Ever since she was little, her mother instilled in her a desire to be a public servant, and when the time was right, that’s just what she did. Susan Morris has been an Isanti County Commissioner since January 2007 and was recently elected president of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) during their annual conference held Dec. 4-5 in St. Cloud.

AMC is a voluntary, nonpartisan statewide organization that has assisted the state’s 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota since 1909. The association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. It provides legislative advocacy, educational programs and training, research and communications for its member counties.

Morris was first elected second vice president and then first vice present before becoming president of the AMC. She is the ninth woman to serve as president of the AMC. “I love serving in my position as an Isanti County Commissioner and president of the Association of Minnesota Counties because I love what I do; I love helping people,” Morris said.

“Growing up on a farm, we often faced big problems with few resources. I love challenges, and we’ve kind of had to bring that to county government; doing more with less but working hard to continue to fix the system. I pinch myself every day. I thank the good Lord I got work to do and I love what I do.”

The Isanti County Board is excited for Morris to serve as AMC president. “I can say that as Isanti County Board chair we are all very proud of Commissioner Morris and look forward to seeing what great things she will accomplish as president of the AMC in 2018,” said Isanti County Board Chair Terry Turnquist. “Having worked with Susan the past three years, I know she will do awesome things not only for Isanti County but all the counties of Minnesota.”

Morris said she always felt a calling in her heart for public service.

“Before I was elected county commissioner, I was a stay-at-home mom and running my small catering business,” Morris said. “My mom was a public school teacher; very patriotic and had a love for this nation. My No. 1 priority was raising my family and my commitment to my family. But once the time was right, I had the opportunity to run for county board. I spoke with Kurt Daudt at the time to become more familiar with the state Legislature and issues. I was intrigued by the different things the county commissioners did, and knew about the many areas of public life they touched. I was excited about the opportunity to step in and be in a position to help so many.”

AMC Executive Director Julie Ring said she is excited for Morris to begin her tenure as president.

Continued on page 2.
Supporting the business community and growing jobs has been a priority for this life-long Minnesotan. In addition to keeping property taxes among the lowest in the state, under her leadership Anoka County supports new and expanding businesses through participation in Greater MSP, the Open to Business program, and the Economic Gardening program. She’s a strong advocate for job training programs, such as the award-winning FastTRAC Health Care Pathway program, to not only find jobs for unemployed or underemployed individuals but also to address the serious labor shortage local and regional businesses are facing.

Described as a tireless champion for the taxpayer, Sivarajah led efforts to lower her county’s property tax levy for the first time in more than 40 years. She worked to streamline and right-size county government, using ideas and models adapted from the private sector. In addition, more than $50 million in county debt has been paid down and a "pay as you go" philosophy has been adopted under her direction. Anoka County residents now have a better understanding of county finances thanks to this commissioner’s efforts to make budget processes and procedures more transparent.

In response to a wave of heroin/opioid overdose cases in Anoka County, Commissioner Sivarajah made it her mission to raise awareness about the danger of heroin/opioid use. Under her leadership and resolve, much-needed attention is now being given to this deeply troubling national epidemic.

MORRIS ELECTED AMC PRESIDENT, continued from page 1

"Commissioner Morris has been an active member of the Association of Minnesota Counties for many years. She is respected by her peers for her enthusiastic, positive approach to problem-solving and her concern for all Minnesotans," Ring said. "As president, she has a great vision for bringing together rural, urban and suburban counties to learn new ways of doing business from each other."

As fourth vice president of the Minnesota Sheriff’s Association, Isanti County Sheriff Chris Caull said he realizes the value of having an Isanti County commissioner serve as president of the AMC.

"It is so great to have our local leaders participate and become involved with AMC. AMC, much like the Minnesota Sheriff’s Association, provides guidance, leadership development and direction for all of the 87 counties in our respective positions. For Susan to be the president of AMC, will prove to be very valuable to Isanti County," Caull said. "She will be able to be part of the team that develops our future growth and sustainability for our county as well as the others. To be involved at this level and be able to bring those expertise and resources back to Isanti County will have a very positive impact for Isanti County. Commissioner Morris takes great pride in her public service, and I am excited for her and the benefits this position will bring to Isanti County."

As an Isanti County commissioner, Morris said she always does what is best for Isanti County.

"At the end of the day, you do what makes sense for the taxpayers and the citizens of Isanti County, and the value of that to me is wonderful," Morris said. "As AMC, we can learn from each other to become more efficient, provide better services to our constituents; this position will offer sharing and learning opportunities and we can look at offering a resource guide among our counties. This position will provide an opportunity for us to bring all our partners to the table and talk about the different issues we all face as a county."

Isanti County Attorney Jeff Edblad is currently serving as past president of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association.

"Having just completed my term serving as president of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, I understand the value and importance of Commissioner Morris serving in this statewide policy making role," Edblad said. "It is always of value to have a seat at the table in helping to craft and lead 2018 AMC President Susan Morris (Isanti County Commissioner) and AMC annual conference keynote speaker Matt Bitk, former Minnesota Viking. public policy initiatives that will serve the interests of Isanti County as well as the state of Minnesota. Based upon her years of service on the Isanti County Board of Commissioners, Susan Morris is well suited to be the voice of Minnesota’s counties speaking to public policy issues at both the state and federal level."

As president of AMC, Morris will make two visits to Washington, D.C., next year and also attend the National Association of Counties annual conference in Nashville in July. These trips are paid by AMC. Morris, who was born and raised in Isanti County, currently lives on a piece of farm property that was owned by her great-grandfather and homesteaded in 1876. She graduated from Cambridge High School in 1982 and later moved to Texas. While living in Texas she met her husband, Karl, of 31 years, and they had five children before moving back to Minnesota in 1999.

Morris’ mother, Mimi Boettcher, taught as a Cambridge school teacher before retiring after 32 years.

“Anyone who knows my mom knows that helping others was how we see our role in life,” Morris said. “Public service to me is public service, and I truly feel I’m a public servant. I’m here to help, first and foremost, and I’m committed to making government more efficient and effective and serving the public better.”
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WINTER 2018

Visit www.mncounties.org/pbp to learn more about how the products and services offered by these companies could help you serve your citizens and employees better!
Census 2020: Upcoming Free Seminars Help Counties Insure a Complete Count

It may seem hard to believe, but it’s already time to begin planning for the 2020 Census. Census Day is April 1, 2020, and counties and local governments need to begin organizing to ensure that everybody in their jurisdictions gets counted.

AMC, along with the League of Minnesota Cities, the MN School Boards Association, MN Association of Townships and service cooperatives across the state have scheduled a series of nine regional seminars that covers what local governments need to do to ensure a complete count.

There’s a lot that rides on Census data. Even one missed person could mean as much as $1,530 in lost federal funding each year of the decade in health, transportation, housing and education programs. It’s also used to apportion congressional districts, to draw county board and city council districts, and to help guide governments decisions.

