST ACT REAUTHORIZATION

by **Charlie Ban**
 senior writer

If bipartisanship is to be found in the 117th Congress, the route to reach it will follow roads and cross bridges. Where it goes from there remains to be seen.

Though a surface transportation reauthorization bill is the only must-do legislation by Sept. 30, members of both parties and both chambers of Congress expressed hopes during a March 25 briefing to NACo members that an infrastructure bill would continue to foster common ideological ground.

Leaders of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee pointed to the FAST Act reauthorization that passed unanimously in the last Congress as a starting point. They hope to have a bill out of their committee by May. House counterparts are aiming for early summer.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), chair of the committee, stressed that bipartisan viability was one of the best qualities the bill could offer.

"One that can get across the finish line onto the president's desk," he said.

His Republican counterpart agreed.

"Obviously, a five-year infrastructure bill, highway bill is not only an enhancement to safety and the ability to move commercial products and other things," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), the committee's ranking member. "It's also a big job creator, it always has been and so we're hoping that with the give and take of a bipartisan process like we've had in the past, we'll have good luck to be able to pass this through committee."

Whatever comity the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee enjoys, it would have to extend to the Banking, Finance and Commerce committees.

"Passing a comprehensive reauthorization package in the Senate isn't something the EPW Committee can do alone, we have three other committees... they've got to do their jobs as well," Carper said.

Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.),



Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) speaks to NACo members March 25 during NACo's 2021 Virtual Legislative Conference.

ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said Biden and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg seemed receptive to making a good faith effort to take Republican priorities into consideration if surface transportation becomes part of a larger infrastructure package.

"I ask that you all remind members of Congress and the administration that the road to success, when it comes to reauthorization of an infrastructure package for that matter, is through partnership, it's not through partisanship," he said.

Rep. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.), ranking member on the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, warned against using budget reconciliation to pass an entire infrastructure bill.

"If you're going to use budget reconciliation, use it for the climate package, don't disguise a climate bill into a title that's infrastructure," he said.

The link between transportation and infrastructure and climate change was reflected both in recognition that new construction would have to hold up under different environmental conditions and the infrastructure needed to serve transportation.

Carper noted that nearly 30 percent of greenhouse gases

were produced by vehicles, making it a big target for Biden's goal for addressing climate change. Capito noted that planning for electric vehicle-charging stations was going to be a fundamental part of long-term planning.

House Transportation Chairman Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) said adjusting to more extreme environmental conditions was crucial to making sure those infrastructure investments last.

"We're going to rebuild the bridges, the highways and our transit in a way that is going to be resilient, we're going to deal with the issues that are the result of climate change — whether you acknowledge it or not — the sea level is rising, we're having more severe weather events, we're going to rebuild it in a way that lasts longer," he said. "I want 100-year bridges, not 60-year bridges."

Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Chairman Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) pointed out that infrastructure concepts ranged beyond transportation, and when comprehensively planned for, could tackle both affordable housing and traffic congestion.

"We talk about infrastructure, we mean it in the broadest terms, we mean roads and bridges and transit, of course, but infrastructure also means housing, broad-

band and public education," he said. "It means research and development in the technologies that support the middle-class jobs of the future."

"We can also make sure communities are thinking about the links between transportation and housing," he noted. "So many people want to live near public transit, they just can't afford it. We can work to help fix that."

The members recognized the plight counties encounter as part of the federal-state-local system and offered support.

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, said "transportation alternative" programs could direct funds specifically to local governments.

"We know you're at the mercy of the states," he said. "Of course, the state has its priorities, but local governments have their priorities and we want to make sure that you have discretion on funding your priorities."

"I'm sensitive to the fact that sometimes the state's interests don't exactly align with county governments," DeFazio added.

Capito stressed local flexibility for what comes out of an infrastructure package.

"I think the worst thing that we could do is think that what's

good in West Virginia is good in California or good in Maine," she said. "Local leaders with state legislators and the governor certainly can make those decisions with their state departments of transportation."

Speakers also discussed paying for an infrastructure package that has been reported to total \$3 trillion.

The user-fee system that has funded infrastructure continues to fall behind pace as new cars need less and less gas, while at the same time the federal gas tax has remained the same since 1993.

Davis said funding sources should be diversified but shouldn't stray too far from transportation and infrastructure sources.

"I think opening up the income tax to pay for a climate bill or an infrastructure bill would be very short-sighted," he said, particularly following the pandemic and economic malaise.

Capito suggested a big bill, properly funded, was the best way to keep the country moving forward, rather than just fixing the transportation system, but the key to continued bipartisanship was to "avoid lightning-rod issues."

"A long-term reauthorization

**NACo 2021 | VIRTUAL
LEGISLATIVE
CONFERENCE**

Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy continues to pose challenges for inmate health care

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

The need to amend the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP) is even greater with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating existing barriers to treatment and healthcare services for justice-involved individuals, according to Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.).

County officials discussed the MIEP, which strips federal health benefits from individuals upon admission to jail, during the Advancing Health Care in Jails Through Access to Medicaid briefing March 25 during the 2021 NACo Legislative Conference. The policy creates challenges for local criminal justice systems and contributes to behavioral and mental health crises.

While passage of the American Rescue Plan expands access to healthcare, including Medicaid coverage, the MIEP will prevent inmates from being able to benefit from these new policies, Markey said.

"This discriminatory federal practice must end," he said.

Markey is working to reintroduce the Equity and Pretrial Medicaid Coverage Act which allows Medicaid benefits to be accessed by individuals who are in custody awaiting disposition of charges.

"Currently, individuals who have been arrested and are able to post bail maintain Medicaid coverage, while those who remain in custody can lose it despite not having been convicted

of the crime for which they have been charged," he said.

In 2019, Markey reintroduced the Supporting Positive Outcomes After Release Act. The legislation prohibits states from terminating an inmate's Medicaid coverage while they are incarcerated.

"We need to do better," he said. "We can do better. All of us know that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the dire need for further innovation in our approach to end this policy."

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.) has also championed legislation regarding the MIEP and introduced the Medicaid Re-Entry Act, which allows states to activate Medicaid coverage for individuals transitioning out of incarceration 30 days prior to release.

"The idea was to lower overdose deaths to better link incarcerated individuals with Medicaid coverage as a conduit for providing better mental health and addiction treatment," he told NACo members.

Tonko said 60 percent of individuals in incarceration centers have a diagnosable substance use problem and most are unable to access quality addiction treatment behind bars.

"We know that when these individuals are released untreated, they're 129 times more likely to die of an overdose in the first two weeks post-release compared to the general population," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Emily Wang, a professor of Medicine and Pub-

lic Health and co-director of the Center for Research Engagement at Yale School of Medicine discussed the National Academies of Science's report, which she worked on. Dubbed "Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19," it examines the community supports designed to ensure successful reentry for released individuals.

The report includes three recommendations related to health care and Medicaid:

- Medicaid should be expanded to ensure that incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals have access to health care services.
- Correctional officials, in collaboration with public officials and community organizations, should develop individualized

re-entry plans.

- Health systems in the community should be better prepared for justice-involved individuals' return.

"Any preparedness strategy for the next COVID-19 outbreak and the next public health emergency must ensure improved integration of the correctional facilities into our larger public health and healthcare system and Medicaid is a first and important step in doing so," Wang said.

Middlesex County, Mass. Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, who also serves as president of Major County Sheriffs of America, said the MIEP forms barriers to accessing health care for justice-involved individuals and places significant fiscal con-

straints on the budgets of sheriffs at the local level.

"I do not think there is a singular issue that has greater impact on sheriffs across the country and the individuals in our care, custody and control or our communities than the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy," he said.

