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**MIDWINTER
MEETING
FEBRUARY 9-13
BILLINGS**

MIDWINTER CONFERENCE: SPECIAL SEMINARS MACo COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Monday and Tuesday of the MACo Midwinter Conference offer two different special workshops focusing on working together with a variety of agencies.

On Monday, "Building County Musclepower in These Challenging and Frustrating Times" is a full-day workshop presented by Carl Neu, a nationally recognized authority on local governments. The sessions address coordination with levels of local governments (cities, counties, school boards, etc). Constituencies may be the same people, but the systems to serve them have been developed separately. Mr. Neu will focus on issues and ways to provide services—not **who** provides them.

On Tuesday, running concurrently with the Elected Officials Conference, Larry Keown will conduct "Building Effective Relationships with Government and Business Neighbors in Our Counties". This workshop specializes in techniques and lessons learned in developing relationships with federal, state, tribal and local governments.

During the DES section of the Conference, in addition to sessions on disaster and terrorism preparedness, a half-day session will focus on the Federal funding sources and the Montana funding application process.

See page 3 for MACo Committees meeting schedule!

NEWSLETTER GOING ELECTRONIC MACo needs your email address

A recent MACo Board decision for Association cost-cutting is to automate the MACo newsletter. This will save the expense of printing and mailing. Beginning in April, this newsletter will no longer be mailed in hard copy.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT MACo HAS YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS. If MACo already has your email address, your county has been contacted to verify that the address is

correct for sending the newsletter. If MACo does not yet have your email address, please send it to:

macopb@maco.cog.mt.us

The newsletter will be emailed in a format which will require the Adobe Reader program. This is a free program to download and install on any computer. Go to **www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html**

DROUGHT— RECORD LOWS AND FALLING

In December the water level at Fort Peck Lake fell below a 50-year low record and will continue to drop. The record low of 2,209 feet above mean sea level was set in April 1991 and was matched on Thanksgiving Day 2003. Full pool at Fort Peck Lake is 2,246 feet, which is 38' by 135 miles of water more than in the Lake now.

Water last flowed out of the spillway in 1997. Lake releases have been around 4,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), according to lake manager, Roy Snyder. At the first part of December, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordered releases doubled to about 9,000 cfs. This release level is to continue through February. With the current inflows around 4,000 cfs, the double draw down will cause the Lake level to decrease even more.

Computer estimates indicate that the lake will lose another 4 feet, reaching a low of 2,204 feet at the end of February. Snyder feels this will probably be lower, since the computer estimates are based on average conditions, not drought conditions.

The Corps has made efforts to mitigate the effect of low water levels on lake recreation. During the last summer, they spent \$385,000 on extending boat ramps to the Lake. If more extensions are needed, they will put them in.

The increased winter release is for hydro-power generation on the downstream river system. The Corps of Engineers runs the dams and handles the flows, but in 14 years, has not finished a master policy manual.

The six states in the Missouri River Basin Association cannot agree on the allocation of water. The upstream states want more for recreation and the downstream states (which have more representatives in Congress) want to continue to float barges for the entire year, rather than on a seasonal basis.

In addition, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is trying to protect wildlife by making demands on the Corps for water. FWS has filed lawsuits to demand the Corps release water to mimic natural seasonal high and low flows on behalf of three endangered species—the pallid sturgeon, piping plover and least tern.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 9-13 MACo Midwinter Conference; Billings
 February 11 County Treasurers Association; Billings
 February 13 Revenue & Transportation Committee
 February 16 Presidents Day Holiday
 February 18 Property Tax Exemption Committee; MACo
 February 19 DNRC Fire Suppression Costs; MACo
 February 19 Subdivision Task Force; Metcalf Building
 February 19-20 Tax Reform Committee; Capitol 317
 February 21 Workforce Investment; MACo; 1:30 pm
 February 27-March 2 NACo Legislative Conference, DC