The seminars will cover how to set up local “complete count committees,” a new concept in Minnesota, but one that has been in place for years in many other states. They are volunteer partnerships of local governments and key players – businesses, civic groups, faith communities, schools, cultural associations and interested citizens. Their job is to identify hard-to-count populations, and to develop and execute strategies for getting them counted in the 2020 Census.

The aim of the seminars is to give participants the data tools, best practices and a plan for promoting an accurate count in each area.

Census Seminar Schedule:
- **Rochester, January 24, 2018**
  Southeast Service Cooperative and Wood Lake Meeting Center
  210 Wood Lake Drive SE
- **Staples, January 31, 2018**
  National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA)
  202 12th Street NE
- **Sartell, February 1, 2018**
  Resource Training & Solutions
  137 23rd Street South, Suite 201
- **St. Paul, February 8, 2018**
  Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT)
  100 Empire Drive, Suite 100
- ** Thief River Falls, March 7, 2018**
  Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC)
  114 W 1st Street
- **Fergus Falls, March 8, 2018**
  Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC)
  1001 E. Mount Faith
- **Mountain Iron, March 21, 2018**
  Northeast Service Cooperative
  5525 Emerald Avenue
- **Marshall, April 11, 2018**
  Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC)
  1420 East College Drive
- **Mankato, April 12, 2018**
  University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office
  1961 Premier Drive, Sakata Room

County, city and private Deputy Registrars have struggled since July with the problematic rollout of the Minnesota Licensing and Registration System (MNLARS). Deficiencies in the new system have caused, among other problems for Deputy Registrars, significantly longer wait times for customers, considerable unexpected overtime costs for license bureaus, and precarious levels of lost revenue for county, city and private Deputy Registrars.

State legislators and members of the media have taken a keen interest in the shortcomings of MNLARS and have pressed the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) Director, for answers on when the MNLARS system will have full functionality. There is added concern as Minnesota looks to the future rollouts of new driver license and RealID issuing systems. Legislators have been told that a roadmap to all the issues will be ready, hopefully, by the end of January 2018. However, many believe that resolutions to the MNLARS system issues may extend through 2018.

MACO has been actively following legislative activity surrounding MNLARS as well as working closely with the Minnesota Deputy Registrar Association (MDRA) and other stakeholders to be sure that legislators are provided with accurate information regarding the true functionality of the system as it exists today. There also has been emphasis on documenting the effects the rollout of the MNLARS system has had on Deputy Registrars and county license bureau services. With steep revenue declines, county/city license bureaus may need to seek local property tax subsidies to continue operating.

As the 2018 Legislative Session draws near, MACO will continue to work with MDRA and other stakeholders at the Capitol to provide remedies and relief to Deputy Registrars impacted by the MNLARS rollout. These measures include:

1. Lobbying for reimbursement of unexpected county license bureau staff overtime costs and loss of revenue. In addition to the shortcomings of the functionality of MNLARS, the conversion has increased the number of steps required for most transactions which has caused significant increases in how long it takes for a transaction to be completed. The result is fewer transactions being completed and significant revenue loss for counties which may be reflected in tax levies.

2. Lobbying for revising the existing fee structure allocations to accurately reflect the shift in transaction responsibilities caused by the MNLARS conversion. With Deputy Registrars now responsible for capturing and processing information on the front end of the transaction and providing services the state provided pre-MNLARS, properly compensating county, city and private license bureaus for their work is crucial to prevent license bureau closures and/or levy increases. This includes revisions to both motor vehicle fees as well as driver’s license fees.

3. Continue to press the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, DVS and Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) to truly partner with Minnesota’s public and private Deputy Registrars. With the impending rollout of a new system for issuing Driver License and RealID, it is crucial that the state provide more than lip service when it says it plans to work with its partners on these crucial projects. MDRA and County Deputy Registrars have continued to volunteer their services to assist in the testing and rollout of new releases/fixes to the MNLARS system, and the design, testing and rollout of the RealID functionality. It is imperative that the new Driver License and RealID systems are fully functional at the time of their rollout and that Deputy Registrars are properly compensated by the state for performing these services on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

As these issues progress at the Capitol, MACO will continue to work with MDRA and other stakeholders to provide solutions.
Counts Receives Government Innovation Awards

Across the state of Minnesota, local governments are finding creative ways to deliver services to their residents with greater impact and at lower cost. Examples include expanding broadband access in Greater Minnesota communities, improving educational outcomes for Native students, and enhancing emergency response to people with mental health issues.

Those projects and nearly two dozen others are being recognized by the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, as recipients of its 11th annual Local Government Innovation Awards (LGIA).

The awards program is organized in partnership with the Bush Foundation and its Native Nation Building Initiative; and co-sponsored by the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Association of Townships, the Minnesota School Boards Association. The awards recognize projects in five different categories, and name one overall award winner in each: cities, counties, schools, townships and new this year, Native Nations.

“In our 11th year of this program, we are encouraged to see expansive ideas about collaboration at the core of so much innovation,” said Jay Kiedrowski, senior fellow at the Humphrey School’s Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center. “Collaboration was readily apparent in the majority of the projects we reviewed in all categories. In particular, we saw a great deal of innovation due to collaboration in our new Native Nations category, which specifically celebrates cities, counties, townships and schools working together with at least one of Minnesota’s 11 federally recognized tribes.”

A panel of judges considered over 100 submissions for their creativity, sustainability, and collaboration. The overall winners of the five categories will receive a grant from the Bush Foundation to continue their work, and a professionally produced video to use for marketing and awareness. The winners in the city, county, township and school categories receive a $5,000 grant.

County Category Overall Winner:

Yellow Line Project: Blue Earth County Human Services, Sheriff’s Department, and Mankato Department of Public Safety

The Yellow Line Project (YLP) provides the earliest response possible when individuals with acute or chronic mental/chemical health problems come in contact with law enforcement. Funded by the Department of Human Services, YLP supports law enforcement and human services negotiations that provide the right services at the right time, not after they’ve crossed “the yellow line” into jail as most national in-house jail services operate. Results include direct savings in hospitalization and detox costs, reduced reliance on corrections and court services and more.

Other County Winners:

Broadband Wireless: Traverse County

Traverse County, a primarily agricultural community bordering North Dakota and South Dakota, now has consistent broadband services for its 3,500 residents and increasing opportunities for economic development. In collaboration with the Blandin Foundation and Advantenon for feasibility and fiscal components, private landowners for tower placement, and Traverse County Electric Coop for a REED loan, the county built a next-generation fiber broadband network that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive in many rural Minnesota counties.

Chisago County Regulatory Approach to Solar: Chisago County

Chisago County, with its 53,800 residents and 21,000 housing units, is pro-actively managing solar power development, embracing its economic and environmental benefits while appropriately regulating its potential community impacts. Small solar power sites and gardens are permitted administratively; modest solar gardens of 20 acres or larger are permitted as conditional uses, and large solar farms are facilitated in conjunction with the MN Public Utilities Commission. Chisago County’s approach and ordinance have helped facilitate over 135 Megawatts of alternative energy production.

