



## NACo Board approves 11 legislative priorities

by **Mary Ann Barton**  
editor

The NACo Board of Directors adopted 11 legislative priorities for 2022 at its fall meeting Dec. 1-4 in DeKalb County, Ga. The year's legislative priorities reflect NACo's long-term mission. The priorities are:

1. Restore the balance of federalism and optimize intergovernmental partnership.
2. Pass legislation to provide additional flexibility for American Rescue Plan Act's fiscal recovery funds to ensure our nation's preparedness and responsibility continues.
3. Successful implementation and execution of the bipartisan infrastructure investments and jobs act for county governments.
4. Promote mental health and substance use treatment and address essential criminal justice reforms.
5. Secure the inclusion of county priorities in farm bill reauthorization legislation.
6. Boost advanced broadband deployment and accessibility while preserving local decision making
7. Support full funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)

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An 84-foot tall white fir tree, dubbed "Sugar Bear," from northern California stands tall on the West Lawn of the Capitol. The tree traveled from Six Rivers National Forest, which is located in Del Norte, Trinity, Humboldt and Siskiyou counties. Photo by Hugh Clarke

## County execs talk infrastructure needs

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

If the threat of losing already-scarce land in Miami-Dade County, Fla. wasn't frightening enough, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava has a second rising tide to worry about when she thinks about sea level rise.

With a convoluted wastewater and sewer system, septic systems can easily find themselves emptying out into Biscayne Bay, threatening the ecosystem and one of the county's economic drivers.

"It's a top priority," Cava said Dec. 8 during a panel discussion at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. "We're pursuing everything that we can," but the county was in a race against time to mitigate the damage, an effort she hoped would be aided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Cava spoke alongside four other county leaders as part of NACo's County Executive Roundtable, held Dec. 8-10 in Washington, all elaborating on where they saw their counties headed with their infrastructure priorities and how they had weathered, as Erie County, N.Y. Mark Poloncarz termed it, the

hardest two years in his career, a sentiment Boone County, Ky. Judge Executive Gary Moore seconded.

That challenging environment was most of what the other panelists knew, including Cava, who took office in 2021;

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## Student rural-urban exchange program helps bridge America's cultural divide

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

Mike McGinley doesn't think his generation is beyond hope, exactly, but he sees a great opportunity to start nurturing some cross-cultural connections among teenagers.

That's why he volunteered Beaverhead County, Mont.,

where he serves as a commissioner, to play host in a growing program for graduating high school seniors — the American Exchange Project.

"I'm not giving up on adults, but it's going to take these kids to save America," he said. "Everything is so divisive these days, but I think a lot of those differences won't seem as bad

once you've spent some time in someone else's community."

The program, founded in 2019, hit a rough patch when the pandemic slowed plans and delayed its pilot year to summer 2021, but it's now expanding its range of participat-

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## Execs talk ARPA funds

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Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, now in his second year in office and Harris County, Texas Judge Lina Hidalgo, elected in 2018.

Each executive brought a different perspective to the infrastructure discussion, such as Poloncarz and Moore's hopes to see local projects take great leaps forward or new approaches championed by neophytes.

When figuring out how to disperse relief funding, Hidalgo wanted to divorce the county from patronage awards.

"The decisions we make about funding are based on formulas," she said, stressing the county's need to see measurable results from funded programs. "We want to focus on who needs the help the most, not who had a friend down-

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# Capitol tree hails from California counties

by **Dakota Hendricks**  
staff writer

The U.S. Capitol is brimming with rich history and tradition. Since 1964, the U.S. Capitol has celebrated the winter holidays with a titan of a tree decorated and displayed on the Capitol lawn and this year is no different.

This year's tree, an 84-foot white fir, dubbed "Sugar Bear," hails from Six Rivers National Forest in northern California, which is partly located in Del Norte, Trinity, Humboldt and Siskiyou counties.

The counties banded together this year to create ornaments and tree skirts for the festivities, sharing traditions that embody Northern California.

Del Norte County Supervisor Valerie Starkey said Del Norte wanted the tree ceremony to be big because it is "a once in a lifetime event" for the children.

Del Norte County 5th grad-



**Jeremy, Sarah, Anthony and Jackson Brown. Brown is chairman of the Trinity County, Calif. Board of Supervisors.**

er Michael Mavris lit the tree Dec. 1 in Washington D.C. after winning an essay contest. Del Norte County published a portion of his essay: "As the lights are strung and the ornaments placed, we, the People who live in the tree's symbolic shadow, hope that its beauty and grandeur provide a beacon to America and a reminder on

this Christmas, that all things are possible."

Each year, the U.S. Forest Service chooses a tree from the 154 national forests across the country. The tradition began when Speaker of the House John McCormack planted a live tree on the Capitol lawn. Eventually the tradition was passed on to the Forest Service and the

agency has selected a tree from a different national forest each year.

Courtesy of the Mad River Ranger District in the Six Rivers National Forest, Sugar Bear began its journey across the country on Oct. 23. This year, the tree is accompanied by a 100-foot display that teaches visitors about the importance of caring for their environment.

Community Engagement Manager Samantha Reho has been on the road with the tree since Oct. 23. Reho said it was a mark of pride to have the People's Tree chosen from California after record-breaking wildfires there.

"The fact that we have a beautiful tree to represent the fortitude and resilience of California during this time is something we're very proud of." **CN**

## NACo Board members meet in DeKalb County, Ga.

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and the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program.

8. Promote county priorities and local decision-making in future of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal rulemaking.
9. Maintain election integrity and strengthen election safety.
10. Enhance community resilience through regional and local disaster preparedness.
11. Promote workforce opportunities and supportive services for county residents to support economic recovery.

### Other business

Members heard from Julie Chavéz Rodriguez, director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, who was introduced by NACo President Larry Johnson. "Collaboration is our currency," Rodriguez said. "Especially as we look at

the historic and once-in-a-generation investments that are coming to our counties and our communities."

NACo Executive Director Matt Chase briefed members on the association's business, including record NACo membership, which now stands at 2,546 members.

Also part of the meeting: The presentation of the Roy C. Brooks Leadership Award, named for former NACo president Roy Charles Brooks of Tarrant County, Texas, in recognition of his leadership and commitment to addressing multi-generational poverty and helping those in underserved communities. The one-time NACo scholarship is partially subsidized by Con-Real LP, through a contribution to the NACo Research Foundation, to help cover the cost of the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy program. The award

was presented to Carrissa Jones, supervisor of the DeKalb County Board of Health's Mothers Offering Resources and Education initiative.

Four NACo members are running for the NACo second vice president position, which will be voted on by members at the Annual Conference in July. They are Sonoma County, Calif. Supervisor James Gore; Mercer County, W.Va. Commissioner Greg Puckett; Loudoun County, Va. Supervisor Phyllis Randall and Beaver County, Utah Commissioner Mark Whitney.