St. Charles Parish, La. Sheriff Greg Champagne emphasized the need for future legislation to provide these benefits for pre-trial detainees.

"While the re-entry and the 30 days before release is a great step in the right direction," he said, "what we really need is for benefits not to be cut off and the inmates who can't make bail not to be discriminated against because of that fact." **CN**



St. Charles Parish, La. Sheriff Greg Champagne discusses the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy.

Partnerships key for COVID-19 housing help

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Counties are utilizing collaborations and partnerships when trying to solve housing insecurity challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local officials highlighted best practices and county solutions when it comes to housing during NACo's Housing and COVID-19: Mobilizing Resources to Support Resi-

dents session March 26.

There is an enormous amount of back rent owed across the country that is greater than the amount of rental assistance available, according to the Aspen Institute's Senior Program Manager Katherine Lucas McKay.

McKay highlighted her work with the COVID-19 Eviction Defense Project, which developed an eviction risk estimate based on census surveys and

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financial information from before the pandemic hit.

According to the research, about 20 million people currently live in households that are behind on rent.

"Even though the economy has begun to improve since the vaccine rollout really has kicked into speed in the last

two months, we still are in a very serious position in terms of the number of people at risk," McKay said.

She added that many people are concerned about how they will pay next month's rent, specifically families with children and communities of color.

"It's really getting to be a problem that reflects the exact same housing disparities we saw before the crisis that just

magnified to an intensity that we have not seen before," she said.

McKay said eviction moratoria are incredibly important in aiding individuals who are facing housing insecurity.

"By one estimate, the eviction moratorium that the CDC implemented last fall saved about 10,000 lives so making sure that people are able to

See HOUSING page 8

The road to rebuild

From FAST ACT page 6

gives flexibility and certainty to have a flow of funds that allows us to do bigger projects," she said. "I think that's going to be where you see, in the broader sense, where the bipartisanship may break down, because I think they're planning to raise all kinds of taxes to pay for this. That's a red flag for us, and for me."

Graves stressed that streamlining the permitting processes would help speed projects and limit budget overruns.

DeFazio said current bond interest rates were low enough to take a dent out of the costs, but years of neglect have added up for too long.

"We have lived too long off the legacy of Dwight David Eisenhower. What he did to knit the country together was incredible, post-World War II, made us the envy of the world. Now it's fallen apart," he said. "Forty percent of the nation's highway system needs to be rebuilt from the roadbed up. You can't just slap another layer of asphalt on it." **CN**

Counties turn to partnerships to create safety nets

From HOUSING page 7

stay in their homes is critical," she said.

"Plus, making sure that they are also able to resolve the rent challenges as they stay in their homes is also critical. One does not really work without the other."

Key actions need to be taken to address the growing payment issues and the challenges that arise when landlords refuse to participate in certain assistance programs, she said.

Future stabilization is key, she noted, adding that a number of programs have started to provide funding for a few months' rent moving forward.

"Rental assistance programs that only pay that back rent without ensuring that people have the capacity to pay rent going forward sometimes solve a problem without solving the full problem," she said.

The American Rescue Plan included an additional \$23 billion in rental assistance.

"This is an opportunity to kind of revamp programs a

little bit and do things like implement negotiations with landlords, allow for things like tenants to move and use some of their rental assistance to actually cover those costs of moving," she said.

Mono County, Calif. Supervisor Jennifer Kreitz said when the state shut down last March, the county was quick to enact an eviction moratorium for residential and commercial tenants.

"We knew right away that

our tenants in Mono County were going to have trouble paying rent because of the lack of business due to tourism being shut down basically throughout the state," she said.

The county turned to partnerships to form collaborations and create safety nets for tenants including working with a nonprofit partner.

In Mecklenburg County, N.C., officials also turned to local partnerships.

Robert Nesbit, policy and

operations manager for Health and Human Services, said the county provided nearly \$2.8 million in CARES Act funding for rent and utility assistance and committed more than \$7 million in FEMA funds to support homeless individuals including utilizing a hotel designated for homeless individuals over the age of 60 with underlying health conditions.

At the site, staff worked to connect individuals to permanent housing, employment, substance use and mental health services.

"It shows the web of services that are needed to really help support people at all sorts of different experiences with homelessness and housing instability," he said.

He highlighted the important role partnerships played.

"We've relied on close collaborations with an array of community partners," he said, "so it's critical that you identify trusted partners who can help you reach the most people as quickly and easily as possible." **CN**



Aspen Institute's Senior Program Manager Katherine Lucas McKay: Twenty million people living in households behind on rent.







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TOURISM BOOM STRESSES GATEWAY COUNTIES

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Perhaps new visitors to public lands didn't see the "take only memories, leave only footprints" signs last summer because so many other hikers were blocking them.

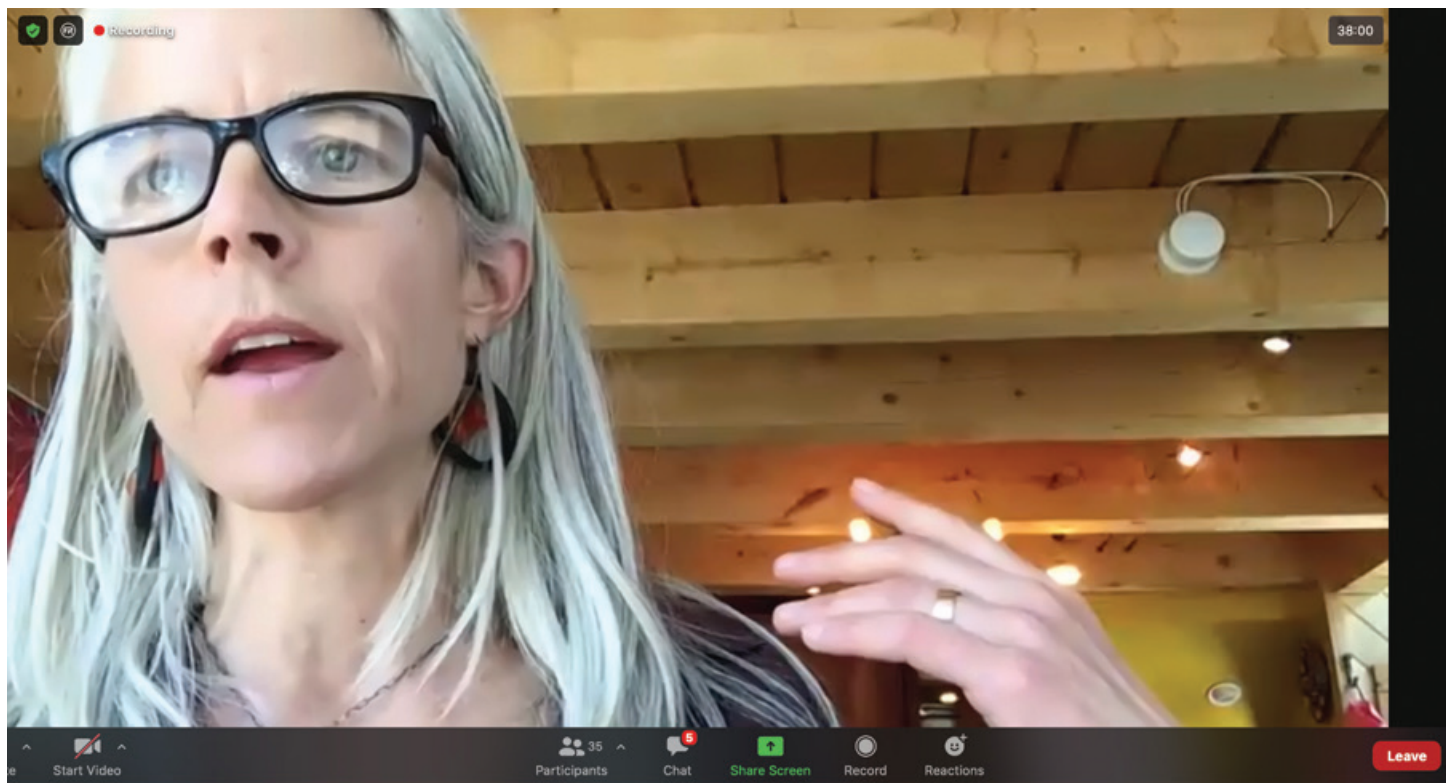
A record year for public lands visits during the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted members in NACo's Resorts, Tourism and Gateways Working Group to think about how the visitors who keep their economies running can also be a liability.