Child Care Licensing Online Orientation: Anoka County

Anoka County created an online process for childcare licensing to provide more access and increase licensing completion rate. This solution addresses the gap between the increasing number who seek in-home child care services, a historically more affordable option; and the decreasing amount of family child care providers. Now the county reports that 80% of those who complete the online orientation actually apply. The training is free and with tools like video and ongoing access, providers can continue to learn and find support.

Adult Shelter Connect: Hennepin County

Hennepin County provides emergency shelter for up to 900 single adults experiencing homelessness every night through 13 programs in five agencies with county and private funds. In 2016, the county launched Adult Shelter Connect (ASC) in collaboration with 100 people in state, city and county government, non-profit agencies, youth and single to make access easier for the homeless. ASC coordinates shelter management through the newly open Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and strengthens the shelter system as a whole. Congratulations to all of this year’s LGIA winners!
Annual Meeting Highlights

Successful Year

The room was filled to capacity when Board Chair Scott Sanders called the 2017 MCIT Annual Meeting to order at the Best Western Kelly Inn in St. Cloud Dec. 4.

Finance Manager Cheri Donovan reported on the financial health of the organization. Donovan began her presentation by advising that MCIT had once again received an unmodified audit from the independent audit firm of Eide Bailly.

Donovan then highlighted notable items of the 2016 audit:

- Member contributions totaled $37 million in 2016, which represents a $1.2 million increase over 2015. Although aggregate rates in workers’ compensation and property/casualty decreased, the increased contribution is the result of members’ increased exposures (e.g., growth in property values, staff, vehicles and budgets).
- Net realized investment income rose slightly from $2.5 million in 2015 to $2.8 million in 2016.
- Claims paid and changes in reserves increased significantly from $91.3 million in 2015 to $19 million in 2016. The difference is attributed to resolution of several Driver’s Privacy Protection Act and jail suicide claims and increases in reserves for workers’ compensation claims.
- Reinsurance premiums decreased by $90,000 from 2015 to $4.6 million in 2016.
- A dividend of $11.2 million was returned to members.
- MCIT’s 2016 year-end fund balance of $84 million was $4 million less than year-end 2015 and is a factor of the decrease in investment income and increase in claims.

Donovan also provided a report on MCIT’s unaudited financial statements as of Sept. 30, 2017. Items she highlighted:

- Investment income of $3.5 million is comparable to the amount at that time during 2016.
- Total paid claims (net of recoveries) are $15.5 million, compared to $14.2 million at the same time in 2016. The increase is influenced by several large property losses in early 2017.
- Total revenues year-to-date are $29.6 million, and total expenses year-to-date are $26.1 million.
- Dividends of $10.32 million declared in July 2017 were paid in November.

Following the board election and vote on amendments to the MCIT Joint Powers Agreement, Executive Director Robyn Sykes reviewed highlights of 2017 and outlined priorities for 2018.

She reported that members continue to take advantage of on-site training sessions provided as part of membership. MCIT staff delivered 32 sessions during 2017 on popular topics, such as social media, performance management, data practices and the Open Meeting Law. Thirty-two members have taken advantage of Resiliency II training presented by Sand Creek, the Employee Assistance Program administrator.

2017 also gave MCIT the opportunity to work with several other associations (Minnesota Sheriffs’ Association, and Association of Minnesota Counties) to develop and present bylaws, the election of a board member was conducted during the Annual Membership Meeting on Dec. 4 in St. Cloud.

Ron Antony, Yellow Medicine County Commissioner (pictured above), was seeking election to his first four-year term. He was appointed to the board in February 2017 to fill the unexpired term of former Lac qui Parle County Commissioner Gaylen Carlson.

Nominating Committee member Felix Schmiesing, Sherburne County Commissioner, reported that notices advising of the election were sent to eligible individuals in October. He commented that the committee received no responses. Schmiesing on behalf of the committee nominated incumbent Antony.

Having no other nominations from the floor, the members in attendance unanimously voted to elect Antony to the MCIT Board for a term that expires Dec. 31, 2021.

2017 MCIT Award Winners

MCIT Board Chair Scott Sanders announced the recipients of MCIT’s awards during the 2017 MCIT Annual Membership Meeting. Preventing and mitigating losses is important to the overall success and stability of MCIT, so every year MCIT recognizes three counties that excel at risk management and loss control.

Criteria used to identify recipients include performance in risk management and loss control efforts, responsiveness to program/casualty claims and workers’ compensation claims administration.

County of the Year: Blue Earth County

MCIT honors the county that has set the standard of excellence in risk management and loss control. Blue Earth County earned this distinction for 2017 because its leaders proved to be aggressive in their efforts to educate and inform staff about techniques to mitigate exposures and provided superior assistance when claims arose.

Outstanding Performance in Property and Casualty Division:

Mower County

Mower County consistently improved its loss ratio through its commitment to implementing better loss control and risk management methods and its dedication to protecting county property and citizens.

Outstanding Performance in the Workers’ Compensation Division:

Pope County

Pope County continually improved its experience modification factor and reduced its claims in the areas of workplace injury and illnesses, was committed to reducing employee injuries and had an overall focus on loss control and risk management.

Looking Ahead to 2018

Priorities in 2018 include wrapping up Driver’s Privacy Protection Act claims, addressing legislation to add post-traumatic stress disorder as a presumption for first responders to receive workers’ compensation, and focusing on developing materials to assist members with managing cyber-business risks.

Sykes reminded the group that the success of MCIT is the result of their commitment to managing risks. She concluded her comments by thanking the membership for their continued trust and support of the work that MCIT does for them.

Membership Votes to Amend MCIT Joint Powers Agreement

Members attending the annual meeting voted unanimously to adopt the proposed amendments to the MCIT Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). This vote culminated a year of review and discussion by the MCIT Board of Directors.

The changes better reflect the operations of MCIT relative to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Section 471.159 and follow MCIT’s standard risk management advice. The changes include:

- More clearly defining the responsibilities of the MCIT Board of Directors.
- Adding provisions regarding meetings of the board.
- Clarifying the process to terminate the JPA.
- Adding language about how the JPA can be amended.
- Adding indemnification and hold harmless language.

The adoption of these amendments by the membership at the Annual Meeting constitutes a change in the JPA and does not require execution by individual members.

Written in 1987, this represents only the fourth time in the history of MCIT that the JPA has been amended.

Members received the amended JPA along with their 2018 Coverage Document in December.

Members Elect Incumbent to Board

Pursuant to the MCIT bylaws, the election of a board member was conducted during the Annual Membership Meeting on Dec. 4 in St. Cloud.

Ron Antony, Yellow Medicine County Commissioner (pictured above), was seeking election to his first four-year term. He was appointed to the board in February 2017 to fill the unexpired term of former Lac qui Parle County Commissioner Gaylen Carlson.