Grant Veeder, a NACo Board member who serves as recorder of Black Hawk County, Iowa, delivered his limerick to commemorate the meeting:

*Of all groups that come to  
Decatur  
The locals can see NACo's greater.  
That's nothing new, though  
Wherever we go  
They find it out sooner or later.*

## SNAP/STATS

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## TOP CHRISTMAS TREE PRODUCING STATES

STATE	NUMBER OF TREES
1. OREGON .....	8.5 MILLION
2. NORTH CAROLINA .....	5.4 MILLION
3. MICHIGAN .....	1.3 MILLION
4. PENNSYLVANIA .....	839,000
5. WISCONSIN .....	657,000

Source: USDA

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# ‘These kids will come out understanding where some other kids are coming from’



Exchange students listen to instructions before planting vegetation in Santa Clara County, Calif. Photos courtesy of the American Exchange Project

**From EXCHANGE page 1**

ing communities, developing a network of rural and urban cities and counties from which teenagers can learn how the “other side” lives, and eventually erode the idea of “sides.”

“We want these kids to get a good look at the world outside of where they grew up, so that they’ll have an open mind about how other people live,” McGinley said. “I’m a little biased, but I’m not sure what kid from the city wouldn’t learn a lot after a week in Beaverhead County.”

It’s an attempt to combat the cultural silos in American society that have only grown as families saw their worlds shrink during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“People really aren’t getting out and talking to each other, we’re all trapped in these bubbles,” said Lydia Fanning, co-director of program development for the project. “They don’t know about the other side other than what they read in the newspaper; we don’t humanize the other side. They’re not spending much time around people with different

backgrounds.”

The project grew from founder David McCullough III’s experiences on a road trip in 2016 into an all-expenses-paid trip to more than three dozen destinations. The 2021 pilot program saw students travel between St. Charles (St. Charles Parish), La.; Kilgore, Texas (Gregg and Rusk counties), Wellesley, Mass. (Norfolk County) and Palo Alto, Calif. (Santa Clara County).

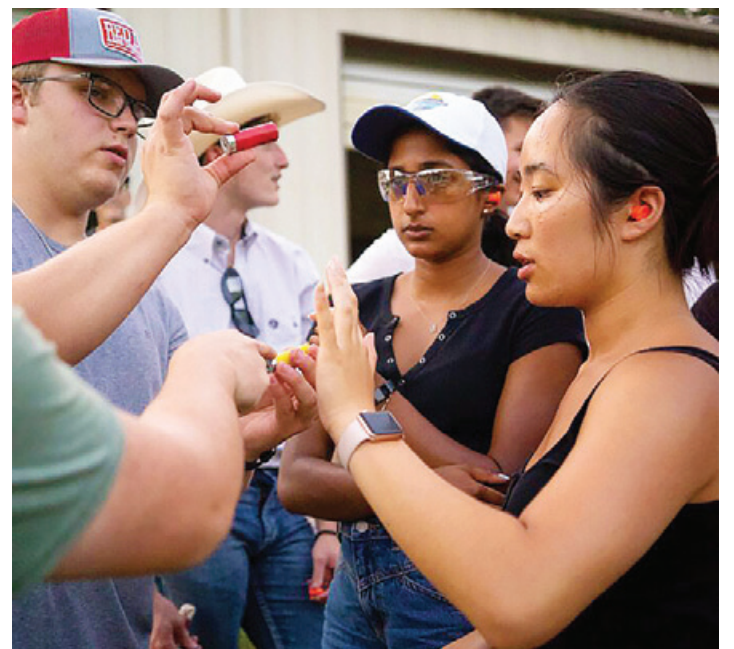
“You can go visit a place as a tourist, go out with your family and see the sights and the landmarks, but you don’t really get to know a place until you stay and talk to people and get to know them, people who call it home,” Fanning said. “We want the highlight to be late-night campfire conversations talking about their schools and their lives. Finding common ground, interesting differences, the little things like that that build friendships.”

The project has spread mainly through word of mouth, targeting teachers and elected leaders to assess their communities’ viability for finding host families and programming, along with student

recruitment. Interested students indicate their interest, along with their top five destinations, and after the March 1 matching day, start a remote orientation process that includes goal-setting sessions, logistical planning and setting up a video pen pal relationship between students in paired communities. Host families and participants’ parents are involved in the planning, and if some families can’t take in exchange students, suitable replacements are identified and prepared.

Each participating community has a designated leader, who helps plan out a local event, an opportunity for professional development shadowing local leaders, a service project and a cultural activity. In the 2021 pilot exchange, students went to a Boston Red Sox game in Massachusetts and rode ATVs in Texas, hiked in Muir Woods in California and rehabilitated houses in Louisiana.

As a rural leader in the program, McGinley wants urban students to understand how his rural teenagers live, the values they live by and the per-



Students learn firearm safety in Kilgore, Texas.

spectives they see.

“I can imagine for a lot of kids in cities, guns are associated with violence, but out here they’re a tool for hunting and they really exist in a different context,” he said. “And we can show them how organizations like the Future Farmers of America are how so many of us learn and practice the leadership skills that are part of who we are.”

“You don’t have to agree on everything, but a lot of these kids will come out of the pro-

gram understanding where some other kids are coming from.”

He is also hoping that residents of his county seat of Dillon learn a little from the visitors, though he’s hesitant to identify them too much with a single town, because he is fighting for representation in the program.

“On the map, you see all these cities and towns,” he said. “I made sure it said Beaverhead County, and not just Dillon.” **CN**

# County launches race-blind charging pilot program

by **Charlie Ban**  
senior writer

The Yolo County, Calif. district attorney's office has debuted software that redacts racial identifying data in efforts to ensure race-blind prosecution.

The program is open source and available for any prosecutor's office in the country to adopt.

"The technology has the potential to be an absolute game changer that is potentially transformational for the criminal justice system coast to coast," said District Attorney Jeff Reisig. "People across the country have made it clear they want meaningful reform in the criminal justice system, especially when it comes to eliminating the insidious effects of racial bias in all forms.

"We [can] ensure that our decisions on whether to charge someone with a crime or not are not infected by any real or perceived bias."

A 2018 study by the Sentencing Project found that African Americans are more likely than

white Americans to be arrested and more likely to be convicted/ African Americans are also more likely to receive lengthy prison sentences, 5.9 times as likely to be incarcerated than whites (and Hispanics are 3.1 times as likely), with those disparities remaining prevalent but less substantial among women.

Launched in 2019, the effort is the result of a partnership between the county and the Stanford Computational Policy Lab, which developed the software. The program automatically redacts most information in police reports that identify an individual's race before the report is reviewed by the deputy district attorney. The police departments in Davis and West Sacramento were the first to participate, though a county-wide rollout is in progress.