"We just saw people flood in," said Eagle County, Colo. Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry. "We just saw such tremendous overuse" as remote work options allowed people to migrate west, temporarily.

"We saw piles of human waste, some people living in dispersed camping [outside of a designated campground] that wasn't supposed to be dispersed camping, we saw them on private lands, a lot of concerns about wildlife impacts," she said.

Noting that she had heard public lands counties characterized as benefitting economically only in its extraction industries like mining or drilling, perhaps that perspective may also apply to tourism.

"This led us to start thinking about outdoor recreation and tourism as an extractive industry," she said. "For us, our industry is tourism and recreation, it's not typically an industry that's been associated with impact funds. I think we need to rethink how we're going to preserve our economy which is based on clean air, clean water, preservation of the environment, wildlife, scenic



San Miguel County, Colo. Commissioner Hilary Cooper says meetings with regional partners helped mitigate an influx of visitors.

vistas, all of those things that bring people here.

"This overuse will continue... with this 'Zoomtown' phenomenon. We need to figure out how to harness this industry that sustains us to protect our community and our workforce."

Not too far south of Eagle County, Gunnison County, Colo. has been relying on its Sustainable Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee to help mitigate some of the problems associated with outside visitors. The committee gathers a wide range of public and private, educational and commercial stakeholders from throughout the community to address recreational issues and coordinate volunteer efforts.

"When COVID hit, the work and cohesion of the group allowed us to have a pretty nimble response," said Commissioner Jonathan Houck. "It was put in place well before COVID, but it was really key to how we've been able to deal with the pandemic."

But some of the pandemic's challenges to Gunnison County fell outside of the STOR committee's bailiwick, because the number of outside visitors helped drive the county's COVID infection rate to third in the state. The county banned second homeowners and tourists from visiting.

"It was controversial, it was a hard thing to do, but we did it because it was the best way to protect the county," Houck said.

Gunnison County also brought federal land managers and tourism officials into the decision-making and public-messaging process.

Blaine County, Idaho, which also saw visitors as a liability, draws skiers during the winter to Sun Valley, but that also means early penetration by COVID carriers, and the county saw its first community spread on March 13.

The county and mayors created rules for visitors, including a mask mandate, dubbed "Mindful in the Mountains."

"I thought it was a good way for people to know what the rules were when they came here, so we wouldn't have any outside visitors unduly affecting our local population," said Commissioner Jacob Greenberg.

"We had a bunch of groups here for out of town and boy, this thing just blew up like wildfire. It wasn't like your neighbor got it and another neighbor got it, this was like no, it's all here, all at once."

Incomplete understanding of COVID-19's long incubation period made the first few weeks of the pandemic even more fraught, at a time in the winter when people were liable to gather indoors and be contagious before they had cause for concern.

"Maybe we could have put in some restrictions sooner, but I don't know how that could have prevented 100-some odd people coming in from out of state for an event like that and



Eagle County, Colo. Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry talks about the recreation industry's impact on her county.

telling them 'No you can't,' when we really didn't have any proof that anything was happening here to begin with," Greenberg said.

San Miguel County, Colo. gathered its communities and regional partners — counties and their health directors — together in what started out as a weekly "cocktail hour," but it actually turned into a very active, effective and coordinated group," said Commissioner Hilary Cooper.

"Four of our counties share high alpine pass roads and as we saw spring wind down and recognized that we were going to have to open those up... we anticipated we were going to have significant traffic and we were able to coordinate with our federal agencies, put signage together and coordinate communication. We were able to do that because we were already meeting once a week and we had that trust built and that communication built."

Mono County, Calif. also saw

tension among locals, visitors and second homeowners.

"I think we're still struggling with that," said Supervisor Stacy Corless. "Our forest supervisor wanted to close down the forest, and where some people live, they couldn't go more than a quarter mile from their front doors."

"From the start, every week it seemed like there was another recreation issue that was just punching us in the face."

Working though Gateway Counties of Yosemite National Park, the affected counties were able to navigate the tricky balance of state restrictions, pressure from the Department of Interior to open the park and lodging and hospitality businesses that needed travelers to stay afloat.

"Our park superintendent worked hard to stave off the opening until we could coordinate with the state of California and advocate for limited lodging opening," Corless said. "That was a big success."

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GET TO KNOW...

Wayne County, Ill.

Welcome, Wayne County, Ill.

Wayne County is located in the southeast portion of Illinois known as “Little Egypt,” a nickname that dates to 1799. The 715-square-mile county was created in 1819 and now has a population around 16,700. Its county seat is Fairfield.

The county is named after General “Mad Anthony” Wayne, who served as an officer in the Revolutionary War and the Northwest Indian War. His nickname refers to his fiery personality and military exploits during the American Revolution.

In 1886, a fire destroyed a two-story, brick “fire-proof” building constructed with the intention to keep county records safe. The fire, a suspected arson case, destroyed criminal, civil, tax and land records that documented the early years of the county.

The railroad served as a main

economic force for Wayne County after local leaders lobbied for the southern extension of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to pass through the county. The route was established 10 blocks west of the county seat.

The county is home to Frey Farms, the largest grower of pumpkins in the United States.

“Get to Know” features new NACo member counties.



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COUNTY ACADEMIES PULL BACK THE CURTAIN ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS



Participants from the 2018 Blue Earth County, Minn. Citizens Academy learn about how road signs are constructed. Photo courtesy of Blue Earth County, Minn.

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

Class is in session and it's time to turn your book to the page all about county governments.

Counties are launching academies to teach residents about how county government operates and the role local leaders play in communities.

Blue Earth County, Minn. launched its Citizens Academy in 2009 to provide a behind-the-scenes look at the functions of county government.

Communications Manager and Business Analyst Jessica Anderson said participants learn from department heads about how county employees perform their jobs and how each department serves the community through different sessions.

A majority of the classes focus on exterior-facing departments such as the library, jail, attorney's office, county administration, human services,

property and environmental resources department, public works and sheriff's office.

An academy favorite is when participants tour county buildings and facilities making stops at the county landfill, historic courthouse, justice center or library.

The Citizens Academy is held once per week for seven weeks with each three-hour meeting held in the evenings. The academy is limited to 20 participants per year to create more of an intimate setting.

"We hope that the participants who complete the program are ambassadors for the county," Anderson said.

The free program is open for those 18 and older who are Blue Earth County residents, although Anderson said there may be exceptions if someone is new to the area but may not live in the county. The program has seen a wide variety of participants from college students

SPOTLIGHT ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

to retired residents who want to become more involved in the community.

Blue Earth County recently launched a comparable academy program that is offered to county employees called the County Ambassador Program.

"It's a chance to almost cross-train some staff so when a human services front desk staffer gets a question about a building permit and they went through the program, they're like, 'I know how to direct that,'" she said.

The Citizens Academy is now held every other year with the County Ambassador Program held in the off year for staff members.

"From a leadership perspective, just being given the oppor-

tunity to educate the community is truly a great opportunity for staff and leaders as well," she said. "I think it benefits the community, but I think it also benefits the leaders of our organization."