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 4 Property Tax Reappraisal; MACo; 9:00 am
 March 9-10 Tax Reform Committee; Capitol 317
March 23-24 **MACo Mental Health Summit; Helena**
 March 25 Last day to file for office
April 8-9 **JPIA Renewals Meeting**
 April 13-15 Road Supervisors Convention; Bozeman
 April 26-30 Magistrates Convention; Butte
 April 28-30 School Superintendents Convention; Livingston

Fort Peck Lake area county officials have been attending meetings and writing letters, but they have seen no changes in favor of Fort Peck Lake. The Corps' requirement to have all Missouri River states agree and approve the master policy is seen as almost futile, when one state can simply refuse to approve. Valley County Commissioners have not supported draining Fort Peck Lake, but think the Lake should be kept as full as possible. "You can always take water downstream, but you can't bring it upstream," said Commissioner Ron Gilbertson.

Further information on drought conditions throughout the state can be found on the State Drought Committee website at

<http://nris.state.mt.us/drought>

The current Montana State Drought Plan is being updated. For copies or information, or to make comments, contact Jesse Aber at jaber@state.mt.us or call 444-6628.



**PLEASE LET MACo KNOW THE
NAME OF YOUR 2004
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAIR.**

MACo MIDWINTER MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

10:00 am — 5:00 pm WORKSHOP
“Building County Musclepower”

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Elected Officials Conference

8:30 am Public Access - Records / Meetings
10:15 Taxable Per Diem and Mileage
11:15 HIPAA
1:00 pm Help America Vote Act
2:00 GIS Funding Proposal
3:00 Homeland Security Grants
County ID Cards

OR

8:30 am — 5:00 pm WORKSHOP
“Building Effective Working Relationships”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

DES Annual Governor’s Conference

8:30 am FEMA Region 8 Report
9:00 Yellowstone Lake Geologic Update
10:30 Bugs, Bovines & Borders
11:30 Emergency Management Overview
Noon Governor Judy Martz
1:30 pm Rocky Mountain Laboratory
2:00 Cyber-security
3:00 Fires 2003: Local Government Issues
4:00 Columbia Space Shuttle Disaster
5:00 Meeting: Fort Peck Lake Counties

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12 *DES Continued*

8:00 am — Noon Response to Bombings
1:00 — 5:00 pm Grant Process

OR

MACo Midwinter Meeting

7:30 am Meeting: Reservation Counties
8:30 Mental Health Issues
10:30 Public Health / Medicaid Re-design
1:00 pm Strategic National Stockpile
2:00 Public Health Emergencies
3:00 West Nile Virus
4:30 Meetings:
Urban Counties / Hard Rock Mining Counties
Forest Counties / Oil, Gas and Coal Counties

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13 *Midwinter Meeting*

8:30 am MACo Dues Increase; Investments
9:30 District Court Video Project
10:15 E-Government
11:15 E 9-1-1
11:45 Prisoner Transportation
Noon Adjournment

MACo COMMITTEES MEETING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, February 10

4:00 pm Resolutions Committee
Ponderosa Room

4:00 pm Public Lands Committee
Jefferson Room

4:00 pm Health & Human Services Committee
Madison Room

Wednesday, February 11

10:00 am Tax, Finance & Budget Committee
Ponderosa Room

2:00 pm Information Technology Committee
Madison Room

STILLWATER COUNTY’S MOBILE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER ON DISPLAY AT MIDWINTER



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MACRS 2004 CONFERENCE

From Jack Knorr, President, Stillwater County

Montana Association of County Road Supervisors (MACRS) will meet at annual conference at the Best Western GranTree Inn in Bozeman, April 13-15. MACRS President Jack Knorr, Stillwater County, invites all commissioners and other officials to attend the conference.

MACRS considers the conference to be a time for elected officials to meet and exchange ideas with the county road supervisors from across the State. Each year, this conference attracts more elected officials. Last year, eighteen county commissioners attended. With road issues being a major county taxpayer concern, it is not a surprise that commissioners want to be more involved.