The deputy district attorney evaluates how well the redaction removed racial identifiers, judges how likely the case is to be charged and compares that conclusion after reading the unredacted report. If the charges are modified, the dep-



uty explains the relevant rationale. The lab then analyzes the data to determine whether any conscious or unconscious bias was a factor in charging the case.

Certain characteristics are flagged, including explicit mentions of race, select physical descriptors including hair and eye color, names or nicknames, location information, including neighborhood names and street addresses and officer names, given that prosecutors may remember

where officers are stationed.

The program was prompted by discussions with the county's Multi-Cultural Community Council. Council Chair Tessa Smith endorsed the program.

"This is what trust and accountability look like, this is what transparency looks like," she said. "This is how trust and relationships are built between a district attorney's office and the community that it serves."

"We as humans still struggle to look past our visible identities like race and we know that color can color the perceptions of what is true, what is just and what is equitable," she said. "Until we get it down pat in our criminal justice system... in every county across the country, we could do well to embed this instrument in our case management system in every criminal justice office, in every district attorney's office in the country."


"We feel that this race-blind charging tool is a major step to help improve procedural justice and to prove that justice truly is race blind," Reisig said.

The Stanford team writes

that the program demonstrates the viability of race-blind decision-making using computational methods, but "the feasibility of our implementation prompts the need for a serious and concrete debate surrounding the normative aspects of blinding decision makers at the different stages of the criminal process."

The team warns that although the program may increase the confidence in the criminal justice system many people are averse to "algorithmic or algorithm-assisted decision-making and the knowledge that computational tools are involved in the decision-making process could increase that aversion."

West Sacramento Police Chief Rob Strange was convinced of the program's potential both in his city and to prompt further reform elsewhere in the criminal justice system.

"It's my hope that this groundbreaking work leads to the outgrowth of tools that can be applied even further upstream," he said. 

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# URBAN COUNTIES TALK CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AT LUCC MEETING



Bobby Wilson speaks from the back of his truck to county officials about his urban farm project during the LUCC meeting. Photo by Hugh Clarke

by **Dakota Hendricks**  
staff writer

More than 200 county officials from across the country gathered Dec. 1-4 in DeKalb County, Ga. for NACo's Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) meeting. County officials had the opportunity to speak with specialists, network with far-off communities and experience exemplary programs in DeKalb County that they might replicate back home.

NACo President Larry Johnson welcomed NACo members and guests Dec. 2, at the official kick-off. "Our goal is to make sure our counties are well-equipped and able to handle anything that comes your way, we just want to give you some extra tools," said Johnson, a county commissioner for DeKalb County. The meeting began with a rendition of the national anthem by the county's WorkForce DeKalb director, Theresa Austin-Gibbons. County officials heard from experts on infant mortality and prenatal care, DEI efforts, homelessness and American Rescue Plan Act funding.

"We're pleased to see you all in person after the dark days of the pandemic," said John O'Grady, LUCC chair and Franklin County, Ohio commissioner.

## Fortifying foster care

The day before, county officials visited a counseling center campus for foster children in DeKalb County. The center, called Chris180, welcomes foster care and homeless children in a program that strives to treat the whole person to help them integrate themselves into society.

"It's a lot of work that we do to try to uplift people in the community" said Kathy Colbenson, president of Chris180.

As more children in need come to the organization, Chris180 has sought to provide solutions to their problems over their 40 years of service. After raising funds to build a 7-acre campus that includes housing, Chris180 added a food pantry, health clinic, counseling and more, all to improve how well they can serve the community through trauma-informed counseling.

The center, said Colbenson, a therapist, is "not about toxic charity. We treat people with dignity. Trauma-informed care should not be about 'What's wrong with you?' but 'What happened to you?'" After the briefing, county officials broke up into groups

led by CHRIS 180 employees to tour the campus.

She also discussed the nuts and bolts of creating the multi-million-dollar campus. Part of the equation included the use of the New Market Tax Credit. "It was an unbelievable amount of work and red tape, but worth it."

## New Black Wall Street Market

After the tour, county officials headed to a shopping center that helps Black entrepreneurs launch businesses. A former Target store, the center is an extension of the Allen Entrepreneurial Institute, created by philanthropist Bill Allen, who discussed his vision with county officials.

The shopping center was

renovated in 10 months and includes more than 100 tenants. It is filled with minority entrepreneurs selling everything from original artwork to hand-rolled cigars to ginger-infused smoothies.

"Bill Allen wanted to see more minorities become successful entrepreneurs," said Matt Hampton, director of the market.

"Most young people are not excited about a job," Allen said. "They want to own their own business. 'Ownership, ownership, ownership.' Say it with me!"

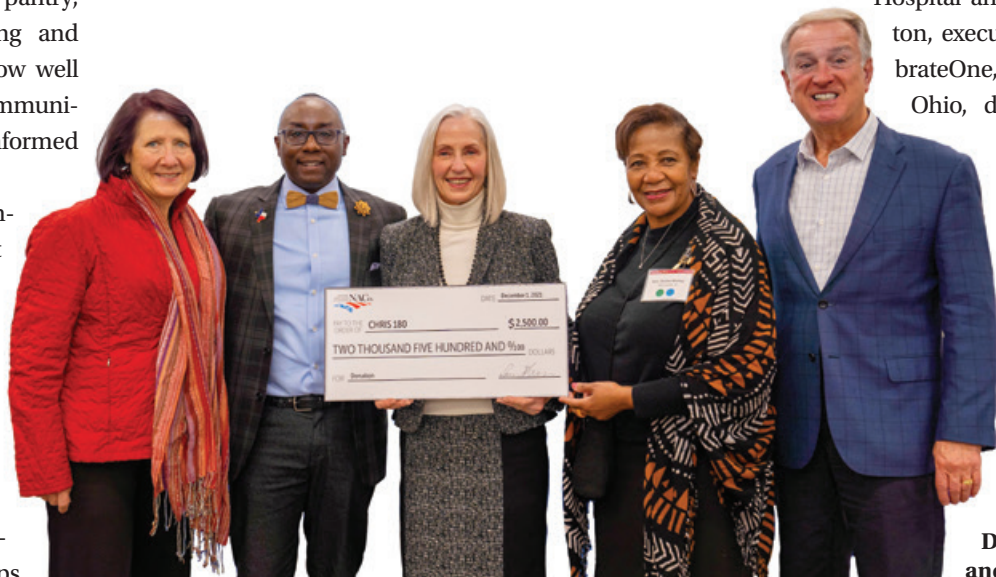
## Infant mortality

During the General Session of the 2021 LUCC meeting on Dec. 2, county officials learned from medical experts and frontline

organizations about the ways communities can lower the infant mortality rate. "In 2018, in my county, two to three babies a week died before the age of 1," said O'Grady. "Counties have a critical role to play in addressing this crucial issue."

