AMC Legislative Conference Draws 300 County Officials, Staff, and Gov. Tim Walz

County officials and staff from across the state attended the annual Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) Legislative Conference and “County Day at the Capitol” in February, which focuses on current legislative issues facing Minnesota counties.

Gov. Tim Walz opened the conference by discussing his thoughts on a variety of county issues, including his support of $30 million in new county program aid (CPA) and robust funding for improving our state’s transportation infrastructure, especially roads and bridges. Attendees then headed to the Capitol for meetings with legislators to discuss a wide variety of issues including combatting the opioid and substance abuse crisis, sustaining the health care access fund, expanding statewide broadband infrastructure, transportation funding and more.

2019 AMC president and Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte delivered his ‘State of the Counties’ address at the close of the conference.

“I believe state of our counties is stronger than ever because of the problem-solvers in this room,” Schulte said. “Those of you who show up, engage, and make sure that your constituents are represented in our work – you are what make our counties strong.”

“By working together, sharing good ideas, and coming together to promote effective public policy, we can begin to address the challenges facing our counties,” Schulte added. “We have the tools we need to do this through our Association of Minnesota Counties.”

Two Minnesota 4H projects were also honored at this conference for their contributions and service to communities. These projects, driven by youth across Minnesota, truly make a big difference and respond to real community needs in the state. Each year, AMC in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension, awards Community Leadership Awards at the annual AMC Legislative Conference. Each project is recognized based on responding to real community needs and demonstrating broad participation by youth in the design and implementation. Each winning club receives $500.

“Creating Community Cultural Awareness” DC Pumas 4H Club - Dodge County
The DC Pumas 4H Club from Dodge County was recognized for their collaborative work on “Community Project Cultural Exposure.” With the mission to teach others about their culture, the club members worked with parents to learn and make presentations about important Hispanic traditions, such as Day of the Dead and Las Posadas as well as Alebrijes and artwork. They made a series of presentations and displays for Triton Schools and community members. As they worked together, the club learned more about their cultural background while also inspiring educated awareness in others.

“Is This Justice? Juvenile VS. Restorative Justice” Franklin Library 4H Club – Hennepin County
The Franklin Library 4H Club from Hennepin County was recognized for their project, called: “Is this Justice: Juvenile Justice vs. Restorative Justice.” Due to first-hand experience with the juvenile justice system, the club members were motivated to talk with community leaders and organizations about alternatives. They created and implemented a presentation that taught about restorative justice practices for a total audience of over 75 youth and educators and received positive feedback for well-researched information as well as learning activities.

Projects are reviewed by members of the AMC Extension Committee Judging Panel. Winners are then invited to a luncheon with county commissioners to be recognized with a trophy and check. If your 4H program is interested in applying in 2020, please contact Heather Bandeen, AMC Education Director, at hbandeen@mncounties.org.
It Only Takes One Wrong Click: Tips for Spotting Malicious Emails

Scammers send out billions of spam messages every day. These messages often get flagged by spam filters, and many users routinely discard these annoying messages on a regular basis. Malicious emails can still get by even the most advanced spam filter systems, however. It is these malicious emails that you should be concerned about.

Malicious emails are one way that hackers try to get access to your private information. If you receive a spam email, you should delete it immediately — do not open any attachments or click any links. The tips below will help you better protect yourself when using email.

Phishing emails appear to come from legitimate sources and aim to get you to download a malicious file, click a malicious link, or provide personal information. These messages often use alarming, outrageous, or tempting language designed to get you to respond quickly without thinking.

Check Email Sender
Scammers often send emails from email addresses that appear to be legitimate. Scammers sometimes create email addresses where numbers have been substituted for letters (for example, “irs-service@irs.gov” is a fake for “irs-service@irs.gov”). You should always review the sender email address to ensure it is valid. In the example above, you should never expect to receive email notifications from the Internal Revenue Service about tax refunds. Pay close attention to messages that come from unknown senders.

Look at the Hyperlinks (Without Clicking)
Hyperlinks or links allow users to click and navigate to specific websites. There are two parts to a link: (1) what is displayed and (2) where the link actually takes you. Spammers often make links appear legitimate. But the links can take you to malicious websites. To avoid accessing a malicious site, know where the link will take you before clicking. To do this, move your mouse over the link but do not click, just hover. Your screen will show you where the link will actually take you when you click it. Use caution with links that contain numbers, misspellings, or other indicators of a scam.

Look for Grammar and Spelling Errors
Spammers are getting smarter when crafting malicious emails, but many messages are still riddled with grammar and spelling mistakes. Read the subject line and first few sentences of the email to determine if the email uses broken language or text not related to the purpose of the email. Here is an example of misspelled “confirm your e-mail” that uses mistyped “confirm a your e-mail address” on a Login Information below or your account will be suspended within 24 hours for security reasons.” Other examples of messages with broken language include “verify your account now to avoid it closed!!” and “Warning!! Account owner that refuses to update his/her account after two weeks of receiving this warning will lose his/her account permanently.” You should delete these messages immediately and avoid clicking links and downloading files that are attached to them.