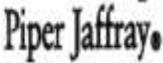
The agenda will address gravel, road law, policies, plan reading and more. Speakers who are recognized experts within the transportation industry will come from several Northwestern states.

A block of rooms has been set aside at the GranTree, and attendees are encouraged to make early reservations.

ORDER IN THE COURT #1

- Q: All of your responses must be oral so that they can be recorded.
Where did you go to school?
A: Oral
Q: Where is that?
A: Oral
-

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E 9-1-1 DEVELOPMENT

By Becky Berger, Program Manager
Public Safety Services Office--Statewide 9-1-1 Program

Rather than fund dozens of stovepipe systems, the state is pursuing funding for a uniform and standard E9-1-1 network, thereby reducing overall investment and eliminating duplication. The State of Montana Public Safety Services Office (PSSO), in meeting these strategic initiatives, has aggressively pursued and received Federal FY03 funding in the amount of \$2,235,375.

In addition, the Montana Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (MSPOA), by way of a Service Level Agreement executed in May 2003, has made the PSSO the funding authority for a similar grant. This grant, in the amount of \$1,987,000, provides for the deployment of an emergency notification service. As a part of the analysis and feasibility, the statewide E9-1-1 will provide a turnkey E9-1-1 network, database services, customer premise equipment (CPE), maintenance, monitoring and training for Phase II Wireless E9-1-1 readiness at individual Public Safety Answering Points and a statewide emergency notification service.

A statewide inventory and site survey of all 58 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), funded by a Public Safety Foundation of American grant, was completed in December 2003. Panel discussions with wireless and local exchange carriers and the PSAPs have provided an overview of the statewide project and feedback from the stakeholders.

The PSSO is now faced with the challenge of selecting the best technical solution for Montana. L. R. Kimball and Associates has been hired by the Public Safety Services Office to develop a recommendation to the State (PSSO) and the 9-1-1 Advisory Council on the solution that meets all the objectives.

To provide more information about the Statewide E9-1-1 Solution, PSSO will conduct a session at the MACO Mid-winter meeting in Billings on Friday, February 13.

LEGISLATIVE INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEES

Property Reappraisal Study Committee (SB461)

Tax Reform Study Committee (SB461)

Property Tax Exemption Study Committee (HB 429)

Property Tax Reappraisal

The directives for this committee are:

1. To study the effects of cyclical reappraisal and methods for mitigating the changes in taxable values caused by cyclical reappraisal;
2. To coordinate its efforts with Tax Reform Study Committee;
 - a. To report to each other following each meeting
 - b. To hold joint meetings at least once every 6 months
3. To submit a written report no later than 12/1/04 which must include recommendations and proposed legislation, if legislation is considered necessary, to mitigate the effects of cyclical reappraisal.

The September meeting covered the history of reappraisal. The November meeting addressed the property tax and the Montana Constitution, local mill levies and property tax assessment in other states.

The joint January meeting included a presentation on constitutionality issues relating to property tax and a discussion of interaction with the committees and their proposals.

Next meeting is scheduled for March 4 in the MACo Conference Room at 9:00 am.

Members of the Committee are:
Rep. Rod Bitney
Rep. Gary Branae
Rep. Larry Cyr
Rep. Ron Devlin
Sen. Greg Barkus
Sen. Emily Stonington
Sen. Bob Story
Sen. Ken Toole

Tax Reform

This committee is charged with:

1. Developing an inventory of taxes imposed at the state and local levels;
2. Evaluating existing taxes for adequacy, efficiency, burden, fairness, exportability, impact on individuals and businesses and the costs of administration and compliance;
3. Examining current tax expenditures;
4. Evaluating alternative methods of taxation from existing, as well as new, sources of revenue;
5. Submitting a written report by 12/1/04 which includes recommendations for tax reform and proposed legislation for the recommendations.