CDC Director of Reproductive Health Dr. Wanda Barfield talked to LUCC members about the importance of improving the health of the mother to impact the health and safety of the child. Infant mortality rate comes from the number of deaths per 1000 live births before their first birthday. Dr. Toyosi Okurounmu of United Healthcare Children's Foundation, Christine Sander, director, Infant Wellness Initiatives at Nationwide Children's Hospital and Maureen Stapleton, executive director, CelebrateOne, Franklin County, Ohio, discussed their re-

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**Kathy Colbenson (center), president of Chris180, accepts a donation from NACo officers (l-r) Mary Jo McGuire, Larry Johnson, Denise Winfrey, and Gary Moore.**

# LUCC members tackle DEI, infant mortality, homelessness at Georgia meeting

From LUCC page 5

gional programs.

“There is a love and spirit of collaboration that is required in order to tackle and win this fight,” Stapleton said.

The infant mortality rate nationally is 5.6 percent, but when broken down by race, it is much worse, they noted in their panel discussion. Traditionally underserved minority populations have a much higher infant mortality rate, as high as 10.6 percent.

Organizations are working diligently to drop the level by studying trends in infant mortality rates. Doctors can better identify unsafe conditions and help prevent future deaths by using data collection. Groups like CelebrateOne started a mentorship program, pairing at-risk mothers with “mentor moms.” By reaching out to at-risk women, the programs can educate, provide medical assistance and help guide new mothers through the challenges of the first year and beyond.

## Economics 101

County officials heard from a representative at the Brookings Institute Metropolitan Policy Program and a Financial Market Economist with Nationwide. Deputy Director of the Brookings Institute Alan Berube advised that it was important to invest American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding for long-term gain. Berube said he expects the pendulum will swing back the other way soon as federal dollars dry up.

“The spigot is going to get turned off very soon,” said Berube. He suggested counties invest in nonprofits that benefit the community and focus on organizations that will be able to assist counties long after the federal funding is spent. He also suggested communities discuss projects on a regional basis and attempt to collaborate in a “potluck” style where all can benefit.

Scott Murray of Nationwide discussed the remnants of the Great Recession as well as economic indicators he is seeing. “Once we get these supply issues corrected, and we sort of create a right-sized economy for the demands out there, we shouldn’t see persistent inflation moving forward,” said Murray.

The job market will likely shift

due to generations no longer being financially stuck in their homes, he noted, and many have the freedom to move and work from home from anywhere in the country. The coming “silver tsunami,” of older workers permanently leaving the workforce, is another factor in the job market, he said. In all, 1.5 million Americans left the workforce during the pandemic, he noted, which gives an opportunity for others to advance and learn new skills. Murray said counties should focus on what makes them great, to attract workers and keep residents while they work elsewhere through building better broadband infrastructure. “What makes your community special to your citizens?” asked Murray “How can we enhance that?”

## Experts talk equity

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) was a hot topic, in a panel discussion moderated by Hennepin County commissioner and LUCC Vice Chair Angela Conley. Panelists discussed ways they are tackling DEI in their communities through healthcare, policy shifts, racial equity tools, budgets and data collection.

In Douglas County, Neb., where the Board of Health declared racism a public health crisis in 2020, Douglas County Commissioner Christopher Rodgers noted that they have begun fighting against “your place determining your livelihood, determining how long you live.”

For the past several years, Rodgers has focused on tackling racial inequities in healthcare to better support the livelihood of underserved communities. In May 2020, the “shot heard round the world,” the death of George Floyd, opened a policy window that the county has been using to combat racial inequity, he said.

Efran Garcia, a Diversity and Inclusion officer in the Salt Lake County mayor’s office in Utah, said the county has been able to draft actionable accountability metrics for the first time in 10 years after the murder of Floyd shined a spotlight on DEI practices across the country.

“In some cases, a single word can impact who’s able to receive or be declined from any of the services [of the county],” Garcia



Philanthropist Bill Allen talks to county officials about helping Black entrepreneurs. Photo by Hugh Clarke

said.

The policy experts focused on improving their community’s acceptance of diverse people and the inclusion of those people in policy decisions. Through their efforts, they have educated county officials on how policies can negatively impact some groups more than others and how to work on fixing those shortcomings for a healthier community.

“I can’t express how important it is to be crafting and creating something as important as justice and equity with the actual community that you’re going to be serving,” said Conley.

## Urban farming

Bobby Wilson saw a need for quality food and green space in low-income areas of metro Atlanta, so he created it. As the former program director for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension/Atlanta Urban Gardening Program, Wilson formed the Metro Atlanta Urban Farm after he retired. The goal: To grow food and educate the community.

Wilson hosted LUCC officials and NACo board members, bringing them together to meet the many organizations he has partnered with to create a sprawling network of opportunity in urban farming.

“Our hope is that we here at Metro Atlanta Urban Farm will create some ideas that you can take back to your communities to help improve the quality of life by making sure we are maintaining and sustaining our green space in our inner cities,” he said, addressing county officials from the back of his pickup truck, with the sound of the farm’s clucking chickens in the background.

The Urban Farm is not only

for farming initiatives, although there are plenty on their 5 acres. The Urban Farm partners with other groups to create gardens, rehabilitate green space and teach the importance of “sustainable high quality, low-cost” agriculture. During the event, members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, local universities, community organizations and entrepreneurs showed off their products and techniques that county officials might replicate at home. County officials learned about specific ways to grow different crops, saw examples of urban gardens, walked through a mobile tour on farming equipment and drones.

## Caution, not panic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a sore lack of preparation for catastrophic-level events that “completely disrupt our way of life,” said Christine Kosmos, CDC director of the Division of State and Local Readiness.

The CDC has been working since the early 2000s to help counties prepare for any sort of health emergencies and that will continue moving forward, she said. To better support communities, the CDC has put senior-level specialists on the ground to in 27 states to help state and local organizations.

“By the end of next year,” Kosmos said there will be a senior-level epidemiologist “in every jurisdiction, every directly funded city, every territory” which will go a long way toward ensuring access to valuable information.

Eduardo Cisneros, COVID-19 Intergovernmental Affairs director, told NACo members he is feeling “optimistic” about how the US is tackling the pandemic


and the emerging COVID variant Omicron. “We can’t predict the future, but we can prepare for it.”

## Clarion call

After the pandemic, “it is not what is lost, it is what is left,” Penny Brown Reynolds, a ground-breaking former judge and lawyer who served as an inspiring keynote speaker during a luncheon on Dec. 3. “It is unprecedented time to be in public service considering the many challenges our nation faces and our communities face...Citizens are looking to you (local leaders) to deliver because they believe in you,” she told county officials.