Once you know what you’re looking for when it comes to malicious email, it’s fairly easy to spot. If you remain vigilant, you can avoid all of the trouble spammers are trying their best to cause.

The IRS needs your information now!
A friend or colleague shared a document with you?

How Can You Tell If an Email is Real?
Email scams (known as phishing) trick you into visiting a fraudulent website, opening an infected document, or logging in to “validate your email account!” These emails, websites, documents, or login pages may be obviously fraudulent, or may look exactly like a familiar login page.

Recognize Email Scams
• From official sounding like “Service,” “HelpDesk,” “Customer Support,” or even colleague or friend.
• Include threats or dire consequences if you don’t act quickly. You are asked to pay ransom to access your data.
• May ask you to open a shared document you may or may not be expecting.
• May ask you to bypass policy/procedures.
• May ask you not to tell anyone.

What Not to Do
• Do NOT give your passwords and other sensitive information to an unverified party online, over the phone, or in person.
• Do NOT click any links contained in the message.
• Do NOT open any attached files or shared documents.
• Do NOT provide personal information such as passwords, Social Security number, or any other personal information.
• Do NOT submit passwords through Google Forms.
• Do NOT violate policy.
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!

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Congressional Schedul

In the waning of the government shutdown that consumed much of Congress’ time in the early months of 2019, the last several weeks in Washington have been filled with legislative business. In March, the President released his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2020, and lawmakers have been busy working on the 12 appropriations bills that will be needed to fund the federal government past September 30. The new House Majority has increased the number of bills that will be considered, including on campaign finance, gun control, and health care, although none of these are expected to be taken up in the Senate. The Upper Chamber has been busy as well, with the confirmation of President Trump’s nominees for administration and judicial posts remaining a priority. In the coming months, expect infrastructure investment and prescription drug pricing to be areas of bipartisan focus that lawmakers would like to take action on before the August recess.

United States Senate

Major Conservation Bill Signed Into Law

President Trump signed the Natural Resources Management Act into law in March, capping a bipartisan effort to update the nation’s public lands laws that had spanned multiple Congressional sessions. The law was praised by Congressional Leaders on both sides of the aisle as a historic investment in American natural resources. The law’s most prominent feature is a permanent reauthorization of the popular Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The bill also included provisions to remove and extend the North Country Scenic Trail and resolve a land management issue in the Apostle State Park, priorities of Minnesota lawmakers led by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). The Natural Resources Management Act passed the House by a vote of 363-62, and the Senate by a vote of 92-8.

Negotiations Underway for Child Nutrition Legislation Reauthorization

House and Senate lawmakers are beginning work on a child nutrition program reauthorization bill, the Ranking Member on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee said. “We’re just at a point where we’re just beginning the conversation,” Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) said in March. Child nutrition programs, which include the federal school lunch program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, better known as WIC, have not been reauthorized in nearly 10 years.

Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers Oppose USDA’s Proposed SNAP Changes

A bipartisan group of lawmakers sent a letter in late March regarding the Department of Agriculture’s plan to toughen work requirements for recipients of government food assistance, stating it should be withdrawn. Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), along with 46 other lawmakers of both parties, sent the letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, specifically in opposition to his proposed rule to eliminate statewide waivers from work requirements for recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) unless a state qualifies for extended unemployment benefits.

“This proposal ignores the intent of Congress, would worsen hunger in this country, and would also fail to help increase SNAP participation, increase long-term employment or move individuals to self-sufficiency,” the letter to Secretary Perdue read. The comment period on the rule ended on April 2. In February, Secretary Perdue said that the USDA will likely proceed to a final rule soon after the comment period ends.

At Fiscal Midpoint, Lawmakers Warn Stopgap Measure a Possibility

April 1 marked the midpoint of the fiscal year for 2019. With federal spending negotiations off to such an unusually slow start, top appropriators are already warning they may need a stopgap measure to avoid a shutdown. Lawmakers’ goal of an early agreement to raise spending caps under the Budget Control Act, which would provide a common set of top-line spending figures for appropriators in both chambers, now seems unlikely. That means appropriators in the House and Senate will likely mark up bills that add up to different figures. As the fiscal year funding deadline approaches at the end of September, negotiators will have to reconcile potentially broad differences over defense and domestic spending levels, as well as the myriad smaller differences within all 12 bills in order to avoid a stopgap spending measure.

Surface Transportation Bill Could Move Out of Committee by July

Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), the ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said the panel will approve a public works package by July. The committee will hold hearings on draft legislation this spring, according to Carper. Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) and Chairman (R-Chair) are currently gathering input from other senators to help in advancing draft of the bill. The current surface authorization expires at the end of 2020.