Individuals who complete the program receive a certificate of completion, a lapel pin and the opportunity to attend a county board meeting to meet with commissioners.

"I think that maybe the general public doesn't have a good understanding of what county government does to serve the community and so we hope that by educating 20 participants a year, then they learned something and then they teach their friends and family and it kind of trickles out into the community from their participation," Anderson said.

The county did not hold its Citizen Academy in 2020 because of COVID-19 and is determining plans for this upcoming year.

Also in Minnesota, Hennepin County created a similar program called the Hennepin County Academy. It launched in 2011 to teach county residents how local government works through evening classes.

Over the course of eight sessions, participants learn about property assessing, community works, health and medical services, community corrections, human services, the court system, transportation, emergency management, elections and the county administration.

"What we want to do is make sure they come away with what the functions are of the county and we want them to meet with leadership with the county," Hennepin County Special Projects Coordinator Diana Houston said.

Houston said the program was initiated by a former commissioner who discovered that many people in the community were unaware of her role. "She

See **ACADEMY** page 16

Q&A: iCIVICS' LOUISE DUBÉ HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

When Boone County, Ky. Judge/Executive Gary Moore began his NACo presidency last summer, he announced that his presidential priority of the LEAD Initiative would focus on the core themes of leadership, education, action and development.

With counties playing a role in encouraging civic education and engagement in schools and communities, NACo has been partnering with iCivics, an organization founded by retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. iCivics provides civic education resources for educators and county officials.

"I believe county leaders can play a critical role in embracing civility and enriching the public's understanding of county government," Moore said.

Moore discussed the importance of civic engagement in communities with iCivics Executive Director Louise Dubé during NACo's 2021 Virtual Legislative Conference.

MOORE: Could you please explain iCivics and your mission?

DUBÉ: We at iCivics create nonpartisan, free materials to ensure that we can reach excellence in civic education. Our goal is really to build civic strength and just prepare students for their role in our civic life. We've done that over the course of the last decade by creating materials that are available digitally from our site [icivics.org](https://www.icivics.org). We are known for 20 games. We put students right in the middle of the action where they are experiencing what it's like to be a civic leader. Additionally, we have hundreds of lesson plans that are available to teachers.

MOORE: How can civic education lead to greater participation in our democratic



NACo President Gary Moore, judge/executive Boone County, Ky. in conversation with iCivics Executive Director Louise Dubé.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Institutions and engagement in public service?

DUBÉ: That is such an important question. The idea in our experiment in self-government in America, which is the oldest such experiment in the world, is really to solve problems. In order to solve problems from the smallest local problems to the larger national problems, you need to be able to work across differences. As many of my colleagues say, disagreement in a constitutional democracy is not a bug, it's a feature. You will have to resolve problems with people you disagree with. Those skills are the skills that civic education can impart.

MOORE: What do you think are the greatest challenges to embracing civic education and how can we overcome some of these conflicts?

DUBÉ: The real issue is the level of intense polarization in our country now means that we don't agree on what to teach. When we don't agree on what to teach, then we don't teach it. When we don't teach it, we don't practice it. It's kind of a vicious circle that we see in summation and that's re-

ally unfortunate. I really believe that there's an enormous amount of common ground between people if we can teach folks the skills and disposition to actually find that common ground because that is the basis of our system.

MOORE: Tell me more about iCivics' Educating for American Democracy Project. What is the purpose of the project and how do you envision working with counties to advance its goal?

DUBÉ: About 300 scholars and educators got together and said, all right, we have this problem that our country is polarized, our constitutional democ-

racy is really challenged right now and yet we can't agree on what to teach. What we need is to come up with this new guidance to try to find those points of 'What does it take to have students become proficient at knowledge and at skills and disposition for this new world?' From that, our goals are really to have 60 million students have the opportunity for high quality civic learning and then 100,000 schools be civic ready. That is all work that gets done at the local level, in some cases with the help of states, but really it has to be a priority for the local leaders. Educating for American Democracy is a roadmap for the future — how to teach

American history and civics integrated together for depth, for preparation, for local leaders to take up and implement in their school districts even directly with educators. This is a very simple document that asks a set of questions and those questions are hard. That is the kind of thinking we want students to do which is in-depth, look at the history, look at the perspectives that it's taking and then become ready to help us lead our counties in the future. **CN**

For more information, visit <https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org> and <https://www.naco.org/counties/icivics>.

EDUCATING FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WEBINAR

You're invited to a webinar on "Educating for American Democracy" on Wednesday, April 14, from 2-3 p.m. ET. Join NACo and Adam Seagrave of the Arizona State University Center for Political Thought and Leadership for a session on civic education and civil discourse in American Constitutional democracy today.

Learn more about ASU's Educating for American Democracy project and learn how county leaders can advance civic education and discourse at the local level.

For more information, contact Alana Hurley at: ahurley@naco.org or call 202.350.2296.

WHY THE ARTS MATTER TO COUNTIES

(NOW MORE THAN EVER!)

SPOTLIGHT ON

CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT**by Jay H. Dick**

Traditionally when Americans for the Arts writes articles for *County News*, we focus on the statistics: The number of arts jobs (5.2 million), economic impact (\$920 billion in 2019), gross domestic impact (4.3 percent of the economy, more than construction, transportation or agriculture), etc. While these numbers are probably even more important today given the effects of the pandemic on our economy, this article is going to focus on a more basic question: Why do the arts matter?

If you ask 100 people this question, you will most likely get 100 different answers, but each of these answers will be authentic and personal to that responder. This is what makes the arts so powerful and diverse. As we struggle each day with the pandemic and fight harder for racial equity, we are grateful that the arts are there to support us. As your county's first responders battled the ravages of the pandemic, the arts were there to bring them peace, to allow them to express their feelings, vent their frustrations and to help them to emotionally cope with

what they saw and had to do to save lives and to keep the rest of us safe. I would encourage you to check out *FirstResponderArts.org* to learn more.

Beyond first responders and essential workers, many of us were confined to our homes with limited personal interactions. During this time, we listened to music, we read, we danced, we watched movies and TV. We learned new hobbies such as cooking, playing an instrument, painting, writing or whatever called out to us. It was the arts that helped keep us emotionally healthy. (Search "balcony concerts" on YouTube to see some great examples of people using the arts as a coping mechanism during the height of the pandemic.)

Then the summer of protests arrived on top of the pandemic. We learned the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many more. Again, the arts played a role in how the country saw race and called for justice. Songs were written, poetry too. People of all ages made posters and signs and then marched. Murals were painted, large and small. The arts were there to tell the stories and record them for

history.

There are more than 5 million people employed in the creative economy in America. The arts, along with tourism and restaurants are some of the hardest hit industries as a result of the pandemic. Even after incredible federal, state and county assistance, 27 percent of musicians are still unemployed, along with 52 percent of actors and 55 percent of dancers.

Every county in America, large or small, urban or rural, has the arts as part of its collective experience. Artists live everywhere and their work seeks to engage their fellow humans to ask questions, to look at a topic in a new way, to foster dialogue or to bring people together. As county leaders, it is up to you to recognize the value that the arts bring to your county, to encourage it, to highlight it and to even help support it. The arts will always be there to be part of our nation's narrative, we just need to listen and to act.

As county leaders, take time to understand your county's arts assets. You will be surprised with how many artists and arts organizations exist. Two, dedicate funds to support the arts in your

county. Remember, the stronger your arts scene, the more tax revenue your county will reap. Three, consider using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for arts related projects. Fourth, designate some of your county's Recovery and Relief funds to support the arts, as the quicker they can recover, so does your county's economy. Lastly, don't forget that USDA Rural Development funds can be used to support the arts.