A lawyer, pastor, county official, district attorney and more, Reynolds encouraged a “forward-thinking strategy” to support counties across the country that have seen nearly 800,000 deaths due to the pandemic. Echoing the THRIVE (technology, health, readiness, infrastructure, vulnerable populations, economic opportunities) message of NACo President Larry Johnson, Reynolds encouraged local leaders to consider how they might rebuild their communities.

“We should use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to,” she said.

To that end, Reynolds encourages strong leadership. “What’s left is a need for leaders with integrity. Character matters, integrity matters...We are not suffering from a lack of resources,” she said. “We have been suffering from a lack of imagination.” Her message is clear: Work hard and collaborate across the aisle to better support the community, she said. “Collaboration is key.” 

# Build Back Better bill awaits Senate vote

by **Rackel Mackey**

The Build Back Better Act awaits a vote in the Senate after the House on Nov. 19 passed the \$1.75 trillion reconciliation package that is offset with new increases in revenue.

The legislation, which passed by the House on a 220-213 vote, is advancing by the budget reconciliation process, which allows both chambers to pass the bill with limits on procedural delays.

Most significantly, reconciliation allows the U.S. Senate to bypass the filibuster and pass legislation with a 50-vote threshold so long as it meets a series of budgetary requirements.

The bill is currently under negotiation in the Senate, where, along with any amendments, it must comply with reconciliation rules. A vote on passage is not yet scheduled. If the Senate approves the measure, the House must then pass the updated legislation before sending it to the President's desk. The majority in both houses aim to complete this process as soon as possible.

The bill invests heavily in childcare, preschool education, paid parental leave, resources to address climate change, education and housing stabilization and more.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a "score" for the bill stating that the measure would increase deficits by \$367 billion over 10 years. Additionally, CBO estimated that the IRS enforcement provisions will yield \$207 billion in added revenue, putting the net cost of the measure at a projected \$159 billion total over 10 years. The White House — using data from the U.S. Department of Treasury — puts the IRS enforcement figure closer to \$400 billion, contending that the plan would have zero net cost.

The provisions included in the House bill are subject to change as the legislation moves through the reconciliation process. **CN**

*Rackel Mackey is an associate legislative director for human services and education in NA-Co's Government Affairs Department.*

## Counties discuss funding hopes and goals



County Executive Mark Poloncarz (right) makes a point at a National Press Club briefing Dec. 8 as fellow county executives look on. Photo by Hugh Clarke

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town.

"It's a delicious puzzle we're trying to tackle."

Tracking the suburban migration of jobs in Milwaukee County, Crowley sees the need for transit options as a no-brainer, though the county doesn't have a comprehensive transit system.

He sees parks as both the feature that people associate with county governments and a way to combat decades-old consequences of redlining and the demolition of Black neighborhoods to facilitate development.

"How can we look at infrastructure to connect communities back to parks, connect with neighbors?" he asked.

And whether that infrastructure is safe is another issue. Crowley noticed a shift in local

drivers, noting how reckless they have become.

"What do our roads look like?" he said, focusing on the future. "How do we reimagine our public streets so they're safe for everyone?"

Boone County, Ky. is in the midst of a multi-year project to link every home to a broad-

band connection, but outside of his county, Moore is optimistic that repairs to the nearby Brent Spence Bridge, which carries two interstates over the Ohio River, would be possible with IJA funding.

"The normal formula dollars that Kentucky would get are not enough to get this project done," he said. "It's going to take the state DOTs to come together but we're exiting about the potential to fix this gridlock."

As popular confidence in the county's comeback from the pandemic is reflected by their increased traffic and public activity, Cava said she sees one drawback that can always point to the need for new infrastructure investment.

"The congestion is back," she said. **CN**

### WORD SEARCH

### MOHAVE COUNTY, Ariz.

Created by: Charlie Ban

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

**ANNEX:** Utah tried to annex northern Mohave County.

**FIFTH:** Mohave County is the fifth-largest county in the contiguous United States.

**GRAND:** Grand Canyon National Park stretches into Mohave County.

**HUALAPAI:** One of three reservations located in the county.

**KAIBAB:** One of three reservations in the county.

**KINGMAN:** The county seat, named after a civil engineer.

**LOST:** Lake Mead now covers what was "Arizona's Lost County."

**MOHAVE:** The compounding of Native American words: aha, water and macave, along or beside.

**NEVADA:** When the county was created in 1864, it included portions

of present-day Nevada.

**NOTHING:** A ghost town reportedly named "by a bunch of drunks."

**PAHUTE:** Pah-Ute County was bisected in 1871, with most of its land going to Nevada and the rest becoming part of Mohave County.

**PARASHANT:** The Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, larger than Rhode Island, is in Mohave County.

**PARCHED:** Some areas of the county receive less than 10 inches of annual precipitation.

**PUBLIC:** The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management own 61 percent of the county's land.

**VENERATED:** Mohave is one of the original four Arizona counties.

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# LARGE URBAN COUNTY CAUCUS SYMPOSIUM

## IN PHOTOGRAPHS

ALL PHOTOS BY HUGH CLARKE



NACo President Larry Johnson displays the latest issue of *County News*' Hot Topics, available online.



Harris County, Texas Commissioner Adrian Garcia discusses ways of tackling homelessness.



Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Julie Chavez Rodriguez updates LUCC members on COVID preparedness.



Judge Penny Brown Reynolds speaks about the importance of local leadership.



Members of the NACo Board of Directors gather for a group photo at their fall meeting, held Dec. 1-4 in Dekalb County, Ga.





(L-r) Panelists Christine Sander, Maureen Stapleton and Toyosi Okurounmu discuss the importance of tackling infant mortality through research and outreach.



Former NACo presidents Roy Charles Brooks (left) and Gary Moore tour CHRIS180, which provides help to foster children.

NACo First Vice President Denise Winfrey pauses for a photo during one of the group's mobile tours.