Senate Moves to Speed Up Trump Nominations

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) deployed the so-called “nuclear option” in April by changing the chamber’s rules to speed approval of various nominations, removing a key procedural hurdle. “It is time for this chapter to end,” he said, rating the new rules will apply to future nominees by the President. Leader McConnell’s effort will increase the rate at which the Senate can vote to confirm or reject nominees, but this change is unlikely to fully clear the confirmation logjam due to the sheer number of positions yet to be filled. Further, the expedited process will not apply to all nominations, with Supreme Court and Cabinet nominees being exempt from the rules change.

United States House of Representatives

Earmarks Not Returning for the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations Cycle

After months of publicly considering the idea to bring back earmarks to the appropriations process, leadership in the House of Representatives decided against the change. Although the return of Congressionally Directed Spending had the support of the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee, as well as the leadership of the House Majority and Senate, House Democrats have avoided it since March. House Appropriations Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) wrote that “unfortunately, there is currently not the necessary bipartisan, bicameral agreement to allow the Appropriations Committee to earmark,” in a letter to her colleagues. Earmarks, which allow Members of Congress to direct spending to specific projects, often in their own districts, have been informally banned in the House since 2011.

House and Senate Explore Funding Options for Infrastructure Package

In March, the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing exploring federal revenue options to improve America’s infrastructure, featuring testimony from House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Ranking Member Bill Shuster (R-PA). Chairman DeFazio emphasized the significant role the Ways and Means Committee plays in passing a comprehensive infrastructure bill and advocated for a number of revenue-raising tools including raising the federal gas tax. Congressman Graves later stated that the federal gas tax is outdated and is no longer a viable long-term solution. Instead, Congressman Graves endorsed legislation to implement a “Vehicle Miles Traveled” program, which would be a federal pilot program exploring the implementation of fees based on miles traveled.

In the upper chamber, Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY), who is most likely to lead the push for a public works bill in the Senate, said a broad infrastructure package is not his top priority in the coming year. “Number one is highway infrastructure,” Sen. Barrasso said, emphasizing that he’s focused on a surface transportation reauthorization bill. “We’re talking basically highway infrastructure, roads, bridges, highway,” he said. The current surface transportation authorization legislation, referred to as the FAST Act, expires at the end of 2020. Sen. Tom Carper, the Committee’s ranking Member is in agreement with the Chairman on the need for a reauthorization and said the Committee will hold hearings on draft legislation this spring.

Congressman Peterson Introduces Bill to Support Sole Community Hospitals

Congressman Collin Peterson (D-MN-07) introduced a bill last month that seeks to support hospitals in small cities and rural areas across the country. The Rural Hospital Frontier Fairness Act would provide Sole Community Hospitals with increased funding to hire staff and expand the 340b Drug Pricing Program to help these facilities afford medications. Congressman Peterson, along with the bill’s Republican co-sponsor Congressman Scott Tipton (R-CO), introduced the same bill in the 115th Congress but garnered little support. The Rural Hospital Frontier Fairness Act has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee as well the Ways and Means Committee where it awaits review. In his announcement of the legislation, Congressman Peterson said that “this legislation will help several Minnesota hospitals attract and retain needed staff. Moreover, they can use their savings from the 340b program to expand their facilities, offer new services, or in many cases, simply keep their doors open.”

Congresswoman Craig Introduces Bill to Address Water Pollution

Congresswoman Angie Craig (D-MN-02) introduced a bill in late February to reduce nonpoint source pollution. Congresswoman Craig said the National Water Quality Act would reauthorize the Environmental Protection Agency’s successful Section 319 Grant Program and increase the grant funding level to $200 million per fiscal year. Section 319 grants can be used by state and local governments for technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and has already received a hearing. The bill is cosponsored by Congressman Brian Mast (R-FL). Previous Section 319 bills have been used by a number of Minnesota local governments to reduce nonpoint source pollution in recent years.

House Tax Panel Prepares for Analysis of 2017 Tax Bill

Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA) of the House Ways and Means Committee held the first of what could be many hearings on the tax overhaul of 2017. Chairman Neal has repeatedly said he wants re-examine the tax law, while Senate Democrats have called for an outright repeal of the law. The State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction, which the 2017 law capped at $10,000, was discussed at the hearing, however Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) has said that he is not interested in any changes to the legislation.