The Committee has held four meetings and considered local option tax, income tax history in relation to property tax, overview of state and local tax revenues and expenditures, 9-state comparison of residential property tax, and a variety of tax reform proposals.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 19-20 in Capitol Room 317.

Members of the Committee are:
Rep. Eileen Carney, Libby
Rep. Jill Cohenour, East Helena
Rep. Bob Lake, Hamilton
Rep. Jim Peterson, Buffalo
Sen. Gary Perry, Manhattan
Sen. Keith Bales, Otter
Sen. Jon Ellingson, Missoula
Sen. Dan Harrington, Butte
Jerry Driscoll, AFL-CIO, Helena
Ken Morrison, Helena
Myles Watt, Bozeman
Mary Whittinghill, Helena

Property Tax Exemption

The purpose of this Committee is to study property tax exemptions; to determine whether property tax exemptions contribute to or impede an equitable property tax system; and determine whether existing property tax exemption laws should be modified or repealed in order to achieve an equitable property tax system.

The Committee met in September and reviewed the current statutes and procedures for property tax exemptions. The group is considering possible limits to types of currently-exempt properties such as farms or large buildings used for educational purposes, church-owned properties and multiple homes occupied by clergy, single-purpose association property and vehicles.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 18 in the MACo Conference Room at 8:30 am.

Members of the Committee are:
Rep. Gary Branae, Billings
Rep. Pat Wagman, Livingston
Sen. Jeff Mangan, Great Falls
Sen. Walter McNutt, Sidney
Mack Cole, Forsyth
local government
Gary Hickle, Billings
tax-exempt organization
Jim Oliverson, Kalispell
tax-exempt organization
Dwayne Iverson, Shelby
business
William Parker, Malta
schools
Randy Wilke, Helena
State executive branch

**Federal FY 2002-2003 (Oct. through Sept.)
FEDERAL MINERAL ROYALTIES**

Montana is among the leaders in funds received from the US Department of Interior for mineral revenues collected within state boundaries. The total of \$1,020,000,000 for the end of FY 2003 compares to \$716,300,000 distributed the previous year.

Wyoming	\$467,300,000
New Mexico	\$297,900,000
Colorado	\$ 53,900,000
Utah	\$ 50,600,000
Louisiana	\$ 30,700,000
Montana	\$ 25,500,000
California	\$ 25,400,000
Texas	\$ 17,000,000

Ted Williams was closing out his career with the Boston Red Sox and was suffering from a pinched nerve in his neck. "The thing was so bad," he later explained, "that I could hardly turn my head to look at the pitcher." For the first time in his career he batted under .300, hitting .254 with 10 home runs.

He was then the highest-salaried player in sports. The next year, the Red Sox sent him the same contract.

He sent it back with a note saying that he would not sign it until they gave him the full pay cut allowed. Williams said. "They were offering me a contract I didn't deserve. I only wanted what I deserved."

Williams cut his own salary by 25%, raised his batting average by 62 points, and concluded his brilliant career by hitting a home run in his final time at bat.

**County Input Is Needed
for
Environmental Health Issues**

The Environmental Public Health Tracking project will be conducting surveys of County Commissioners across Montana to determine current environmental health concerns in various counties. During the Annual Conference in Lewistown last September, State Medical Officer Dr. Michael Spence described the project during his remarks in the "West Nile Virus" panel presentation. The project has contracted with MSU Bozeman College of Nursing to conduct the survey. The short survey can be completed and submitted on-line or as a paper questionnaire.

The Environmental Public Health Tracking is a project of Montana Department of Health and Human Services. It is a federally funded project through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as one of 20 demonstration sites across the country. The goal of the tracking project is to begin to link information from environmental agencies with information about chronic disease and birth defects from public health sources. This type of tracking of environmental health concerns is just beginning nationwide and CDC hopes to build a nationwide network which, like the infectious disease reporting system, will lead to improved prevention, and quicker responses to health concerns.