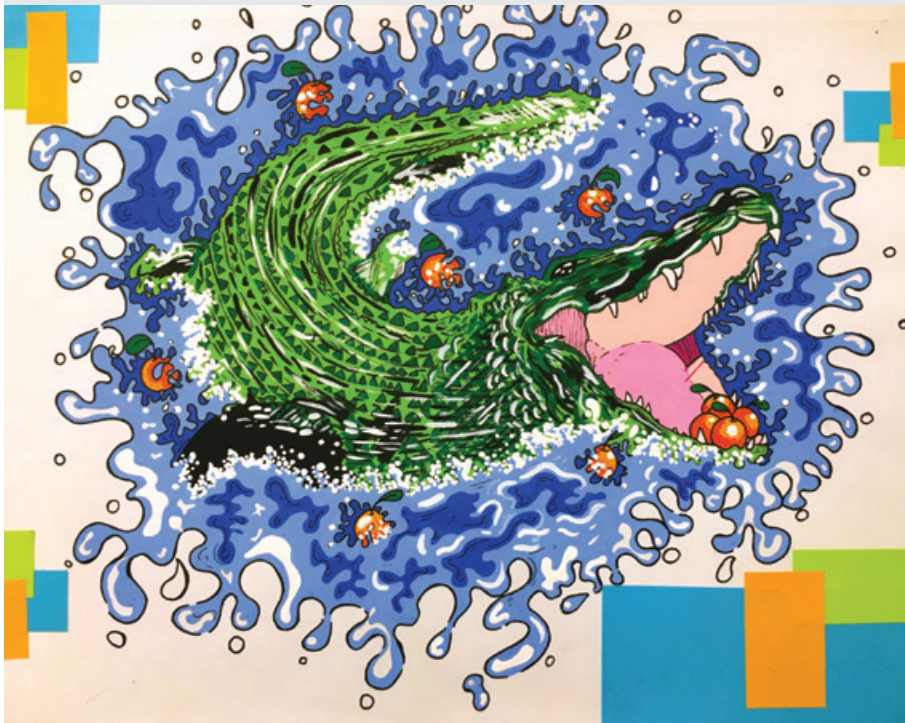
A young boy rakes one of the gardens at the Urban Farm in Fulton County, Ga.



Mary Ann Borgeson, a former NACo president, addresses fellow NACo Board members.



# Palm Beach County student artwork features Florida's official state reptile



Ravia Facey's artwork entered in the NACo student art competition shows off the unique splendor of her county. Facey, grade 9, won the art contest for her grade level for her piece highlighting unique aspects of Palm Beach County, Fla. Her artwork, created with acrylic paint, shows an alligator surging through waters filled with citrus fruits.

Facey has a "unique style" said Diana Fernandez, Facey's art teacher. Fernandez said Facey has already won two or three art contests with the unique circular style of her art and that Facey has a "bright future" in the arts.

Palm Beach County is a larger county with 1.5 million residents and leads the nation in sugar and sweet corn production. The lush

area is well known for its beaches and palm trees; the tourism industry employs about 70,000.

The art competition is sponsored by Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading non-profit arts organization, which serves, advances and leads a network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain and support the arts in America. They have partnered with NACo for almost 25 years to educate and inform county elected leaders about the importance and value of the arts to their community, both culturally and economically. **CN**

*Winning artwork will be featured in a 2022 NACo calendar and in County News.*



## ON THE MOVE

### NACo OFFICERS AND STAFF

- **Elynn Lee** has joined NACo as a program manager focusing on justice issues. She previously served as project manager at the International Association of Chiefs of Police and a project coordinator for Migration and Refugee Services. She earned a bachelor's degree in public and urban affairs and public policy and is pursuing a master's in business and health administrat



**Lee**

- **Donna Nguyen** has joined NACo as a staff accountant. She previously worked as a staff accountant with Elm Street Development's Legend Management Group and for Baudler & Flanders CPA. Nguyen earned a bachelor's degree in accounting.



**Nguyen**

- **Chelsea Thomson** has joined NACo as a program manager focusing on justice issues. She previously served as director of operations and a policy analyst at the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center. Thomson earned a master's degree in Public Policy and a bachelor's degree in Political Science.



**Thomson**

- **Dorina Tota** has joined NACo as a tech support specialist. She previously worked as an IT specialist with Montgomery County, Md.'s Health and Human Services Department and an IT helpdesk manager for the Democratic Party of Albania. Tota earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in mechatronics, robotics and automation engineering.



**Tota**

- Deputy Government Affairs Director **Eryn Hurley** attended the Alaska Municipal League Annual Conference in Anchorage Borough.

- **Hurley**, along with First Vice President **Denise Winfrey** and Associate Membership Director **John Losh** attended the Association of Oregon Counties annual conference in Lane County.

- Membership Director **Kim Hall** attended the Washington State Association of Counties annual conference in Spokane County.

- Government Affairs Director **Mark Ritacco** and Chief Information Officer **Rita Reynolds** attended the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania fall conference in Dauphin County.



**Mattson**

- President **Larry Johnson**, Past President **Riki Hokama**, Executive Director **Matt Chase** and **Losh** attended the Missouri Association of Counties Annual Conference in Camden and Miller counties.

- **Winfrey** and Program Director **Spencer Bridgers** attended the California State Association of Counties Annual Conference in Monterey County.

- **Hall** attended the Colorado Counties, Inc. Winter Conference in El Paso County.

- **Johnson** and Second Vice President **Mary Jo McGuire** attended the Association of Minnesota Counties annual conference in Hennepin County.

- **Johnson** and **Losh** attended the County Commissioners Association of Ohio Winter Conference in Franklin County.



**Cline**

- **Hall**, Associate Legislative Director **Brett Mattson** and National Director of Strategic Partnerships **Kyle Cline** attended the Nebraska Association of County Officials Annual Conference in Buffalo County.

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# PROFILES IN SERVICE

## TAMMY A. LEE

**NACo Board Member**  
County Commissioner  
Bertie County, N.C.

**Number of years active in NACo:** Seven years serving on Justice and Public Safety Steering committee and Veterans and Military Services committee.

**Years in public service:** Seven years as a commissioner and 18 years serving the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division of Prisons.

**Occupation:** Retired

**Education:** High school and some college-level courses.

**The hardest thing I've ever done:** Burying my 5-week-old granddaughter, watching my son drive away on his way to Iraq and running for commissioner.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** My favorite actor Patrick Swayze, Martha from the Bible because she deserves a meal



Lee

cooked for her, plus, we are a lot alike, President John F. Kennedy. I think he would have been a great president had he not been assassinated.

**You'd be surprised to learn that:** I was a firearms instructor and a hand-to-hand combat instructor.

**My favorite way to relax is:** Sitting on the beach, listening to music.

**I'm most proud of:** My children.

**My favorite meal is:** Anything Italian.

**My pet peeve is:** Calling North Carolina correctional officers "guards."



**THE MOST ADVENTUROUS THING I'VE EVER DONE IS:**  
Went on a mission trip to Micronesia.

**My motto is:** Don't sweat the small stuff and everything is small stuff.

**My favorite movie is:** "The Color Purple."

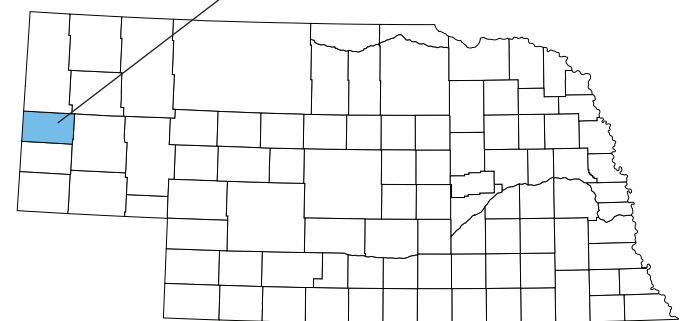
**My favorite music is:** Contemporary Christian

**My favorite U.S. president is:** President Ronald Regan

**My county is a NACo member because:** We believe it's a great organization and it's a great resource.

## GET TO KNOW...

## Scotts Bluff County, Neb.



### Welcome Scotts Bluff County, Neb.

Nestled in northwestern Nebraska, Scotts Bluff County was formed in 1888. The rustic community is filled with rolling hills, farms and grasslands.