Lawmakers Circulate Letter in Favor of PILT Funding

House and Senate champions of Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program have been circulating letters calling on Congressional Appropriators to provide full-funding in FY 2020. Without congressional action, nearly 1,900 counties across 49 states face the expiration of critical financial offsets for untaxed federal lands within their jurisdiction. These counties depend on PILT payments from the federal government to provide critical health, education, cultural and emergency services to their residents and federal lands visitors.
approximately 30% of American lands owned by the federal government, are permitting processes for broadband infrastructure, using federal property to lower to increase broadband access. A report released by the USDA includes the American Broadband Initiative, a coordinated federal interagency strategy Telecommunications and Information Administration announced last month The White House, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Medicare. The full details of the budget were released by the White House on March 18. Selected highlights from the budget are cited below:

- **Addressing the Opioids Crisis:** One area where the proposed budget increases federal funding is for programs addressing the opioids crisis, a priority of local governments across America. President Trump has recommended $25 million in new funds to address the opioids crisis and $2.1 billion in new funding for health center programs and public health research.

- **Community Development Block Grants:** The CDBG program was enacted in 1974 to provide block grant funding for community development programs. The program assists urban, suburban and rural communities to improve housing and living conditions, and to expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons. Currently, CDBG is funded at $3.3 billion for FY 2019. The proposed FY 2020 budget formula the Trump Administration recommended total elimination of the CDBG program for FY 2020.

- **HOME Investment Partnerships Program:** The HOME program was authorized in 1990 and assists state and local governments with providing affordable housing for low-income families, helping to improve the quality of life in local communities. HOME funds provide counties with the flexibility to design policies and programs that address local affordable housing needs. Currently, HOME is funded at $1.25 billion for FY 2019. The Administration proposed eliminating the HOME program for FY 2020.

- **Economic Development Administration Funding:** The U.S. Economic Development Administration is the only federal agency solely focused on private sector job creation in distressed areas. EDA grants seek to assist economically distressed areas, where resources for economic development can be scarce. Currently, EDA is funded at $304 million for FY 2019. The Administration proposed eliminating the Economic Development Administration in its FY 2020 budget proposal.

- **Investments in Rural America:** USDA’s Rural Development branch is targeted for a 12% cut, with a number of rural housing and economic development programs being completely cut. This includes funding for home repairs or direct home ownership loans for low-income families; initiatives to help farm workers find housing; and programs to preserve affordable housing in rural areas and help low-income residents pay rent.

**White House Announces New American Broadband Initiative**

The White House, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration announced last month the American Broadband Initiative, a coordinated federal interagency strategy to increase broadband access. A report released by the USDA includes recommendations that fall into three major categories: streamlining federal permitting processes for broadband infrastructure, using federal property to lower the cost of broadband deployment, and maximizing the effectiveness of federal broadband funds. Rural places, many of which are located in and around the approximately 30% of American lands owned by the federal government, are often the communities with the least access to broadband. These places are the primary focus of the report and proposal. Several agencies are expected to initiate rulemakings during 2019 to fulfill the goals of the American Broadband Initiative. Rulemaking is ongoing and will continue in 2020. The Administration will seek to eliminate the CDBG program and the HOME program.

**President Trump Asks Senate for a New Health Care Plan**

President Trump has asked a group of U.S. senators to create a health-care plan to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as the Administration seeks to have the law invalidated in court. Senate Majority Members John Barrasso (R-WY), Bill Cassidy (D-LA) and Rick Scott (R-FL) are developing the plan. President Trump indicated in March, President Trump’s Chief of Staff said the Trump Administration plans to send a short summary of its health care “principles” to Congress as the basis for potential legislation. This announcement followed a notice from the Justice Department that it has shifted its position on a Texas legal challenge to the ACA, in which it previously sought to have only part of the ACA declared unconstitutional, declaring in a court filing that it now wants the entire law thrown out. The federal judge hearing the case ruled last year that the law is unconstitutional because of changes Congress made in 2017.

**HHS Announces Second Round of Funding for State Opioid Response Grants**

On March 20, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a second installment of $437 million in funding for the two-year Opioid-State Targeted Response (STR) grants first authorized in 2016 under the 21st Century Cures Act. Combined with the $933 million in continuation funding to be paid later in 2019, Opioid-STR grant funding to states will total approximately $1.4 billion for FY 2019, a nearly $500 million increase above FY 2018 funding for the program.

Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), Opioid-STR grants are formula funds awarded to states, territories and jurisdictions to support the expansion of addiction treatment and recovery services, with the aim of reducing unmet treatment needs and opioid overdose deaths. Specifically, Opioid-STR grants provide funding for states and other jurisdictions to identify gaps in current treatment activities and capacity, expand access to medication-assisted treatment therapies, and advance substance misuse prevention in coordination with federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**LOCKRIDGE GRINDL NAUEN**

Federal Relations Group will continue to work diligently on behalf of the Association and its Members of the Minnesota Delegation on the aforementioned issues and continuously report back with updates. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (202) 344-9840 if you have any questions or if there are any areas of interest you would like an update on that were not discussed in this article.
MCIT Board Welcomes New Member, Says Goodbye to Two Others

Efforts to fill the vacancy created with the departure of Watonwan County Commissioner Scott Sanders at the end of 2018 culminated during the March 8 MCIT Board meeting with the appointment of Jackson County Commissioner Dan Wachal to the board. Three other candidates were interviewed for this seat on the board: Blue Earth County Commissioner Kip Bruender, Kandiyohi County Commissioner Roland (Rollie) Nissen and Winona County Commissioner Marcia Ward. Commissioner Wachal will complete the term of Sanders, which expires Dec. 31, 2019. He is required to stand for election at the 2019 MCIT Annual Meeting if he wants to pursue a new four-year term. Wachal joins the board for its May 10 meeting.