With the vaccinations underway, the creative economy is ready to help get our economy back on track by getting people safely out of their homes, spending money, interacting with others and helping us to return to a sense of normalcy.

The arts will continue to work overtime in every community, household and family, doing what they do best: Connecting us, giving us needed moments of joy, and most of all creating hope. **CN**

Jay H. Dick is the senior director of State and Local Government Affairs at Americans for the Arts and a member of the NACo Arts and Culture Commission. You can reach him at: jay@artusa.org.

SPOTLIGHT ON

CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT

PANDEMIC PIVOT ALLOWS FOR EASIER ACCESS TO COUNTY MEETINGS

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

County meetings are an endurance event.

Elected officials and staff members have grown accustomed to the rigors of showing the county's work and adapted to refine their routines. To the uninitiated, particularly members of the public who want to voice concerns to their leaders, extensive agendas are a barrier to entry. So are meeting times that often conflict with the workday, and long drives to the courthouse.

When social distancing requirements meant limiting in-person action, public meetings went the way of so many workdays — online. And while many complain about the undulating waves of “Zoom fatigue,” counties report that they've seen more frequent and more constructive public interaction and civic engagement on their remote meetings. For some, holding steady counts for success, too.

“We have seen a significant increase in attendees — members of the public and county employees,” said Barbara Byrum, Ingham County, Mich. clerk. “A lot of that is because it is so easy for those who have the ability to access the technology to jump on a Zoom call. And now we're a year into the pandemic and Zoom is common now.”

For Byrum, who serves as clerk to the Board of Commissioners, it's a combination of convenience and simplicity.

“At this point, because we have embraced Zoom, we not only can allow anyone with Internet access to watch a meeting, but they can do it from their home.”

In Pierce County, Wash., remote meetings allow residents to pick and choose when they're tuning in.

“The public could be part of the meeting, but still be doing things at home that they proba-

bly needed to get done— making dinner, helping kids with homework,” said Brynn Grimley, communications manager for the Pierce County Council. “On some items, we can have two hours of public testimony, so it's a real investment for someone to stick around all night — some of our meetings start at 3 p.m. and can last until 9 p.m.”

One meeting last November, when the Council was debating disbanding a joint health department with the city of Tacoma, drew 372 attendees, many of whom spoke on the item.

Pierce County used some CARES Act funding to finance some renovations to its Council chambers to integrate broadcast equipment.

“We pretty much knew right away once we got it going and it was successful, we knew we weren't going back to in-person meetings only,” Grimley said. “We've opened this door and it's been wonderful, why not keep doing it?”

She acknowledges that

some people have been wistful for face-to-face interaction and the chance to look Council members in the eye while speaking. They will probably get their chance when the county migrates part way back and holds hybrid meetings.

“As far as functionality goes, we didn't notice anything missing in terms of getting testimony and allowing people to be heard,” Grimley said. “We've worried that it could be prohibitive for older residents who might not be as tech savvy.”

The Council employs a meeting operator who troubleshoots people's interactions as they view and comment on meetings. Her effectiveness has earned her, and the county, some public goodwill.

“She has a wonderful decorum dealing with the public, she's very kind and patient,” Grimley said. “Twitter blew up about how she was a saint, she earned a fan club.”

Arapahoe County, Colo. did some video meetings before the pandemic, typically for

subjects of popular interest, such as oil and gas exploration in the county, but that was a deviation.

“As much as possible, we tried to be in person,” said Public Information Officer Luc Hatlestad. “But we found over and over again that even if you promote it, prepare for a whole bunch of people to show up, the truth is not that many people show up to public events. If they do, they're usually the same people.”

“We just weren't reaching that many citizens.”

That changed with the pandemic. Quarterly district meetings for the five commissioners drew between 10 and 20 residents. With 15 of the 20 meetings complete, the low mark for attendance has been around 250, with the most popular meetings drawing nearly 1,300. County-wide information meetings have topped 23,000 people on them, with a total of more than 166,000 viewers over the past year.

“These have been so success-

ful that even when we return to in-person fully, we'll have virtual components,” Hatlestad said. “We're reaching a bigger portion of the population, but it's also a morale issue for the staff. Given how much work we put into it all, it's important to not see that go to an empty audience.”

In response to a wider potential audience, county staff have rethought their slides and presentation materials to be more accessible and viewer-friendly.

“We've cleaned up the ‘inside baseball’ stuff to be easier for citizens to grasp,” Hatlestad said.

Though Pierce County has not tracked its attendee demographics, Grimley has noticed a number of features that lead her to believe the video Council meetings are drawing a younger crowd.

“Just from the sound of their voices, some of them reference their age, some on Twitter use photos that would lead some

See PIVOT page 16





Bernalillo County, N.M. Clerk Linda Stover visits classrooms before the COVID-19 pandemic to teach students about county government through the About My County Activity Book. Photo courtesy of Bernalillo County

ACTIVITY BOOK INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

In Bernalillo County, N.M., Clerk Linda Stover was on a mission when elected to office to promote civic education in schools throughout the county.

When attending a past NACo conference, Stover learned about the iCivics program and the My County Works Activity Book for elementary students. She knew she wanted to take the concept home and make it her own.

Stover spearheaded the creation of the About My County Activity Book which is designed to introduce students to the Bernalillo County government structure. The book is based on the My County Works Activity Book with information specific to the Bernalillo County government.

While visiting schools after being elected county clerk, Stover said she found students had no civic classes on local government. While the social studies

educational standards in New Mexico include civic requirements, they focus on learning about state and national governments.

"They knew who the president was, they knew some of that stuff, but their local stuff which is their backyard stuff, these little kids had no idea," she said.

The goals of the About My County Activity Book are to inspire students to become public servants and elected officials and educate students about the services Bernalillo County offers.

Stover talked with directors about their divisions and gathered information to incorporate into the book which describes the county, districts, commissioners, the treasurer, assessor, court of wills, estates and probate, sheriff's department, county manager's office, fire department, animal care services, community services division, senior and social services and housing, among others.

"Bernco Bernie," a sheep who

serves as the county mascot, guides students in the activity book through games, illustrations, coloring prompts, fun facts and puzzles.

Stover came up with the idea to use Bitmojis (cartoon versions of people) to represent the people working for Bernalillo County.

"The hard part was convincing these directors to get one [an emoji]," she said. "I wanted something that would hold a child's interest."

Communication Services Coordinator Tiffany Chamblee played a key role in the design of the book.

Chamblee explained that she has a broad knowledge of the county because she's worked in various departments, which helped her streamline the book's language to be understandable for children.

"County government and civics can be very confusing and so I wanted to simplify it as much as possible using illustrations and learning techniques to bring it

down to their level," she said.

The book is geared to students in third to fifth grade.

In helping Stover bring her idea to life, Chamblee designed the pages to be age appropriate and get the message across about the functions of county government.

One page covers emergency communications and focuses on the kind of information to share when making a 911 call.

"We try to get at a mindset of a fourth and fifth grader so we had to use smaller language and smaller words and draw pictures because I wanted them to understand it," Stover said.

Stover visited several schools during a book tour before the pandemic hit to share the activity book with students and is hoping to return to classrooms this fall.

"I carry these little books into the schools and I take colored pencils and we just go through it and have a ball," she said.

During her classroom visits, Stover said she was approached by some teachers who told her that there was information in the book they did not know. In response, Stover made a teacher's edition of the activity book, which includes the answers to the prompts and puzzles.

"Now when we go into a class,

we take enough for each student, but we take a teacher's edition, too," she said.

Albuquerque Public Schools incorporated the activity book into their curriculum for all fourth graders which includes over 6,500 students in 91 elementary schools.