For more information on Environmental Public Health Tracking please visit the website at: www.dphhs.state.mt.us/epht

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ORDER IN THE COURT #2

- Q: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?
A: Yes
Q: And in what ways does it affect your memory?
A: I forget.
Q: You forget. Can you give us an example of something that you've forgotten?
Q: How old is your son, the one living with you?
A: 38 or 35, I can't remember which.
Q: How long has he lived with you?
A: 45 years, I think.

COUNTY NEWS

NATURAL RESOURCES

BEAVERHEAD, ANACONDA-DEER LODGE, BUTTE-SILVER BOW and MADISON COUNTIES have signed an historic document binding the four counties to establish and implement development standards on the Big Hole River watershed.

RAVALLI COUNTY is considering a slough and a river location for portage requests. Some landowners say the slough is a private waterway; others say it is a side channel of the Bitterroot River.

FLATHEAD and BEAVERHEAD-COUNTIES have established Natural Resources Committees as a step in gaining cooperating agency status with federal agencies. The Beaverhead Committee is also developing a "Resource Use Plan."

TAXES

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY is accepting property tax payment online through checking account numbers. Credit card payments have been accepted for over a year and include a surcharge.

PRAIRIE COUNTY livestock producers have been paying a per-head fee for predator control. The 50¢ per head fee for cattle and 60¢ for sheep appears on tax statements.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY received an application to abate taxes on the abandoned Pierce Packing Plant. Eighteen years of back taxes amount to \$361,574. The Commission toured the building which has been undergoing clean-up of hazardous materials.

DAWSON COUNTY approved tax benefits for Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline, even though the business protested its property taxes.

LAWS AND COURTS

FLATHEAD COUNTY has a new "accountability officer" in the Justice Court who will oversee the terms given domestic abusers. Offenders who complete all components of their sentences are less likely to be repeat offenders.

CARBON COUNTY received six used patrol car light bars, donated from Helena City Police Department. The light bars are destined for unincorporated community use.

MISSOULA COUNTY, after threatening to close its Public Defender Office, was absorbed into the state's legal defense against the ACLU lawsuit for inadequate indigent defense.

FLATHEAD COUNTY is preparing to take legal action against billboard companies that have not complied with county sign regulations for size, distance, lighting, etc.. More than half of the billboards in the county are in violation.

VALLEY COUNTY Attorney filed suit against the County to receive the full salary. The County has questioned the legality of paying for part of the State's half of the salary, which the State was not paying.

VARIETY

GALLATIN COUNTY appointed a citizen's committee to explore a program that would allow landowners to sell "transfer of development rights" (TDRs) in order to keep their land as open space or to allow density credits, which would set the number of homes which could be built.

BUTTE-SILVER BOW authorized funds to help the League of Cities and Towns explore takeover of Northwestern Energy. The County effort is aimed, primarily, at retaining the 550 Northwestern jobs.

SANDERS COUNTY has saved all commission meeting minutes, starting in 1906, on computer CDs

FACILITIES

MINERAL COUNTY accepted the donation of a nine-hole golf course and adjacent land for expansion located near the community of St. Regis.

MISSOULA COUNTY is remodeling the courthouse to put office spaces in the former county jail space on the fourth floor.

BUTTE-SILVER BOW is on notice that its designation as a National Historic Landmark District is officially "threatened" because of too many demolitions, the lack of rehabilitation of old buildings and new buildings that don't blend well with the surroundings.

WHEATLAND COUNTY is proposing to build a new office building on property given them, which contains a former drive-in restaurant. Remodeling the 1957 building is questionable because of accessibility and building code requirements.

DAWSON COUNTY is looking at several options for a road department shop. The County contacted the State Department of Transportation about a facility which the state will be vacating.

GALLATIN COUNTY applied for a State Board of Investment loan for \$999,000 for jail repairs and another loan in the same amount to buy an office building next to the County Law and Justice Center. In December, thirteen inmates were released due to crowding.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY sold a county park at auction, with the proceeds from the sale going into the county parks department fund.