Enter, Kuhns Depart

As Wachal joins MCIT, Brown County Administrator Charles (Chuck) Enter and Waseca County Commissioner Dan Kuhns unexpectedly announced their departure from the board.

Enter advised he is leaving Brown County at the end of May. Enter’s position will be filled pursuant to the MCIT Bylaws, which provides that the Minnesota Association of County Administrators will recommend a county administrator or coordinator. The appointment is subject to approval by the board. Enter’s replacement will join the MCIT Board in June.

Waseca County Commissioner Dan Kuhns accepted a position in the Waseca County auditor’s office in March, which required his resignation as county commissioner. This resignation precludes his continued service on the MCIT Board. The board will discuss this vacancy during its May 10 meeting.

MCIT ‘Cyber’ Coverage Program Expands

Cyber claim exposures continue to be a complex and evolving threat. Several years ago, MCIT analyzed potential exposures presented by the membership and in response debuted a comprehensive suite of cyber-related coverages in 2017. It was determined that MCIT could no longer rely on the limited coverage included in the property and general liability coverage at the time.

Thanks to a favorable loss experience, the MCIT Board took action to provide counties with increased coverage limits starting this year. County limits increased from $50,000 to $100,000. Also all members now have the option to pursue increased coverage limits up to $1 million if interested.

MCIT’s comprehensive data compromise and cyber-attack coverage package is reinsured by Hartford Steam Boiler (HSB). HSB is a long-term partner that has been in the cyber-coverage space for several years. It has an experienced claims adjusting team that is familiar with these varied and specialized losses, and helps direct and coach members through their claims. HSB has also assembled a panel of attorneys, forensic IT and public relations professionals who are available in the event of a covered claim.

All actual and suspected claims should be reported to MCIT as soon as possible. MCIT promptly coordinates the claims process with the member and HSB.

Increased Cyber Limits Available

The coverage limits of $100,000 for county members and $50,000 for noncounty members are provided as part of MCIT membership and do not require an underwriting survey or questionnaire to qualify. Effective this year all members have the opportunity to purchase increased coverage limits of $100,000, $250,000, $500,000 or $1 million.

Requests are subject to brief eligibility questionnaires and HSB’s underwriting guidelines. Requests for increased limits are dependent upon underwriting guidelines and are not guaranteed.

Increased limit changes also raise many of the coverage sublimits, and in the case of $500,000 and $1 million limits, increase the claim deductible from $2,500 to $10,000 per claim.

Coverage limit changes can be requested any time throughout 2019, with members being charged on a pro-rata basis. Beginning next year, changes will only be allowed at renewal. Any changes would take effect Jan. 1 of the following coverage year.

Assess the Risk

All members have some level of risk for a cyber-attack or release of personal information, but there is no clear-cut answer in deciding on the limit of coverage needed. Members should conduct an internal assessment of:

- The types and quantity of data they collect and store.
- The strength of their controls, including written policies, staff training and use of policies.
- The strength of system tools, such as use of firewalls, multicharacter passwords and system backup protocols.

Large aggregators of data, such as counties and larger joint powers organizations in particular that may have volumes of medical records and sensitive citizen information, should assess their appetite for risk compared to their system controls and protocols.

MCIT’s claim experience during the past two years has been favorable and, with one exception, has been sufficient to contain losses to well within the $50,000 coverage limit previously provided. Of the 31 claims reported, 27 arose from a data compromise event and four were from a computer attack or ransomware event.

Of the four claims that were paid to date, two of them exceeded the then $25,000 sublimit for legal review and/or forensic IT. Additional payments may be made as claims develop.

Next Steps

Members who have questions with cyber coverage should contact their risk management consultant. Questions regarding the process for pursuing increased limits, including requests for an increased limits eligibility questionnaire, should be directed to MCIT Underwriting Manager Gary Severson toll-free at 1.866.547.6516, ext. 6410 or gseverson@mcit.org.

Extension Mobilizes to Address Rural Stress and Mental Health

By Bev Durgan, University of Minnesota Extension Dean

Minnesota’s rural residents and communities are facing a number of challenges and stresses, both directly and indirectly, from the weak agricultural economy. University of Minnesota Extension is mobilizing its resources to help.