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Having no other nominations from the floor, the members in attendance unanimously voted to elect Antony to the MCIT Board for a term that expires Dec. 31, 2021.

Sykes also praised MCIT staff who developed and designed two loss prevention best practices guides that earned MCIT a national first-place award from the Public Risk Management Association. This is the second time in four years that MCIT has received this honor.

Other highlights included:

- Introduction of data compromise/Cyber One coverage, which includes access to counsel, forensic staff and media assistance.
- The announcement of MCIT’s 26th consecutive dividend of $10.322 million, bringing the total fund balance returned to members to more than $323 million.
- 2018 will be the fifth consecutive year of rate reductions in both divisions.

Sykes went on to explain that when the board decided to end its reliance on a third-party administrator in 2014, it required MCIT to build internal expertise for property/casualty claims administration and underwriting activities. Almost all positions were filled by the end of 2017.

The software conversion that started in 2016 was completed in early December, at which time MCIT became independent of the third-party’s support. The conversion required that every process and product be reviewed and revised. According to Sykes, these changes will improve MCIT efficiency and reduce operating costs.
AMC Launches New HR Technical Assistance Program for Counties

By Heather Bandeen, AMC Education Director

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our new Human Resources Technical Assistance Program at the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)! As you may have heard, we are offering this exciting new program in partnership with DDA Human Resources, Inc. through funding from the National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA).

Beginning in January, AMC released the first components of this program on our website at www.mncounties.org/humanresources. There, you will find the starting point of a knowledge base of templates and tools, including draft HR policies. This knowledge base will continue to grow, and resources will be frequently updated.

One of the most exciting components of the program is a new Human Resources Helpline that will be staffed by professionals with years of county government experience and legal expertise.

To ensure a successful start to this program, this Helpline is now available to two people per county/multi-county entity. We think it's important that only authorized human resources contacts have access to this service to streamline communication and to prevent others from circumventing county leaders when it comes to crucial decision-making. We are open to your feedback on this approach and it may evolve with time.

When you contact the new Human Resources Helpline, our dedicated colleagues at DDA Human Resources, Inc. will respond to your questions. Here is a little bit about them:

Gary Weiers: Gary leads the Human Resources Division and heads the executive search and organizational analysis services. Since 2013, he has provided human resources management services, executive searches, organizational studies, and management support. Gary has conducted over 50 searches and assisted with dozens of organizational-related projects. Prior to joining DDA, Gary worked his way up the county government ladder, rising from social worker to social services director. He then served as the Rice County Administrator for 11 years where he managed 16 departments with 350 employees and an annual budget of $50 million. This included organizational oversight of Human Resources.

Melanie Ault: Melanie is the primary person responding to county questions. Melanie brings over 20 years of experience leading Minnesota county human resources and labor relations operations with additional experience at the city, regional, and state levels. You might recognize her by her passion for examining pending legislation and its ramifications for the public sector. Melanie holds BA, MA, and JD degrees, with further education in public administration and is an avid supporter of professional organizations, serving on the state and national levels. She loves making new connections and looks forward to helping you find answers and ideas. Melanie is one of our full-time AMC Human Resources Technical Assistance Program staff.

Kerie Anderka: Kerie is passionate about strengthening and building up communities through excellence in local government service. Kerie has over 15 years of Human Resources leadership experience, including 10 years in county government and labor relations. Her work, overseeing a full array of county human resource services, has been marked with innovative problem solving, positive organizational culture change and strategic planning. She has also been instrumental in building strong relationships and communications with local government leaders to reach organizational goals. She holds a BA in both philosophy and Spanish, relishes the nuances of English while drafting union contract provisions, and loves to ponder a good question in either language. Kerie works part-time as one of our AMC Human Resources Technical Assistance Program staff.

Kristin Hack: Kristin has 20 years of experience in Human Resources and Labor Relations, including 12 years of public sector human resources and labor relations experience. Kristin is an innovative HR practitioner and excels at researching and applying human resource principles and best-practice solutions to complex human resource issues. Kristin holds a BS in Communication and Public Relations; she is also SPHR and SHRM-SCP certified. Kristin works part-time as one of our AMC Human Resources Technical Assistance Program staff.

We are honored to partner with Gary, Melanie, Kerie, and Kristin to launch our new AMC Human Resources Technical Assistance Program.

Please make use of this program by reaching out with questions, downloading policy/procedure templates, and also providing feedback on what you need most. All human resources inquiries are welcome – from policy development to new employee requests to ongoing workplace challenges.

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for all you do and for being a part of AMC!
2017 AMC County Achievement Award Winners

Winners include programs in Anoka, Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Goodhue, Kanabec, Morrison, Redwood Sibley, Steele, Todd, Wabasha, Wadena and Waseca Counties.

The children's advocacy center works to bring abuse victims to tell their stories, receive support and additional services such as mental health or medical referrals. This has led to a significant reduction in the number of patients who are imprisoned for similar offenses.

Opioid Program - Morrison County

The Morrison County Community-Based Care Coordination started in January of 2015 with concerns of hospital staff and county law enforcement observing excessive prescriptions of narcotics at crime scenes and patients visiting the emergency room of the hospital requesting pain medications. A grant was awarded to CHI St. Gabriel’s Hospital requiring community partnerships which included Morrison County Public Health and Morrison County Social Services, Morrison County Sheriff’s Office and the Morrison County Attorney’s Office to focus on the patients using opioids for chronic pain.

Healthy Pathways Program - Brown, Dodge, Goodhue, Kanabec, Morrison, Sibley, Steele, Todd, Wabasha, Wadena and Waseca Counties, and South Country Health Alliance

Due to the shortage of rural mental health and chemical health providers, it can take several months for people to obtain services. Opioid use disorder is one issue that we offer immediate support to individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. Key county leadership in the areas of mental health and chemical health partnered with South Country to address this gap in care. From this partnership, the Healthy Pathways Program was born. Healthy Pathways was designed to be flexible so that counties can respond quickly and by doing so, help avert further issues that often come with untreated mental health symptoms such as homelessness, job loss, financial hardships, etc. Having the ability to offer immediate support to individuals in a mental health crisis provides county case managers the foundation to begin building a trusting relationship. As a result, case managers can help navigate the complicated health care system ensuring care with a mental health professional is established. Healthy Pathways Program is also a transition service for those individuals who have received Mental Health Targeted Case Management (MHTCM) but no longer need that level of care.