COMPUTER EYE STRAIN

By
Emelia McEwen

When people are working in front of their computer screens for long periods of time, they do not blink as much, which can lead to both tired and dry eyes.

People's eyes are also susceptible to becoming irritated because of allergens in the air.

Dr. Jeffrey Anshel, Carlsbad, CA, has named the "3 Bs" to combat computer-related eyestrain. They are blink, breathe and break.

"People blink at a rate of about 12 to 15 times a minute in normal situations," said Anshel, who is the author of "Visual Ergonomics in the Workplace".

When engaged in reading or computer work, people tend to blink less. Anshel suggests that people try to maintain their normal blinking patterns even while they are focused at their computer terminals.

Correct breathing, Anshel said, is another way that people can relax the eye muscles.

In addition, taking proper eye breaks is essential in helping eyes refresh their energy. During the break, Anshel said, "Look far away from your terminal, at least 20 feet, and breathe and blink easily. Keep your eyes moving while looking at different distant objects."

GRANTS

To Attend PRIMA Conference

Scholarships are available to financially assist staff and officials of small county governments to attend the Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) Annual Conference, June 13-16 in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Application deadline is February 27.

Each scholarship provides \$1,000 for conference and travel expenses, discounted conference registration and other benefits. Staff and officials from counties with less than 100,000 people, who have not attended a PRIMA Conference within the past three years, qualify to apply.

Applications are available at www.primacentral.org or from Audre Hoffman at (703) 352-1846 or ahoffman@riskinstitute.org

ORDER IN THE COURT #3

Q: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo or the occult?

A: We both do.

Q: Voodoo?

A: We do.

Q: You do?

A: Yes, Voodoo

STATE OIL AND GAS LEASE SALE SCHEDULED

The quarterly oil and gas lease sale conducted by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is scheduled for March 2, 2004 in Helena.

According to Monte Mason, DNRC Minerals Management Bureau Chief, the only action proposed at this time is issuing leases for possible future exploration and production. "Before any activity occurs, DNRC will prepare an environmental review," he explained. The state Board of Oil and Gas must also review and issue permits before any activity can occur.

The March sale includes tracts in the following counties: **Blaine, Carbon, Chouteau, Fergus, Golden Valley, Hill, Judith Basin, Musselshell, Phillips, Richland, Sheridan, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Valley, and Yellowstone**. A map and a detailed list of tracts being considered by DNRC may be obtained by calling Mason in Helena at (406) 444-2074 or online at: <http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/trust/>

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COUNTIES DEAL WITH BUDGET SHORTFALLS

Excerpted from "Counties in Crisis: A Survey of Current Budgetary Situations Facing America's Counties", by the Carl Vinson School of Government, University of Georgia.

Q: Why don't counties just increase their property taxes to raise additional revenue?

First, many counties do not have the option of increasing their taxes. Forty-seven of the states in the country have imposed some kind of property tax limitations on county governments. Only the states of Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont are without limitations. In addition to property tax rate limits, assessment limits, tax freezes and revenue rollbacks imposed by the state, 44 states require property tax exemptions for senior citizens and/or home-steads.

Q: If counties can't increase property taxes, how are they making ends meet?

For governments that cannot increase property taxes, adjustments in staffing levels, service hours and programs can often achieve cost savings. A recent survey of counties and cities, conducted by the International Personnel Management Association, revealed that some are achieving cost savings in staffing by using layoffs, hiring freezes, leaving positions vacant, providing retirement incentives and mandatory furloughs. Others are reducing the hours of county conducted services.

Q: If counties can't increase property taxes, are there other revenue sources that they can use?