"I just think it's been a real informative thing," Stover said. "If you can get a real basic understanding of your local government, then you can go on to state and higher government."

Stover said she believes the activity book has improved civic engagement throughout the county.

"I would encourage anybody ... not just necessarily county clerks, anybody who wants to get engaged within the school, I think they're really hungry for an education on what happens with the political process in their county with their county government," she said.

Counties throughout the state are also working to create their own activity books based off Stover's work.

"Civics has just kind of disappeared from our school system and I think that's a shame so anything we can do in Bernalillo County to bring it to the forefront and share it, we're going to do," she said. **CN**

'These individuals become ambassadors for the county'



Participants from the 2018 Blue Earth County, Minn. Citizens Academy stand on the steps of the county courthouse with county commissioners holding their certificates for completing the academy. Photo courtesy of Blue Earth County, Minn.

From ACADEMY page 11

felt like this would be a great program for us to initiate at a county-wide level to engage with the community and then offer them an understanding of what the county does," she said.

The academy also provides tours of county facilities.

"What's really special is they have the opportunity to go behind the scenes, to tour areas of the building and functions the general public do not get the advantages of seeing," Houston

said.

The series is free for those who are 18 and older and register for the academy, which typically hosts 35 to 40 individuals per group.

"We want to have a really broad cross-section of the county [participate] and we usually end up with a nice number assortment across all of our commissioners' districts," she said.

Houston said she's heard from members of the academy who have referred other individuals by sharing their

positive experiences with the program.

Those who participate in the academy are in an alumni group which Houston said she often refers to when seeking engagement for advisory boards or county studies.

"These individuals become ambassadors for the county and for their community and you can't put a price on the time or the effort that goes into this — so then people are sharing their knowledge and it spreads and spreads and spreads," she said. **CN**

'I don't believe it's issue driven...it's accessibility'

From PIVOT page 14

one to believe they're younger," she said. "Those are folks who more than likely wouldn't have shown up to a council meeting before."

Roanoke County, Va. has been holding meetings in person, but had been broadcasting them for years before the pandemic, allowing for an easy transition. Meetings include a 10-minute window for additional comments via email, but Public Information Officer Gray Craig said while the county hasn't seen a boom in public participation, the broadcast has been enough to keep levels steady.

"That's a win for us, not losing audience," he said. "While the number of in-person and email comments have remained steady throughout the year,

certain development projects drew more public participation than usual, most likely due to the availability of telephone and email comments during live meetings."

As for Ingham County's meetings in Michigan, however, Byrum thinks the new way is going to be the best option for continuing to grow public participation in county government. "I don't believe it's issue-driven at all, I believe it's the accessibility," she said, about the surge. "You don't have to get someone to watch your kids while you drive to Lansing or sit around for a few hours. It's just so much easier now."

Time is running out in Michigan, because of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's (D) temporary suspension of a requirement that governments hold in-person

meetings. Byrum is hoping the Legislature amends the Open Meetings Act to allow more flexibility. Various states have similar requirements for what must be done in person, many of which are facing the sunset of their own emergency exceptions during the pandemic.

Many counties can pivot back to what some, like Roanoke, are already doing — gathering officials in the same room and continuing to broadcast online and accept testimony on the phone or via email. That doesn't entice Byrum.

The Ingham County Commission's meeting room is woefully inadequate for the audio needs for broadcast, Byrum said, making it hard to identify the speaker, and quotes to adjust the room's acoustics to fix that are beyond the county's budget. **CN**

PROFILES IN SERVICE

CLAY WALKER

NACo Board Member
Mayor
Denali Borough, Alaska



Walker

Number of years active in NACo: 10

Years in public service: 15

Occupation: Full time mayor/chief executive

Education: Bachelor's degree in Geography, Master of Public Administration degree in progress.

The hardest thing I've ever done: Say goodbye to good friends and dogs.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Alfred Hulse Brooks, John McPhee and David Letterman

A dream I have is to: My dreams revolve around new family trips, hikes and hunts.

You'd be surprised to learn: I took up whitewater rafting this year — old dogs can learn new tricks.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done: Setting out alone into unknown lands on several continents.

My favorite way to relax is: Watch my favorite sports teams play ball.

I'm most proud of: My wife and three kids and the good life we have built together.

Every morning I read: Emails and an array of state and national news.

My favorite meal is: Alaskan surf and turf (grilled salmon and moose steak.)

My pet peeve is: Whining and placing blame rather than seeking solutions.

My motto is: "Work hard, work smart, work together."

The last book I read was: *Denali's Howl: The Deadliest Climbing Disaster on America's Wildest Peak* by Andy Hall

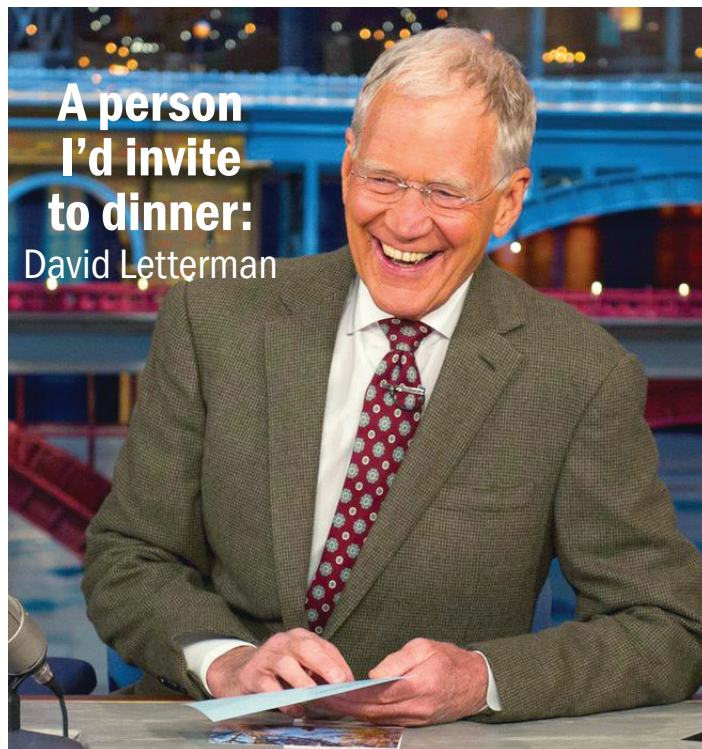
My favorite movie is: *The Princess Bride*

My favorite music is: Sometimes funk, sometimes alt country

My favorite U.S. president is: Thomas Jefferson

My borough is a NACo member because: NACo's support and advocacy brings great value back to Denali Borough. NACo helps strengthen all of America's counties — even those in the middle of Alaska!

A person I'd invite to dinner: David Letterman



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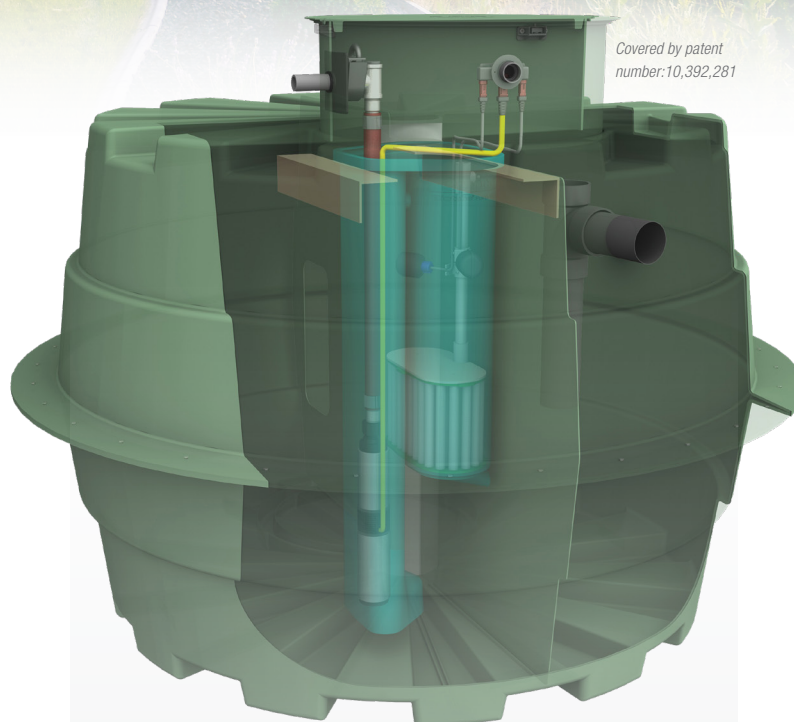
- Brundtland Report, United Nations, 1987

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*WERF Fact Sheets C1, C2, & C3, “Performance & Cost of Decentralized Unit Processes,” 2010.