Children’s Advocacy Center - Redwood County

Redwood County’s Children’s Advocacy Center is a program that provides a safe and child-friendly environment for child abuse victims to tell their stories, receive support and additional services such as mental health or medical referrals. This program provides a platform for a multidisciplinary team response to child abuse allegations in Redwood County. The Redwood County Children’s Advocacy Center is working towards regionalizing its program and services to surrounding Southwest Minnesota counties to serve more children and families. The children’s advocacy center works to bring awareness to the epidemic of child abuse and bring our community together through community partnerships, and will soon develop community education events in 2018.
2017 AMC Outstanding Service Award Winners

Nina Ameson, Goodhue County Director of Health and Human Services, and Jerry Soma, Anoka County Administrator, were recognized with Association of Minnesota Counties’ (AMC) 2017 Outstanding Service Awards for exhibiting excellence, innovation and dedication to their work in county government. 2017 AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County commissioner, presented the awards at the association’s annual conference December 4 in St. Cloud. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.

Nina Ameson, Goodhue County Director of Health and Human Services

Goodhue County Health and Human Service’s Director, Nina Ameson, has been involved in public service for 20 years, and working for Goodhue County for the past seven years. Nina was hired under the joint leadership of the former Human Service’s Director, Greg Schoener, and former Public Health Director, Karen Main, with the goal to be to integrate two county service systems into one, more efficient way to deliver county services known as Health and Human Services. This transformation was years in the making and under Nina’s leadership has been a success in Goodhue County. In addition to Nina’s strong leadership role in Goodhue County, she also plays a critical role in her involvement with South Country Health Alliance. In 2015, when the Department of Health announced they planned to discontinue contracting with South Country Health Alliance, Nina was the driving force behind a committee who met with DHS officials and representatives from Governor Dayton’s Office and as a result, DHS reversed their decision and spared some of Goodhue County’s most vulnerable citizens.

Jerry Soma, Anoka County Administrator

With a remarkable 51-year tenure, Anoka County Administrator Jerry Soma’s legacy of leadership, integrity, and service to county government is unparalleled. His entire professional career has been dedicated to public service and the citizens of Anoka County have benefited immeasurably by his passion, extraordinary vision, and unwavering commitment to making county government better. In his role as county administrator, Jerry has introduced numerous innovations and service delivery enhancements. He has promoted a work culture that encourages creativity, nurtures professional development, and inspires excellence.

Jerry is a gifted communicator, whether working with staff, county commissioners, legislators, community leaders, or members of the public. He listens thoughtfully, has a strong sense of fairness, and possesses extraordinary vision. He is a positive leader who sees the possibilities in every challenge facing county government. His unfailing optimism and can-do attitude fosters a spirit of collaboration and motivates others to find workable solutions to complex issues, even among groups with widely divergent viewpoints. Jerry has dedicated his life to public service. His long tenure working in county government has been far more than a career; it’s been his life’s calling.

Nina Ameson with her son and husband Scott Ameson, Goodhue County Administrator.

Jerry Soma (center) with Anoka County Commissioners (from left to right): Mike Gamache, Jim Kordiak, Robyn West, Rhonda Sivarajah, Julie Braasted, Scott Schulte and Matt Look.

Traverse County's Broadband Wireless Initiative Receives Economic Development Award

The Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED) selected Traverse County’s Broadband Wireless Initiative to receive the group’s annual county economic development award. Traverse County is very rural with a sparse population (3,500 residents), that borders South Dakota and North Dakota. They have seen the importance of consistent broadband services for all residents and businesses for both the quality of life and economic development improvements. This broadband project was a quick launch project with subscribers up and running in less than a year, with the highest level plan being three times cheaper than what most users in Traverse County had been paying! This low-risk project is also innovative because the county provides a loan to local provider Advanteno and they pay it back as new subscribers are added. It was also innovative in that the county secured a zero-interest loan from the electrical cooperative, making it a relatively zero-cost investment. It’s the first county-wide project in Minnesota of this nature.

Rock County’s Disaster Recovery Assistance Program Receives 2017 County Conservation Award

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) selected the Rock County Land Management Office’s Disaster Recovery Assistance Program (DRAP) to receive the 2017 AMC-BWSR County Conservation Award. Following the floods of 2014, the Rock County Land Management Office sought to operate a Disaster Recovery Assistance Program (DRAP) in response to the many documented erosion issues. The granted project funds for cost-sharing engineered conservation projects that impact surface water health and landscape resources was $15.6 million over the course of the period 2015-into 2018. The funds were stretched, using local, private, and federal cost-share to accomplish nearly 200 separate conservation projects that address damaged conservation projects and correct eroded areas. Coordination and operation of the DRAP program tested the limits of the Rock County technical and administrative staff, their partners, and the Area 5 Technical Services Area, who were already administering programs under normal operating capacity including oversight of buffer activities. Projects accomplished through this program's effort helped with flooding, worked toward water quality goals, and promote public awareness of the importance of conservation.

Rock County and the Land Management Office in particular should be commended for their success of this program given the very large scope of the project in conjunction with its efforts in other SWCD programs as well as the solutions to challenges faced through insufficient planning and engineering help at times.

BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke (far right) with representatives from Rock County.

BVSIR Executive Director John Jaschke (far right) with representatives from Rock County.
Our thanks to the more than 500 attendees and 112 exhibitors for making the 2017 AMC Annual Conference in St. Cloud a successful event! Mark your calendars and make plans to join us at the next annual conference at the DoubleTree Hotel in Bloomington on December 2-4, 2018.

Eleven AMC Past Presidents attended this year’s conference! From left to right: Harlan Madsen (Kandiyohi), Jack Swanson (Roseau), Duane Bakke (Fillmore), Gene Short (Redwood), Jim McDonough (Ramsey), Nancy Schouweiler (Dakota), Gary Hendrickx (Swift), Bob Fenwick (Cook), Christopher Shoff (Freeborn), Dennis Fink (St. Louis) and Randy Maluchnik (Carver).

Let’s show the world what we can do together.

Day by day. Project by project. Together we’re bridging what’s possible and moving the world forward.

Volunteers tied blankets for hospitalized children for “Loving Hands of Faribault” – a group started by Ruth Gillen (wife of Rice County Commissioner Jake Gillen) that has donated nearly 40,000 quilts to children’s hospitals.

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"Our employees are a very tight knit group," Caldwell explained. "In doing this, I hope we were able to help Jen grab onto something normal after so much in her life seems out of her control."

Grace helped organize a Taco Tuesday Fundraiser lunch to help defray some of Jen’s medical expenses.

"It was also Grace who first came up with the idea about seeing if Jen could attend a Vikings game," noted Caldwell. "Jen loves NFL football, and Vikings football in particular."

Through the Minnesota Association of County Administrators, Jeff was able to contact Brad Madson, Executive Director of Community Relations for the Minnesota Vikings. Learning of Jen’s situation, the Vikings graciously provided complimentary tickets and on field passes for Jen and lifelong friend Liz Dawson to attend the December 17, 2017, game against the Cincinnati Bengals. Jeff and another colleague were also able to attend to assist Jen and Liz in getting around US Bank Stadium.

In addition, the Hotel Ivy in Minneapolis provided complimentary accommodations and amenities for Jen and Liz.