Starting this month, Extension’s new Rural Stress Response team will be finding ways to provide more streamlined access to educational programs and resources related to mental health. The team, working with state agencies and agricultural organizations as well as colleagues throughout the University of Minnesota, will strategically address issues and provide useful and educational resources for people across Minnesota. The team includes Extension educators who specialize in the health of families, young people and communities as well as agriculture.

I have appointed Extension Educator Emily Wilmes, a resident of Stearns County who is based in Extension’s Stearns County office, to lead this task force. Throughout at least the next 12 months, AMC members can expect to receive regular reports about this Extension project.

Please contact me if you would like to know more about this project.

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MCIT Board in June.

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Donated Leave Programs

By Melanie Ault, DDA Human Resources

When a catastrophic medical event hits an employee or immediate family, accrued leave banks can easily be exhausted. Donated leave programs can provide opportunities for coworkers to donate earned, accrued leave such as Paid time Off (PTO) to an employee in need. However, employers are not required to offer leave donation programs. If your organization already offers a leave donation program, it may be worthwhile to review associated policy and practices, to ensure compliance. Creating a donated leave program can be challenging. Taxation and plan design requirements are significant and often trip up employers. Careful attention must be given to plan design and administration details. Here are some key questions to consider in advance of implementing or updating a donated leave policy to ensure it stays compliant.

Basic Elements of a Leave Donation Program

- Put your program in writing. Use a form so all applicants are required to supply the same information.
- Apply policy in a non-discriminatory manner; have neutral criteria in place treating all applications equally; recognize some employees’ requests may be denied.
- Respect privacy concerns. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act still apply, and the County is subject to their requirements.
- State the maximum number of hours a donor can give.
- State that the recipient may not liquidate any donated leave to receive a cash payout.
- The donation may only be used for a "medical emergency." The IRS defines this.
- The county should require the requesting employee to apply in writing, and to explain the need. (It’s OK to ask for a doctor’s note).
- Recipient, not donor, is taxed when withdrawing from a “central bank.” There is no “assignment of income” taxation issue. It’s less clear when your program allows the donating employee to direct the donated hours/income to a specific person.

Think Through Possible Problems with a Donated Leave Program

- Will you also allow donations for a family member’s medical emergency? How will this be defined? Immediate family including parents, spouse, child? Relatives listed in Minnesota’s Sick & Safety Leave? Defined to parallel FMLA?
- Will you require documentation of familial relationship if the time off is needed to care for a loved one?
- What kind of medical documentation will be required?
- The county should never reveal medical information of a potential leave donation recipient, with individuals who are considering donating leave time.
- If you have any kind of cap on accruals or carryovers of accrued leave, a donation program will likely be an overall extra and unbudgeted cost to the County. Hours that would otherwise be forfeited or lost will instead be paid to another employee.
- Donors donate a specified number of hours. Payroll converts the donation into cash value. Recipients withdraw the benefit based on their own regular rate of pay. While this controls payroll costs, it’s typically not an hour-for-hour transfer.
- Will receiving donated leave delay the date the recipient would otherwise qualify to receive Short- or Long-term Disability benefits (if available)? Double check your STD & LTD policies. Are employees and the county comfortable with this outcome?
- Avoid hurt feelings and misunderstandings. Decide up front when donations will end for the recipient.
- Upon separation from employment?
- At the end of the biweekly pay period in which the recipient provides written notice that the medical emergency is over?
- When the County is notified that the recipient has been approved for PERA disability benefits?
- When the individual reaches a defined timeframe limit?
- Can someone who is receiving workers’ compensation benefits also be eligible to receive donated leave?
- Include a statement that your policy does not limit or extend the time available under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- Consider whether donors’ names be made available to the recipient (sometimes they want to write a thank you note). To the supervisor? To the head of the county? Will anyone have access to the information?
- Does the donor need to retain a minimum number of hours in their own accrued leave bank when donating?
- Is HR prepared to take on the administrative burden of taking in, evaluating, and approving/rejecting applications for donated leave, and communicating those decisions to the requesting employees? Is payroll prepared to put in the effort and staff time required to administer the program and process the transactions?

If not already permitted in collective bargaining agreements, is HR/Labor Relations or the county’s bargaining committee on board with bargaining the program or obtaining memoranda of agreement so that bargaining unit members can participate as donors and recipients?

Templates for a variety of policies are available in the Knowledge Base at www.amcdahrsupport.com.

UNLEASH LEADERSHIP

www.stcloudstate.edu/graduate/mpa/
Investments in Local Public Health: Local Public Health Grant

By Amy Caron, LPHA Chair and Dodge-Steele Community Health Services Administrator

Our Local Public Health Agencies serve all citizens pre-birth until death. Public health agencies have a pulse on health issues within communities and strive first to prevent negative impacts. Local Public Health is the front line in identifying and stopping the spread of disease, investigating health hazards, promoting healthy behaviors, assuring access to health services for all people, and responding to health emergencies. The citizens of Minnesota not only rely on healthy places to live, work and play—but expect it.