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NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

Supervisors in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** recently approved a program to **create job opportunities for county youth** during the pandemic. The Youth Environmental/Recreational Corp. provides career readiness, workforce development and mentorship for youth between the ages of 16 and 24, KUSI-TV reported. Through the program, low-income youth will have paid employment opportunities in county departments. The jobs will focus on “green” careers.



FLORIDA

• The Property Appraiser's Office in **BROWARD COUNTY** has **launched the Owner Alert system** to help property owners avoid scams. The system is in response to an uptick in property fraud. Property owners who register will receive notifications if someone has filed a deed on their property or tries to change ownership on their property, WTVJ-TV (NBC 6) reported. More than 12,000 property owners in the county have registered for the free alert system.

• A new program in **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY** is delivering **COVID-19 vaccines directly to underserved seniors**. The county is holding pop-up clinics at senior communities as part of the Targeted Vaccine Area Initiative. The initiative is in collaboration with the county aging services, office of emergency management and

state health department, WUSF reported. The program targets seniors who are unable to access public sites to receive a vaccine.

ILLINOIS

• The Department of Health in **COOK COUNTY** has deployed **mobile COVID-19 vaccination teams** to suburban areas of the county. The department launched the pilot program to prioritize organizations serving those 65 years and older, vulnerable populations in congregate settings and essential employees who have limited access to care, according to WMAQ-TV (NBC Chicago).

• The **LAKE COUNTY** board recently approved a **4-cent per gallon fuel tax**. The tax will generate \$8 million to \$11 million per year and the money collected will be used for unfunded road projects, the *Daily Herald* reported. Board members debated the tax with some raising concerns that the timing is wrong to increase taxes while many are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IOWA

A new program in **LINN COUNTY** is aiming to bring back more greenery after last year's derecho, or strong windstorm, caused the county to lose 70 percent of its tree canopy. The **Tree Equity program** is focusing on restoring the canopy and Sustainability Manager Tamara Marcus told KWWL-TV that trees are being replanted in equitable ways to prevent pockets of tree-less neighborhoods in the future. The program involves partnerships with 11 community organizations. All trees replanted through the program are native to Iowa.

MARYLAND

• The health department in **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY** has



MARYLAND

• **MONTGOMERY COUNTY** Parks and Recreation Department has opened the “Facets of Hope” **COVID-19 memorial**. The art installation includes more than 1,400 strands of chandelier crystals. The crystals each represent one county resident who died from the virus. The memorial is open through September. Photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks

released a **vaccine equity plan** to incorporate African American and Hispanic churches into the vaccination process. The plan aims to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable populations and communities of color, WBAL-TV reported. The partnership between the health department and local medical organizations allows older members of churches to receive vaccines.

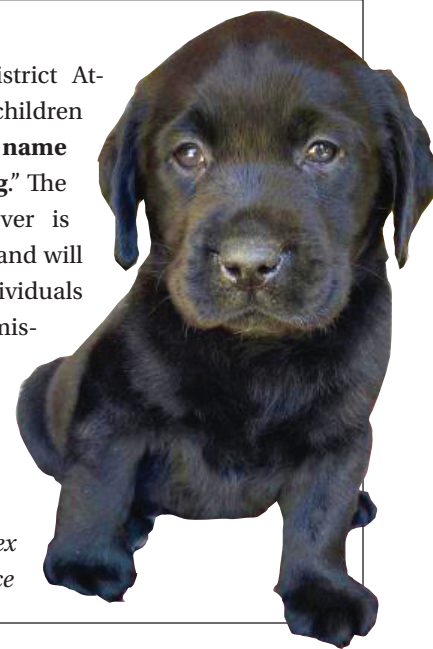


• The **BALTIMORE COUNTY** Public Library has launched the **1,000 Books Before Kindergarten** reading program to encourage parents to read to children from birth to age 5. Early reading helps children

MASSACHUSETTS

MIDDLESEX COUNTY District Attorney Marian Ryan is asking children throughout the county to help **name the office's new “comfort dog”**. The male black Labrador retriever is joining the office this month and will work with employees and individuals throughout the county. Submissions can be made online or by mail. The winner of the contest will receive an in-person, COVID-safe visit from the puppy.

Photo courtesy of Middlesex County District Attorney's Office



develop literacy skills including speaking, listening and communicating. Participants can keep a log of the number of books they read and collect special stickers for every 100 books read and a completion prize after reaching 1,000 books.

MINNESOTA

Commissioners in **HENNEPIN COUNTY** recently approved a measure that **raises the hourly minimum wage**

for county employees from \$15 to \$20 per hour. It increases earnings for full-time employees by nearly \$10,000 per year and impacts more than 400 employees. The last minimum wage increase for employees was five years ago.

NEBRASKA

With a new and improved jail due to open in 2022, **SARPY COUNTY** is thinking ahead to improve inmates' access to mental health care. That will

MICHIGAN

SAGINAW COUNTY Programmer/Analyst Pam Pelkki has received recognition from commissioners for receiving the Best IT Project Award 2020 from the state of Michigan for the **blood search warrant solutions project** she developed. The project allows law enforcement officials to electronically request blood search warrants from county judges, improving the workflow for law enforcement and judicial courts. Pelkki worked with more than 350 law enforcement officials and trained all county judges to register with the system. Photo courtesy of Saginaw County



start with a program that will be the state's **first forensic psychiatry fellowship**. The University of Nebraska Medical Center will provide one psychiatrist a year to help with psychiatric services primarily for inmates with serious mental illness at a cost of \$1.2 million to the county. The new jail will include a training site for the fellowship and will share the cost of faculty and a program director to support the center's behavioral health care unit, KMTV-TV, the local CBS affiliate, reported.

NEVADA

WASHOE COUNTY's county resident service call center saw its **call volume triple** in a year following service expansions during the pandemic. In February 2020, Washoe311 received 448 calls; in March 2020 it received 6,226 calls. Some of the top questions over the year surrounded COVID-19 testing and vaccination, building permits and inspections, voter registration and a large variety of road concerns during the winter.

NEW JERSEY

CAMDEN COUNTY has taken its popular **dance party** program for residents with disabilities to Zoom. The five-year-old program, led by professional instructors, pivoted to online during the pandemic.

NEW MEXICO

The **SANTA FE COUNTY** Board of County Commissioners has voted to **align county energy efficiency standards** with the city of Santa Fe's. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported that the county's lack of a building inspection department has forced it to rely on state building officials to review and approve plans, do all necessary inspections during construction and

then issue certificates of occupancy upon completion. Soon, the county will be able to mandate energy efficiency in new homes based on performance, which is easier to manage than prescriptive rules regarding energy efficiency.