Scotts Bluff earned its name from pioneer explorer and fur trader Hiram Scott, who died at the base of the bluff in 1828. Accounts vary on what happened, but the community chose to name the area Scotts Bluff, which became the name of the county.

The county was originally part of Cheyenne County,

which included much of the Nebraska panhandle. In 1888, an election resulted in the creation of Scotts Bluff and other counties. The county population numbers about 37,000 and the county seat is in Gering.

Agriculture is the dominant industry in the region with farms growing corn, beets, and beans.

**Founding member and lead bassist of The Eagles rock band, Randy Meisner, was born in the county.**

"Get to Know" features new NACo member counties.



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Randy Meisner



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**BRIGHT IDEAS** | ALAMEDA COUNTY, Calif.

# California County Offers Residents a Recipe for Healthy Living

**PROBLEM:** Too many residents face food insecurity and lack the knowledge to live healthy.

**SOLUTION:** Create a program to put fresh produce in the hands of the residents who need it most, teach them how to live a healthy lifestyle and foster a healthy community.

by **Dakota Hendricks**  
staff writer

For one doctor in California, the old ways of providing healthcare could not keep up to the communities needs in 2021.

His solution? Throw out the script and radically rewrite a coordinated approach tackling preventative care through nutrition and behavior.

Recipe4Health (R4H) is a program he created in partnership with ALL IN Alameda County and many other organizations to tackle food insecurity, behavioral struggles and medicine all in one.

## Healthy food interventions

“Food as medicine” is a phrase used by Dr. Steven Chen to describe his innovative program.

Instead of tackling health through separate industries working independently, R4H focuses on crafting a cooperative system through the Food Farmacy, the Behavioral Pharmacy and provider trainings.

People who are food insecure have a drastically higher rate of illness than those who are food secure. Food security means “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life,” according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Being food insecure can lead to chronic illness, behavioral issues, and medical conditions like diabetes.

During COVID, the rate of



Residents gather for a healthy meal at Open Source Wellness in Alameda County, Calif.

food insecurity in the country doubled to about 23 percent of the population. Chen said it is not enough to “roll a food bank into your clinic” to tackle food insecurity. Access to quality food alone is not enough, he noted. Providers must be trained on how to use food as medicine.

Many patients may be fine with increased access to quality food, but others may need more support through nutritional advice or behavioral support, he said, adding that the “how” is missing from the current healthcare model.

Chen describes his model as a sandwich — the protein of the sandwich being the clinic with trained professionals who understand food as medicine, while the top bun is the nutrient-rich food provided by the Food Farmacy and the bottom bun is the Behavioral Pharmacy, providing additional community support for those in need.

Together, the program treats many of the critical aspects of health necessary for a healthy individual and a healthy com-



The Food Farmacy gears up to transport food to patients across the county.

munity.

The Food Farmacy focuses on putting nutrient-rich foods in the hands of those who need it most.

To do so, the Farmacy grows organic foods regeneratively. Regenerative practices focus on the health of the produce and the soil, ensuring the soil is not stripped of its nutrients. The Alameda-based Dig Deep Farms does not use pesticides and creates a community of “farmacists” to help produce and deliver foods across the county.

To further support the community, the Food Farmacy provides training and jobs for the recently incarcerated, helping reduce recidivism by providing a career path and a way to make a difference improving the community.

## Community is medicine

The Behavioral Pharmacy offers cooking classes, information on how to stay active, connecting with others and much more.

The non-profit organization

Open Source Wellness, which runs the Behavioral Pharmacy, promotes four key ideals: Exercise more, eat better, reduce your stress and gain social support. The Behavioral Pharmacy is not a place to prescribe a solution, but a community where they show residents how to live better through shared experiences.

R4H includes a training program to teach clinicians how to use food as medicine, to understand the shift in mindset toward preventative care as well as pharmaceutical care. The program is an eight-hour course featuring a chef and Chen, who aim to teach clinicians, nutritionists and others how to quickly make recommendations on food insecurity. The goal is to have doctors make recommendations during a typical 15-minute meeting with a patient.

In Alameda County, the food insecure can get access to quality, nutrient-rich vegetables for 16 weeks delivered directly to their door. Residents can attend the behavioral pharmacy once a week to work on skills, movement and connection.

ALL IN is a funding partner program, championed by the late Supervisor Wilma Chan of Alameda County to help organizations fight a war on poverty.

To date, the program has helped 1,691 residents with food insecurity. Food insecurity is not often treated by traditional medicine. “Most healthcare people aren’t thinking ‘food,’” Chen said.

He hopes to see doctors around the country screen for food security and make use of this integrated treatment model.

*The Alameda County’s R4H-program is the recipient of a Best in Category 2021 NACo Achievement Award in the Health category.*

# NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION



A couple celebrates their wedding on Clark County property - the median on which the famous Welcome to Las Vegas sign stands.



## COLORADO

Spam calls in recent years have gotten out of control and ignoring unknown numbers has become commonplace. For one lost hiker in **LAKE COUNTY**, ignoring those calls made **rescue efforts** difficult. According to National Public Radio, the lost hiker mistook rescue calls as spam, ignoring the unfamiliar phone number from Lake County Search and Rescue. The hikers' wary attitude toward scam calls forced him to spend the night on the mountain, being discovered the next day.

## FLORIDA

- Taking care of an aging parent can seem like a daunt-

ing task, but for **caregivers** in **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**, it gets a little easier one Zoom meeting at a time. The Hillsborough County Adult Day Services held a virtual conference themed *Caregiving Around the Clock* as part of National Family Caregivers month. The program aims to put tools in the hands of caregivers, giving them additional support during a difficult time.

- **Protecting wildlife** is important to **LEE COUNTY**. According to WINK-TV, around 900 manatees have died in waterways of the county which is unacceptable to the commissioners. They are planning to put permanent low-speed zones in certain waterways to protect the gentle "sea cows." The draft ordinance faces scrutiny first from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission before moving on to public review.

## ILLINOIS

For **COOK COUNTY** Treas-

urer Maria Pappas, **home ownership** is critical to a healthy community. To that end, she has opened a new office at Saint Sabina Church as part of the Black Houses Matter initiative where a team of accountants look back years to find property values. The initiative has already brought back \$87 million in overpayments and missed exemptions since

its founding in 2020.