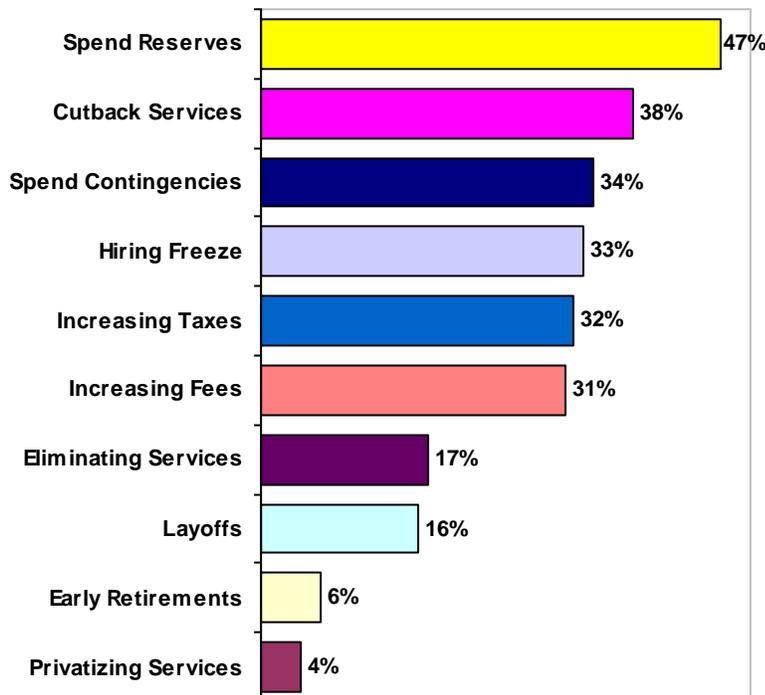
Counties can increase service charges and fees as a

means of meeting the budgets required for some service delivery areas. Counties are charging for the use of county buildings and recreation facilities, hiking fire inspection fees for nonprofit groups and increasing collection of traffic fines. Other counties are increasing vehicle registration fees or the cost of a driver's license.

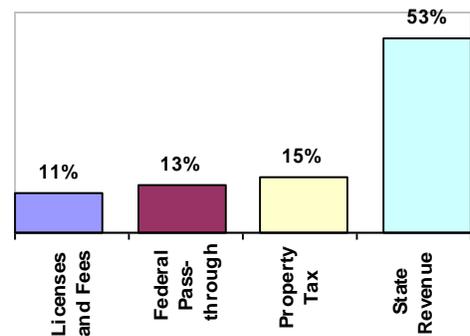
Q: What if citizens don't want fee increases?

Counties are increasing revenue just by being more diligent about collecting what they are owed. County treasurers, tax collectors, utility managers and courts are being more aggressive about collecting delinquent payments. Many have hired outside debt collection services to go after this revenue. Partnered with this aggressive debt collection is increasing the fees for returned checks written to the county.

COUNTY RESPONSES TO BUDGET SHORTFALLS



AREAS OF REVENUE SHORTFALLS



ORDER IN THE COURT #4

Q: What is your date of birth?

A: July 15th.

Q: What year?

A: Every year.



NACo INFORMATION



RURAL PLANNING GUIDEBOOK

THE PLANNING FOR RESULTS GUIDEBOOK: Practical Advice for Building Successful Rural Communities describes how to design and conduct a community planning process that is inclusive and action-oriented.

County elected and appointed officials, as well as planning commissioners and interested citizens, will find this guidebook helpful.

Topics include:

- ▶ Developing a shared vision of the future;
- ▶ Understanding local economic conditions within the context of national, regional and global economies;
- ▶ Assessing a community's natural and cultural assets and how they are affected by population growth and development; and
- ▶ Effectively managing growth and change by using a wide variety of both regulatory and non-regulatory tools to protect or enhance local assets.

One free copy of the book has been sent to the commissions of each NACo member county. Additional copies are \$10 each. To order more copies, go to www.naco.org and click on "County Resource Center" and then "Library" to access the "Publications Order Form"

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NEW Grants.Gov WEBSITE

A new single, comprehensive website that will contain information about finding and applying for all federal grant programs has begun.