The Local Public Health Grant is one of the main sources of State investment in Minnesota’s public health system. These dollars are intended to support state-mandated local governmental public health services and provide local policy makers with the ability to direct those dollars to areas where needed. The Local Public Health Grant accounts for a small fraction of Local Public Health expenses in Minnesota at just 6 percent.

Meanwhile, local tax levies are the single largest source of Local Public Health funding for Minnesota Community Health Boards, accounting for nearly 36 percent of all expenses. As illustrated in Figure 1, nearly half of Local Public Health funding is locally-generated. Federal funds contribute the next largest share, while state and federal funds contribute the next largest share, while state funds make up just 15 percent.

Compared to the nation as a whole, Minnesota’s local public health departments rely more heavily on local funding.

As shown in the Figure 2, the per capita funding to the Local Public Health Grant statewide has been cut nearly in half since 1979, shifting the cost of critical public health services to local government, or worse, leaving significant gaps in communities across Minnesota.

As such, over the past 15 years, Local Public Health has seen a slow crumbling of public health infrastructure. This crumbling leads to dire consequences amongst the most vulnerable populations. Infectious disease and mental illness rates are going up. Trends of drug and alcohol abuse are rising. For the past two years in United States, average life expectancy has gone down (78.7 years) rather than up. Public Health is serving a larger number of people who are falling through the cracks.

During the 2019 legislative session, bills were introduced in the House and Senate that would increase Local Public Health Grant funding by $16 million per year above the current base funding of $21.6 million. This request is critical and would be a starting point to restore public health services to the citizens of Minnesota. As of mid-April, additional Local Public Health Grant funding is not included in the Senate’s budget and is included in the House Health and Human Services budget at $1 million per year. While any additional funding is welcome, it is imperative that we continue to lobby for critical Local Public Health funding via the Local Public Health Grant.

Becky Pizinger, Communications Coordinator – 20 Years

What was your first role at AMC?

I was hired as the Communications Coordinator, which is still my title, but the actual work has changed immensely over the years as communications, in general, has transitioned from the printed word to electronic. When I first started in 1999, email and web sites were in their infancy—we barely used either to communicate with members. Within two years, that completely changed and I had to learn how to translate what and how we communicated to use the new tools at our disposal. As the nature of communicating evolved, so did AMC. AMC was always very willing to change with the times in order to communicate better using the new tools of communication. There were growing pains in that only about half of the members even had email, so for quite some time we had to produce both printed and electronic versions of everything! I know that AMC helped counties through the process of transitioning to this new digital world and utilizing the new tools for communicating—we learned and changed together.

What are the biggest changes you’ve seen during your time at AMC?

Really, it’s night-and-day compared to how we communicate now. My career at AMC exactly coincided with the societal switch to primarily electronic communications. When I first started, for example, the Legislative Update was a biweekly printed newsletter that was mailed to all members. Completely different from what it is now! We’d have a deadline for materials from policy analysts on Mondays, then I’d lay-out and edit a 10 page newsletter, have it to the printer on Tuesday so that it could be printed on Wednesday and in the mail on Thursday so that members would receive it by Saturday. That’s just one example. Everything was far more labor intensive and far less timely.

Electronic communications are so much more effective because they’re timely and easy for people to access. It’s made AMC a far more effective as a membership organization because we’re able to connect with members so much more easily. I think that because counties themselves are better able to communicate with each other more easily, too, the overall understanding of each other’s similarities and differences has exponentially increased as communications have evolved, which leads to a more unified group—which is the whole point of a membership organization.

Why has AMC been a good fit for you?

AMC is a non-partisan organization with the primary goal of helping counties serve their citizens in the best ways possible, and I see that at work every day, which is really gratifying. Being part of an organization with members who are committed to building consensus to achieve the best outcome for all, despite their differences, is pretty rare in government. Counties play such an important role in the lives of people every day, and I feel the importance of AMC’s role in helping them do that for the good of all.

Beyond that, AMC itself is simply a great place to work with a group of highly competent people working toward a common goal. There are lots of varied, moving parts at work every day, but to be in a place where you are confident that each individual is doing their part to achieve a common goal is very satisfying. AMC is a nimble organization that’s truly committed to assisting counties, so I literally see our mission and purpose at work every day in everything we do.

What’s the best part of working at AMC?

I get to do what I love and work with some really great people, so I’d say that’s a pretty good way to spend 20 years!
Collaboration is Different than Work within Your Own Organization

By Michael Williams, PhD, Stearns County Administrator and MACA Secretary

County government officials are continually asked to solve complex problems. Solutions to those problems often intersect program, policy, and institutional lines requiring collaboration to make progress. As a result, county officials are often asked to collaborate with other departments, counties, cities, townships, multiple agencies, nonprofits, and the State. Collaborative work can be a challenging environment for County Commissioners, Administrators and staff. Arguably, being successful at collaboration requires different skills than leadership and management within a traditional government organization.