NEW YORK

• **ONEIDA COUNTY** has introduced a task force designed to help reintegrate residents who have been **released from state incarceration**. The Oneida County Re-Entry Taskforce includes referrals to social service, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and educational services. The program provides a cognitive behavioral intervention and a work readiness program.

• The **SUFFOLK COUNTY** Legislature passed a bill making it illegal for a driver to **pass a cyclist** without three or more feet of clearance. Without adequate space, the driver would be required to stop until they can go around the biker safely.

NORTH CAROLINA

WAKE COUNTY has updated its nondiscrimination ordinance to include **protections for hair styles**. Though much of the attention around similar policies have focused on Black women's hair, Wake County's resolution also protects the hairstyles of those of Jewish, Latinx or Native American descent, *The News & Observer* reported.

OHIO

Eying a chance to make up a racial gap in truancy rates, **FRANKLIN COUNTY** has debuted a two-year pilot program to provide **wraparound support for families of low-income boys** to help them navi-

gate the human services system to get their needs met and improve their long-term opportunities for success. The Family Stabilization Unit is a partnership with the National African American Male Wellness Agency, coordinated by the county's Job and Family Services agency.

TENNESSEE

• With **vaccine hesitancy** threatening vaccination goals, **SHELBY COUNTY** Mayor Lee Harris has formed a group dedicated to fostering trust in the process. The COVID-19 Community Council is comprised of upwards of 40 people who have influence in various minority groups that have expressed skepticism about the vaccines. They will receive special briefings from the county twice a month, information about the vaccine and other ways to

stay safe during the pandemic, which they will in turn distribute to their networks.

• The **WILLIAMSON COUNTY** Public Library is holding a drawing to encourage residents to **become new cardholders**, the *Williamson Herald* reported. Residents who sign up for a card by the end of May are eligible to win one of two gift cards or a video game system.

VIRGINIA

• The 2020 Census may be finished collecting responses, but **ARLINGTON COUNTY** still wants to do some counting. The county's police department will oversee a contractor that will fly drones over the county, looking for heat signatures in the woods to **gauge the white-tailed deer population**.

Airspace in the county is severely limited, so the project will involve cooperation among the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Security Administration and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

• Gov. Ralph Northam (D) has signed a bill allowing **LOUDOUN** and **PRINCE WILLIAM counties** to establish their own independent health departments. They currently

must rely on state-run health districts. Both counties told WTOP News that their own health departments would allow them to be more responsive to their residents' needs and would remove bureaucracy and more stable recruitment and retention efforts. Neighboring **FAIRFAX** and **ARLINGTON counties** also have county-run health departments.

WISCONSIN

After a hiatus early in the pandemic, the **MILWAUKEE COUNTY traveling beer garden** will resume this spring. The Traveling Beer Gardens are two restored fire trucks, converted into a mobile beer truck serving up 12 craft brews from Milwaukee's Sprecher Brewery. Two trucks travel around Milwaukee County Parks on two simultaneously running tours between May and September.

Over eight years of partnership with a local brewery, the moving beer garden, staffed by county parks department employees, has raised more than \$200,000 for parks improvements.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.



WASHINGTON

Artwork reflecting the Black Lives Matter movement now adorns hundreds of **KING COUNTY** Metro buses. Three county transit agency employees designed the murals that wrap the buses and posters on display at agency worksites.

American Jobs Plan invests in broadband, water systems, transportation and more

From **JOBS PLAN** page 4

Broadband | \$100 billion

- Building out broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas to reach 100 percent national coverage
- Providing specific support for locally owned broadband networks
- Lifting barriers that prevent locally owned or affiliated providers from competing with private companies

Counties support congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.

Water systems | \$111 billion

- \$56 billion through grants and loans to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants and support clean water infrastructure across rural America, including \$10 billion to remediate PFAS contaminants

As major owners, users and regulators of water resources and systems, state and local governments are responsible for 95 percent of the total public spending on water infrastructure each year.

- \$45 billion to eliminate lead pipes through the Environmental Protection Agency Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act grants

Counties own and operate 45 percent of public roads and 38 percent of bridges in addition to directly supporting 78 percent of public transit systems and 34 percent of public airports that keep Americans connected in every part of the county. Annually, counties invest \$134 billion in the construction of infrastructure and the operation and maintenance of public works. **CN**

Transportation and resilience | \$621 billion

- \$115 billion to repair, rehabilitate and upgrade 20,000 miles of highways and roads and 10,000 small bridges across the county

- \$20 billion to improve safety through increases to existing programs and a new Safe Streets for All Programs to fund local Vision Zero plans

- Establishing a new competitive grant program to repair the nation's top ten most economically significant bridges

- \$85 billion to upgrade and expand public transit systems

- \$80 billion to address Amtrak's repair backlog

- Enhancing federal rail grant and loan programs to support improved rail safety, efficiency and network electrification

- \$25 billion for airports through the Airport Improvement Program and a new program that will support "groundside" development projects

- \$17 billion for coastal and inland ports, inland waterways, land ports of entry and ferries

- \$174 billion to deploy electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and to support Buy American rules in manufacturing the chargers

Creating grant and incentives programs for local governments to build a national network of EV chargers by 2030

- \$20 billion for a new program to resolve racial and social inequities created by transportation assets, and to advance environmental justice and enhance accessibility

- \$25 billion for "shovel ready" projects that have the potential to significantly impact the regional or national economy, but are too large or complex to be carried out through existing program funding structures

- \$50 billion to empower local communities to improve disaster resilience and protect critical infrastructure, including funding for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program

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- Providing technical assistance, training and procurement best practices to local governments to support the best possible outcome of AJP's transportation initiatives

- Coordinating the federal permitting process to expedite federal decisions while ensuring stakeholder engagement and positive environmental and health benefits

Counties own and operate 45 percent of public roads and 38 percent of bridges in addition to directly supporting 78 percent of public transit systems and 34 percent of public airports that keep Americans connected in every part of the county. Annually, counties invest \$134 billion in the construction of infrastructure and the operation and maintenance of public works. **CN**



I LOVE MY COUNTY BECAUSE... ART CONTEST

Winning artwork will be featured in a "Counties Matter" calendar, in *County News* and at NACo headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Visit naco.org/art for all the details!

I LOVE MY COUNTY BECAUSE... ART CONTEST
NACo.ORG/ART

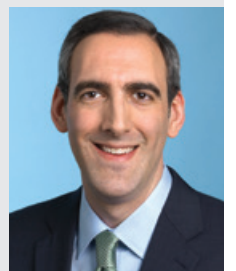
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES **NACo**

NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH
APRIL 2021

ON THE MOVE

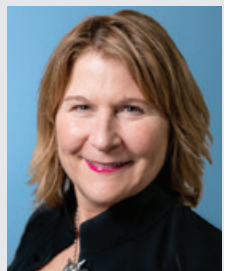
NACo MEMBERS AND NACo STAFF

- Chief Public Affairs Officer **Brian Namey** and Membership Director **Kim Hall** discussed the American Rescue Plan and the benefits of NACo membership March 14 at the New Hampshire Association of Counties' new commissioner orientation.



Namey

- Executive Director **Matt Chase** spoke about the American Rescue Plan March 15 to the Virtual Assembly of the Washington State Association of Counties.



Hall

- Associate Program Director **Rashida Brown** and Milwaukee County Executive **David Crowley** participated March 16 in the National League of Cities' and National Conference of State Legislatures' "State and Local Government PN-3 Collaboration in Action" fire-side chat.



Brown

- Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** participated in a webinar panel March 23 for FedInsider on Cyberattacks 2021: The Landscape of Evolving Threats.

- **Chase** addressed both the board of directors at the New Jersey Association of Counties and the board of directors of Will County, Ill. on March 26.



Crowley