The website "Grants.gov" makes it easier to learn about and apply for federal grants.

NACo Executive Director Larry Naake said, "We are especially pleased with the process that was used to develop this program. NACo and county officials across the country were consulted early in the process to assist with its development."

Information on more than 800 available grant programs, a cross-agency effort involving all 26 federal grant-making agencies, provides access to more than \$360 Billion in grant funds. The site provides information in a standardized format across agencies and includes a "Find Grant Opportunities" feature to help applicants find potential funding opportunities.

The "Apply for Grants" feature simplifies the application process by allowing applicants to download, complete and submit applications for specific grant opportunities from any federal grant-making agency. This feature is especially important for smaller counties which do not necessarily have high-speed broadband Internet connections at their disposal.

To date, only five agencies have posted (Commerce, Education, Energy, Justice and Health/Human Services), but the offerings will be expanded in coming months as federal agencies continue to post application information.

The site is accessible through NACo (www.naco.org) on the "Federal Grants Alert" link or by entering directly through www.grants.gov

ORDER IN THE COURT #5

- Q: Doctor, how many autopsies have you performed on dead people?
A: All my autopsies are performed on dead people.



NACo INFORMATION



NEWS FROM OTHER STATES

Mississippi Case May Pave Way for Indigent Defense Costs to Shift to States

NACo reports that Quitman County Mississippi has a case pending in circuit court that may have ramifications nationwide. The lawsuit attempts to force the state to establish a “network of public defenders stationed in local district offices to replace the current system, which requires that each county hire and pay for attorneys to represent defendants who are considered indigent.”

In the past, the US Supreme Court has ruled that in the interest of providing fair trials, lawyers must be assigned to all defendants, including these who are indigent. However, the Court never specified which entity would be responsible for payment of those legal services. As a result, in nearly half of the states, that duty falls largely to county governments.

If the Mississippi judge rules in favor of Quitman County, NACo states that “a precedent could emerge that would effect many counties throughout the nation who are frequently overburdened with the cost of hiring public defenders.”

Washington State Cancels Presidential Primary

During a recent special Washington State legislative session, the Washington 2004 Primary Election was cancelled. Points brought up during the hearings included:

- ▶ The Primary would serve little purpose because the state Democrat Party will allocate all of its delegates to the Democratic National Convention based on the results of party caucuses. Republicans felt that the presidential nominee was already decided so the results of a primary would mean nothing.
- ▶ Funding (\$6 million statewide) for the election could be better used on other programs.
- ▶ The requirements for electronic voting in the Help America Vote Act do not yet provide a paper trail for verifying vote totals.

North Dakota Counties Consider Consolidation of Services

Eight counties in the northern corner of the North Dakota are considering the economies of consolidating the delivery of social services, road work, law enforcement, employee benefits, etc. The effort is driven by the familiar rural story of population loss and the aging of the remaining people.

This effort has originated with the counties, rather than with the state. North Dakota state laws allow counties and other subdivisions to share services and officers and shrink the government without dissolving borders. In 10 years, the eight counties have reduced the number of elected officials from 349 to 240. For example, two counties share an attorney; two other counties share a superintendent of schools, etc. Consolidation has allowed counties to economize without relinquishing traditional names and courthouses, while continuing to provide effective and efficient services.

  <p>The National Association of Counties (in partnership with Nationwide Retirement Solutions and state associations of counties) provides this Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program.</p>	<p>Better than the Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ #1 IN FIXED OPTIONS by an independent consultant ➤ REPRESENTS OVER 380,000 county employees and retirees ➤ ENDORSED by 42 associations of counties ➤ OFFERS EDUCATION RESOURCES THROUGH Morningstar—experts in planning advice, investment-related education and guidance solutions ➤ LARGEST 457 RETIREMENT PROGRAM available to county employees, with exceeding \$6.0 billion.
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