"Hotel Ivy staff went out of their way to make our stay exceptionally memorable and comfortable," said Dawson. "I cannot thank Senior Manager Kevin Callaghan enough for extending such graciousness and hospitality to us."

"From the time they entered US Bank Stadium, Vikings and Stadium staff created a truly amazing experience for Jen and Liz. While on the sidelines before the game, Jen was able to meet several current Vikings players and coaches, including Wide Receivers Stephon Diggs and Jarius Wright and Defensive Coordinator George Edwards.

Especially memorable for Jen was meeting former Vikings superstars Randall McDaniel and Greg Coleman. "Randall joked about not being old enough to use a walker like mine," laughed Jen, who also admired the sharp dress and larger-than-life personality of Greg Coleman.

"All of the staff of the Vikings, Hotel Ivy, and US Bank Stadium were extremely accommodating and gracious in anticipating Jen’s needs during her stay, and went out of their way to provide a fantastic memorable experience," said Caldwell. "We are so grateful to all who were involved for making this possible for her."

The game proved to be an enjoyable 34-7 win for the Vikings; and one in which we saw the long-awaited return of Teddy Bridgewater to competitive football and the Vikings crowned NFC North champions.

In the end, however, it was not the win or the score that mattered most. When asked why the Cook County family went the extra mile for Jen, Administrator Cadwell reflected.

"Our employees are a very tight knit group," Caldwell explained. "In doing this, I hope we were able to help Jen grab onto something normal after so much in her life seems out of her control."

According to Jen, who is now receiving care and treatment for her illness in Duluth, "for a few hours, I was able to forget that I have cancer. Thank you."

Former Pipestone County Administrator Receives Award for County Management Excellence

Sharon Hanson, longtime former Pipestone County Administrator and current Administrator for the City of Marshall, received the "Joe Ries Excellence in County Management Award" from Minnesota Association of County Administrators (MACA) president Chuck Whiting, Polk County Administrator, during the Association of Minnesota Counties’ (AMC) Annual Conference in St. Cloud.

Whiting selected Hanson for her dedication to strengthening county administration and mentoring new professionals in the field. Hanson served as Pipestone County administrator for the past 13 years and is a former MACA president who continued to be deeply involved in the organization up until her recent departure to become the City of Marshall’s Administrator in November.

"Sharon is the exemplification of what our organization promotes, which is excellence and professionalism in county government management," explained Whiting. "We will miss her very much in county government, and we know that she’ll serve the City of Marshall well."
Many of our county partners know that 4-H is Minnesota’s largest youth development program. But did you know just how large and effective it is?

Last year, more than 60,000 young people participated in 4-H programs across the state, with the help of more than 11,000 adult volunteers who contributed over 1 million hours of their time. 4-H operates in every Minnesota county and offers young people opportunities to become leaders, to communicate more effectively, and to build connections with their peers, adults and communities.

Through programs like the Science of Agriculture Challenge and State Ambassadors, young people learn about the importance of investing in their communities and about becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

Minnesota counties are important partners with Extension in ongoing support of 4-H. Together, we can build an even more impactful program. An estimated 35 percent, or about 350,000, of Minnesota’s youth between ages 5 and 19 are involved in 4-H. Together, we can build an even more impactful program. An estimated 35 percent, or about 350,000, of Minnesota’s youth between ages 5 and 19 are not yet involved in quality out-of-school activities. Minnesota 4-H has made it a priority to expand its reach, to engaging more of those young Minnesotans who aren’t yet involved in 4-H and who may not be aware of its benefits.

An expanded 4-H means a better Minnesota. Together, we can make that happen.

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Big (and historic) election year in Minnesota in 2018

By Steve Simon, Minnesota Secretary of State

I hope everyone had a safe and happy new year, and is ready for 2018. This is going to be another important (and historic) election year in Minnesota, beginning with precinct caucuses on February 6, the state primary election on August 14, and the state general election on November 6.

Minnesotans will be voting for their choice for both U.S. Senate seats, their member of the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as their choice for Governor & Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, State Auditor, Attorney General, and State Representative. This will be the first election in Minnesota since 1978 that both U.S. Senate seats and the governorship are up for election in the same year.

Some Minnesotans will also be voting for their local County Officers, City Officers, School Board Members, Township Officers, Hospital Board Members, Park Board District Members, or local ballot questions.

Minnesota has a proud tradition of high voter participation, and thanks to the great work being done by all of you at the county and local levels, our election system will continue to be one of the most envied in the nation.

Presidentiadal Advisory Commission on Election Integrity

On January 3, the President issued an executive order dissolving the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity.

This was the right decision for the country. From the beginning, I had serious doubts about the Commission’s credibility and trustworthiness. That’s why I refused to turn over Minnesota voters’ personal information in response to the Commission’s intrusive data requests. In the end, the Commission was a distraction, and it collapsed under the weight of the false and irresponsible claim that millions of ineligible votes were cast in the last election.

I hope that we can all now re-focus our attention on the most serious national challenge to the integrity of our election system: cyber-intrusion from outside forces that want to disrupt our elections. There is overwhelming evidence that the risks of election-related cyberattacks are serious, verifiable, and growing. That ongoing challenge is where we need to concentrate our energy and resources.

Remembering Deputy Secretary of State Ann Kaner-Roth

Lastly, I have some sad news to share with all of you. Deputy Minnesota Secretary of State Ann Kaner-Roth died after a battle with brain cancer on Dec. 21, 2017. She was 49 years old, and is survived by her husband Marc Roth and their three children.

Before joining our office as Deputy in January 2015, Ann had been a longstanding and well-known civil rights advocate, most notably as executive director of a nonprofit organization called Project 515, which played an instrumental role in enacting marriage equality in Minnesota. Before that, she lobbied for children’s issues at the Minnesota Capitol.

The world has lost a special soul with the passing of Ann. On behalf of my entire office, I’m devastated by her death – and I’m heartbroken for her family. She was my friend, my collaborator, and my colleague. She dedicated her professional life to giving equal voice and equal dignity to as many people as she could. She brought passion and skill and empathy and patience to that work. She achieved great success, while always deflecting credit. Her impact will endure. She inspired many people – including me. The best way to honor her is to live by her example. May her memory continue to be a blessing.
WINTER 2018

A Look at the Federal Tax Bill from the County Perspective
By Matt Hilgart, AMC General Government Policy Analyst and Federal Relations Coordinator

What’s the News and Why Does It Matter?

HR 1, more formally known as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, is the first major tax code overhaul to occur in 3 decades when then President Reagan signed the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The newly-passed, comprehensive tax bill touches nearly every sector of the economy, impacting individuals, corporations, small businesses, and even local governments. AMC has been actively monitoring developments and engaging with Minnesota’s congressional delegation to make them aware of early versions of the bill which limited local governments’ ability to restructure debt, successfully use private activity bonds, and maintain critical tax exempt status on municipal bonds. Altogether, first versions of the tax bill had the potential to slow housing/HRA project investments, make financing of county/local government infrastructure more costly, and completely eliminate deductibility of state and local taxes for itemized tax filers.