## KANSAS

**SEDGWICK COUNTY** takes **gun safety** seriously. In response to resident complaints, the county commissioners voted to make discharging firearms across borders, like property boundaries, illegal after several residents' homes were damaged by irresponsible gunfire. The new law includes several exemptions and carries a fine of \$500 which one commissioner said was too low.

## MARYLAND

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY** State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy is cracking down on **unreliable police testimony**. Braveboy released a list of officers they will not call on to testify in court because of disciplinary records, criminal records and more. Others have followed suit, with a total of 148 officers put on the "do not call" list.

## NEVADA

- The **NYE COUNTY** Commission voted to allow for **recreational cannabis consumption lounges**. The county code will be revised to allow for the businesses, the *Pahrump Valley Times* reported. The coun-

ty will not place a limit on the number of lounge licenses, but the state Cannabis Compliance Board might.

## NEW YORK

- The **NIAGARA COUNTY** Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse is surveying residents to **evaluate how well they know how to access services** to help them or someone they know, which will help inform how to better make those resources available.

- **OSTEGO COUNTY** will use American Rescue Plan funding to pay for a **pilot ambulance service program**. Its 20 EMTs and two ambulances will support a network of volunteer emergency service squads across the county, where the average amount of time from when a person calls 911 and when they get to a hospital is more than two hours in large part because of struggles to recruit volunteers. If a volunteer squad cannot make it to an emergency, the county ambulance service can jump in, WS-KG-TV reported.

## NORTH CAROLINA



## CALIFORNIA

**ALAMEDA COUNTY** voted to support a 45-year project ensuring the Oakland Athletics baseball team **remains well supported and playing ball** in the county KLAS-TV reported. The \$12 billion project will be funded in part by a 45-year tax district and is estimated to bring in upwards of \$12 million a year in revenue to the county. The project will produce community benefits including 18 acres of new public parks along the waterfront, affordable housing and union jobs.



**NEVADA**

• **CLARK COUNTY**'s Board of Commissioners voted to pursue a trademark for the phrase "**Wedding Capital of the World.**" The Board's agenda said "establishing Clark County as the registered owner of the brand and associated artwork will ensure that the graphics and name are used in accordance with county guidelines in a positive fashion," and the funding for the trademark registration would come from the special revenue fund for promoting marriage tourism, the local NBC affiliate reported.

Attorney's Office, *The Mail Tribune* reported.



**TEXAS**

**HARRIS COUNTY** added a mobile rapid air monitor to its Pollution Control Services department. The **Rapid Ambient Air Monitoring** unit, known as the "RAAM," will be able to detect a wide array of compounds and provide real-time data to

PCS' online dashboards. Houston Public Media reported that the county will strategically plan the mobile unit routes to collect baseline air quality data and address environmental racism. The RAAM will also be used for emergency response during chemical fires and other disasters.

**WASHINGTON**

• **KING COUNTY** has introduced a **protective escort service** for county workers. The Walking Bus program provides security officers to escort those workers from the county courthouse to nearby public transit centers. While

the officers will not be armed, radio station KOMO-TV reported, they will have ballistic vests, pepper spray and radios.

• The **SPOKANE COUNTY** Veterans Service Center was named **Small Business Employer of the Year** for their employment and retention of veterans by the state Employment Security Department.

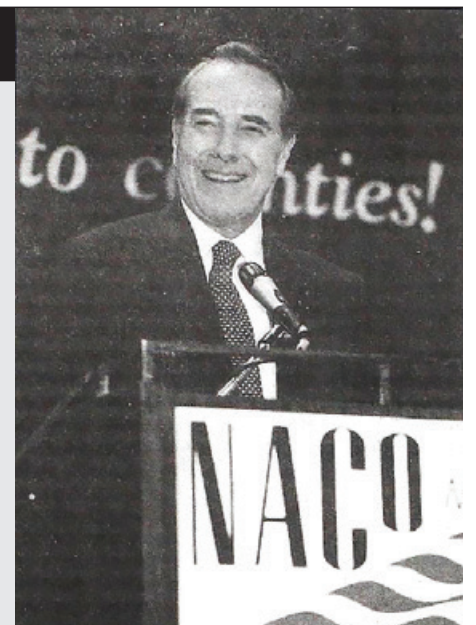
*News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Dakota Hendricks. Does your county have news we should know about? Contact [cban@naco.org](mailto:cban@naco.org) and [dhendricks@naco.org](mailto:dhendricks@naco.org).*

**CN SPOTLIGHT**

**Remembering Sen. Bob Dole, a former Russell County, Kan. attorney**

Former U.S. senator, presidential candidate and **RUSSELL COUNTY, Kan.** Attorney Bob Dole died Dec. 5 at age 98. He followed up eight years as the county attorney with eight years in the U.S. House of Representatives and 27 years in the U.S. Senate before winning the Republican presidential nomination in 1996. As Senate Majority leader in 1995, he addressed the NACo Legislative Conference, where he asked delegates to send his office their "10 regulation horror stories" and touted the Senate's bipartisan effort to address unfunded mandates.

Photo by David Hathcox



From NEWS FROM page 14

• **BUNCOMBE COUNTY** will consider **dismissing minor traffic tickets** issued between the mid-1980s and 2018. Drivers with unpaid court fines and fees for minor traffic offenses will no longer face a long-term license suspension under a program created by the Buncombe County District Attorney's Office, Buncombe County Clerk of Superior Court, Buncombe County District Court Judges and the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center.

• **MECKLENBURG COUNTY** commissioners passed an ordinance protecting residents and visitors from **discrimination** based on sexual orientation, gender identity, natural hairstyle, and other characteristics in employment and public accommodations.

• **WAKE COUNTY** commissioners unanimously approved the formation of an **affordable housing** advisory committee to address the affordable housing crisis. Members of the 16-person committee will include representatives from behavioral health systems, an affordable housing developer, a local college, a community representa-

tive, economic development, faith community, financial system, health system, hospitality industry, human services, law enforcement, legal industry, lived experience community representative, NC-507 Continuum of Care, rental housing and property management and the public school system.

**OHIO**

A federal grand jury found that CVS, Walgreens and Walmart contributed to a public nuisance in **LAKE** and **TRUMBULL counties** by selling and dispensing huge quantities of **opioid-based prescription pain medication**. Attorneys for the counties described the jury's decision as a "milestone victory" in the effort to hold companies accountable for the addiction crisis and a separate legal proceeding will determine damages.

**OREGON**

**JACKSON COUNTY** officials plan to ask the state for nearly \$7.3 million to fight **illegal cannabis cultivation operations**. The county would use the money to hire 37 new workers, including code enforcement officers, Sheriff's Office detectives and additional staff for the Jackson County District

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