What are the Main Components of the Bill?
The House and Senate both released their versions of tax overhaul in late November, hashing out differences in mid-December, and ultimately getting the President’s signature on a comprehensive bill three days before Christmas. The final version contains several major tax provisions, including, but not limited to:

- Lowering 5 of 7 individual income tax rates—final rates are set at 10, 12, 22, 24, 32, 35, and 37%.
- Doubling the standard deduction for single and joint filers.
- Limiting or eliminating several personal/itemized tax deductions.
- Increasing child tax credit from $1,000 to $2,000.
- Repealing individual healthcare mandate starting in 2019 (but bill does not repeal “Cadillac tax”).
- Lowering corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%.
- Phasing out Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT).

All told, changes in credits, exclusions, rate changes and receipts will add more than $1.5 trillion to the nation’s projected budget deficit over the next 10 years. For a specific breakdown of county-related provisions and how they proceeded through the process, please visit the naco.org web site.

How Did Counties Fare?

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<th>Good News:</th>
<th>Bad News:</th>
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<td>Counties successfully advocated to maintain current tax exempt status on municipal bonds—a critical financing tool that has allowed hundreds of millions of dollars in county road, highway, bridge, hospital and community project investment over the last decade. Congress also preserved the tax exempt status on Private Activity Bonds (PABs), a mechanism commonly used by HRAs, nonprofits hospitals, rural cooperatives and airports.</td>
<td>The State and Local Tax deduction, commonly referred to as “SALT”, has been a part of US tax code for over a century, allowing taxpayers who itemize their taxes to deduct their state and local taxes (both income and property taxes) from their overall federal tax liability. Congress’ decision to cap this deduction at $10,000 total will undoubtedly have an impact on thousands of Minnesota households in addition to potentially making property taxpayers more sensitive to local property tax rates/levies. The final, signed bill also eliminates tax exempt status on advanced refunding bonds (the ability for governments to refinance interest rates one time during the lifetime of a bond) and repeals the individual healthcare mandate starting in 2019. While AMC has no position on the latter, it is unclear what effect(s) the repeal will have on individual rates of insurance and insurance marketplaces.</td>
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Good News: Emily Babcock, a new Health and Human Services Policy Analyst, joins the IGS team on February 12.

Bad News: The State and Local Tax deduction, commonly referred to as “SALT”, has been a part of US tax code for over a century, allowing taxpayers who itemize their taxes to deduct their state and local taxes (both income and property taxes) from their overall federal tax liability. Congress’ decision to cap this deduction at $10,000 total will undoubtedly have an impact on thousands of Minnesota households in addition to potentially making property taxpayers more sensitive to local property tax rates/levies. The final, signed bill also eliminates tax exempt status on advanced refunding bonds (the ability for governments to refinance interest rates one time during the lifetime of a bond) and repeals the individual healthcare mandate starting in 2019. While AMC has no position on the latter, it is unclear what effect(s) the repeal will have on individual rates of insurance and insurance marketplaces.

What Does the SALT Deduction Cap Mean for Minnesota?

“High tax” states and high property value communities are becoming increasingly concerned about what the SALT deduction will mean for homeowners and real estate markets. If, as some groups allege, it becomes more costly to be a homeowner and pay property taxes, what will happen to the housing market? Moreover, will property taxpayers be more sensitive to future referendums, levy increases, or capital bonding projects? Time will tell. In the meantime, certain “SALT-heavy” states such as California and New York have gone so far as to brainstorm possible workarounds that include letting tax filers make a charitable contribution in the amount of their state and local tax liability in exchange for an equal sized tax credit that could then be deducted from your federal return since it would be qualified as “charitable giving”. Whether this kind of mechanism would work, is legal, or might be eventually circumvented at a federal level has not yet been determined. The Internal Revenue Service issued guidelines stating that taxpayers taxes levied and paid in 2017 would still be deductible but that a “prepayment of anticipated real property taxes” would not—meaning that using Truth and Taxation notices for 2018 taxes may be a stretch. It is important for counties seeing an influx of prepaid property tax payments to remember that payments are coming in early and do not represent a windfall, but just an early payment.

What Happens Next?

The tax bill passed both chambers on strict party lines and was signed into law by President Trump on December 22nd, with most effective dates starting January 1, 2018. While there may be certain amendments or clarifications to the law later on, counties should expect these changes to be a permanent fixture of US tax law. Moreover, the overall size of this bill and its impact on the projected federal deficit has several majority House and Senate members already talking about the need to reel in spending on entitlement programs – which could include future proposals impacting social security, Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps, and more. If Congress chooses to also move forward on a national infrastructure bill, pressure would only mount to make cuts to balance additional spending. In Minnesota, attention will turn to whether lawmakers are interested in making federal conformity changes to put Minnesota’s tax code in line with federal law and if those changes would be revenue neutral or pose a reduction to the state’s coffers. In the end, the desire to pursue some kind of conformity bill may even resurrect conversations from last year’s tax bill and at minimum start the debate about what the potential cost of conformity means for an already projected deficit. For more information, please contact Matt Hilgart at mhilgart@mncounties.org.

New HHS Policy Analyst Starts February 12

A MC is pleased to announce that Emily Babcock will join the IGS team on February 12 as our new Health and Human Services Policy Analyst. She joins the association after nearly a decade as a senior policy analyst at the Texas Medical Association where she worked on public health policy issues on behalf of more than 50,000 physicians.

She’s moving to Minnesota after 14 years in Austin, Texas, in part to be closer to family. She grew up in South Dakota and attended the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, where she received her bachelor’s in Journalism. After college, she worked as a print and radio reporter before shifting to public health policy. She earned a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

She believes in the power of good policy and is eager to get to know Minnesota’s counties and work on issues to protect the health of Minnesotans.
**AMC 2018 LEGISLATIVE POLICY PRIORITIES**

**AMC supports requiring that county boards be notified of, and allowed to comment on, applications for state-funded acquisition projects that are proposed in the county.**

**Environment and Natural Resources: Land Acquisitions**

Background: The issue of acquiring private lands with state funding has been a hotly debated topic at the Legislature the last few sessions. Granting agencies such as the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council have also recently discussed application procedures and best practices for land acquisitions.

Staff Analysis: With these discussions already occurring, AMC decided it would be timely to form a work group to further examine all public lands issues from the county perspective and to determine if AMC should consider and/or pursue any new policy recommendations to address some of the concerns. The AMC Public Lands Management Work Group met three times during the summer/fall and this policy was one of five positions developed by the work group that had group consensus. AMC believes that early and enhanced communication on state-funded land acquisition projects would help address many of the concerns county boards encounter with respect to land acquisitions. A notification requirement to county boards prior to approval and funding of the project would allow for dialogue and problem-solving early in the acquisition process to result in win-win situations for all parties involved.

**Health and Human Services:**

**Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS)**

Background: Today, nearly one million Minnesotans are enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA) or MinnesotaCare. Counties are responsible for determining eligibility for these programs. METS was created to be an automated system to address the increased volume resulting from MA expansion. This system has proven to be technologically inefficient requiring counties to invest in increased staff to ensure productivity requirements are met.

Staff Analysis: Counties want our eligibility system to be one that is one of integrity, where individuals are receiving the appropriate services. Periodic Data matching (PDM) will help accomplish this, however it cannot be accomplished with a system that does not function. Given concern with the recent roll out of MnLARS, and a field test being identified as a means by which the roll out could have been run more smoothly with better results for counties and consumers, AMC is seeking legislation that will require a field test of the technology associated with completing PDM successfully before a complete roll out statewide.

**Health and Human Services/Public Safety:**

**Mental Health Bonding**

Background: There are proposals at the legislature to use bonding for mental health infrastructure to help enhance the current system. These proposals would benefit counties in multiple ways. The triage center approach would reduce the number of people in mental health crisis that are brought to the jail as a last resort. The housing funds would create additional opportunities for moving individuals out of the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center in a more timely manner, reducing the cost share pressure on county budgets.

Staff Analysis: Solutions to these issues continue to be challenging. There are multiple areas within the system for which additional resources should be allocated. With this year being a “bonding year” and a champion already identified for these proposals, it makes sense for AMC to focus our efforts toward making them a reality and while they won’t resolve all of the issues facing the mental health system, it is a meaningful step forward.

**Public Safety:**

**Opioids**

Background: This plank would include assuring that any efforts to spend resources on combating the opioid epidemic include counties and resources be shared with county partners. This would also include a review and potential changes to statute to allow for all types of first responders to carry and administer Narcan (Naloxone) and to be sure that any county employee with regular contact with a high risk population have liability protection for administering Narcan.

Staff Analysis: This is very timely for this session given the attention focused on the issue by the media as well as policy makers from all levels of government. Opioid related overdose deaths increased 18% from 2015 to 2016 and the most recent data suggests that it will increase again in 2017. In addition to potential financial resources for prevention and treatment, this issue also offers the possibility for policy changes that do not require additional funding, increasing the likelihood of success in a non-budget legislative session.

Transportation Funding

Background: The Legislature passed a comprehensive transportation funding bill last session, which included general fund revenue shifts from the sales tax on auto parts, general obligation bonding money, and transfer of the entire amount of the Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax (MVLSST) to transportation. The bill included $235 million in new revenue for roads and bridges and an additional $71 million in general fund dollars for Metropolitan Area Transit. Despite this additional funding, the bill did not include a substantial increase in funding from any constitutionally dedicated sources. AMC must continue to be active in educating legislators and advocating for long-term funding: the solution should be comprehensive (multi-modal), balanced (regionally and between modes), sustainable (on-going funding), and dedicated (constitutionally for roads and statutorily for transit).

Staff Analysis: Going into a bonding year, it will be important for AMC to support funding for transportation related bonding programs. Last year, the Legislature passed a nearly one billion-dollar bonding bill to make up for the lack of a bonding bill in 2016. The bill included a record amount of funding for the Local Road Improvement Program and the Local Bridge Replacement Program, though the funding for each program was almost entirely earmarked for specific projects. The waiting list of roads and bridges seeking funding from these programs continues to grow. It will be important for AMC to support a robust bonding bill in the 2018 Session that adequately funds the local road and bridge programs as well as the Local Road Wetland Replacement Program.

**To learn more, visit www.mncounties.org or contact AMC’s Intergovernmental Services Staff.**
As we embark on a new year, Local Public Health Association (LPHA) members look forward to strengthening existing partnerships and developing new partners to promote and protect the health of Minnesota residents. Through our strategic planning process and in setting legislative priorities, we have our work cut out for us in 2018!

The four goal areas in the LPHA Strategic Plan for this next year are:

1. **Membership Engagement:** We recognize the importance of a connected and engaged membership. With many new directors and managers working in local public health, we remain committed to pursuing strategies to increase meeting attendance, engagement and networking opportunities for members. Our efforts will include: supporting implementation of a Vidyo agreement with DHS, which provides innovative opportunities for connecting with members and peers through videoconferencing; assessing LPHA’s regional structure for opportunities to enhance mentoring and support; and strengthening our orientation process for new public health leaders.

2. **Public Health Leadership and Workforce:** We are committed to developing our future workforce and providing opportunities for members to grow as leaders. To accomplish this, we will be: exploring opportunities to collaborate with partners on employee retention and professional development initiatives; cataloguing current leadership development opportunities (and gaps) and helping to promote such events to members; and continuing to pursue opportunities to co-sponsor trainings and professional development seminars for members, such as the Minnesota Fall Supervisor’s Conference, New Director’s School and testimony training.

3. **Health in all Policies:** We want to further health in all policies as a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations and an equity lens into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. We will engage with local and state partners to pursue collaborative solutions that focus on: strengthening MN’s public health system, reducing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and addressing the opioid crisis and substance abuse. In addition, we will continue to establish opportunities for local public health to meet with state agency staff and AMC affiliates on shared priority issues.

4. **Public Health Brand:** The work of local public health isn’t always visible, but we’re all safer and healthier because of it. To increase visibility and communication efforts of local public health and our association, we will: work to establish a joint communication strategy and calendar with the MN Department of Health; revamp LPHA’s website; and initiate the development of an LPHA communication plan, taking into account current outreach and assessing the value of developing a social media presence to boost advocacy efforts, better engage with media, and elevate the work of local public health agencies.

In addition to implementing the goals in the LPHA Strategic Plan, we will be working on the following 2018 Legislative priorities:

- **Local Public Health Grant:** LPHA supports outreach and education regarding the need to increase funding for the Local Public Health Grant in the FY19 budget year to restore local capacity to maintain core, state-mandated services, address emerging public health issues, and relieve local tax levies.

- **Telehealth for Infectious Disease Investigation, Prevention & Treatment:** LPHA supports revisions to the MN Telemedicine Act that allow local public health providers to bill MA more than three times per week per enrollee for telemedicine services conducted for the purposes of infectious disease investigation, prevention and treatment.

- **Health Care Access Fund & Provider Tax:** LPHA supports reinstating the provider tax in the absence of an alternative funding source for the Health Care Access Fund.

- **Opioid and Substance Abuse Prevention:** LPHA supports policies and new funding that address opioid and substance abuse through public health prevention.

- **Promoting Healthy Communities & Healthy Behaviors:** LPHA supports maintaining state funding for programs that promote healthy communities and healthy behaviors, including family home visiting and the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership.

Onward to 2018! We are thankful for the expertise and commitment of our members and the ongoing support from AMC and other affiliate organizations. We look forward to working together to make 2018 a healthy and productive year!
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