To make a positive impact on mental health issues, for example, might require collaboration among local police, the Sheriff’s Office, Attorney’s Office, Human Services, Corrections, Courts, Local Health Care System, other Emergency Services, State Departments, and the Jail. These groups can have differing missions, governance, leadership, constituencies, allegiances, and levels of power.

To make matters even more complex, collaborative work must be carried out while everyone involved must continue to maintain their responsibilities to their traditional organization. Thus, making a collaboration successful takes extra time and effort! Those involved must first be true to their own organization mission and policies while also upholding the collaboration’s mission and purpose. Those involved must be sure that the collaboration will provide public value that would not otherwise be created by one institution alone or the effort will be a waste of resources.

How can we, as counties, prepare for and succeed in collaborative relationships? Collaboration requires a shared purpose for mutual benefit in an atmosphere of trust, interdependence, and shared resources and responsibilities. Consider the following tips to help guide you as you work with partners in a collaborative effort.

Establish a common vision and goals. There must be agreement on common goals at the beginning of a collaborative effort. The goals can be lofty and general, but must be compatible to each member of the collaborative.

Foster trust. Beginning collaboration with individuals and organizations that already have trusting relationships is more likely to succeed. Trust can also be built with a series of small wins to create confidence between members in a collaboration.

Provide value for everyone. Partners in a collaborative effort must find support or measurable results that support their distinct missions. A collaborative, for example, to reduce the cycle of mental health crisis will include a reduction of costly hospital emergency room visits or inappropriate jail intakes benefitting those that need to make an effort in the collaborative.

Communicate. Communication is important for building trust and common vision. Meetings, therefore, are often the most important media of collaboration. Regular meetings should also be inclusive by allowing space and time for anyone to make their issues known to the group. With good relationships, the communication atmosphere can become safe, allowing openness and honesty aimed at solving problems.

Recognize power and conflict. Common vision and goals, trust, and healthy communications will reduce the negative impacts of power struggles and conflict. There are a number of points of power to recognize, including size, resources, funding, access to media, access to administrators and policy makers, and power to withdraw.

As long as the conflict is not about the purpose and goals, the participants can use conflict to focus the discussion, clarify actions, and spur improvement. Participants in thriving collaborations report few conflicts. When conflict does arise, however, it is managed with courtesy and fairness.

Create structure and administrative support. Administrators for collaborations provide a structure for communications; keep members informed; organize functions and meetings; coordinate services; communicate with the public; and manage agendas, minutes, leadership structure, and other governance issues. Formal bylaws, rules, guidelines, roles, and organizational structure can also help foster success. Sometimes this role can be filled with a member’s resources, but most successful collaborations have an outside entity or paid staff to take on the administrative duties.

Provide the medium for leadership. A collaborative composed of organizations temporarily linked by common goals requires leadership with the ability to build consensus, reduce conflict, and juggle varying expectations. Collaborative leaders need to make use of administrative support, open communications, and other means to accomplish harmony. Leaders blend facilitating and guiding skills with effective process and administrative structure to get results. In successful collaborations, leadership is often dispersed and unrecognizable.

County officials cannot always advocate for best solutions on their own because the solutions to complex problems require collaboration with a wide array of organizations. County officials facilitating collaboration or participating in it need to be sensitive to other organizations’ needs and missions. The tips provided here are relevant to many professional relationships but are critical for collaboration success.

Nominations for AMC’s Annual Awards
Open June 1, 2019.

Submit nominations to honor individuals or programs in the following categories:

Outstanding Service
County Achievement
County Conservation
Economic Development

Nomination deadline: October 25, 2019.

Look for more information on how to submit nominations soon in your email and at www.mncounties.org.
ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES
JANUARY 18, 2019

CALL TO ORDER
President Scott Schulte called the AMC Board of Directors’ meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room at the Association of Minnesota Counties building located in St. Paul, MN.

INTRODUCTIONS
• Welcome to new Board members:
  o Rodney Peterson (Dodge), Health and Human Services Policy Committee Chair
  o Ben DeNucci (Itasca), District 2 alternate, attending for Director Tim Summer today
• Welcome back to former Board members:
  o Todd Patzer (Lac qui Parle), 2nd Vice President
  o Darryl Tvetbak (Pennington), District 3
  o Vance Stuehrenberg (Blue Earth), Transportation & Infrastructure Policy Chair
  o Colleen Londikamer (Blue Earth), NACo Past-President

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
MOTION by Vance Stuehrenberg, seconded by Jan Callison to approve the January 18, 2019 AMC Board of Directors’ agenda. The motion carried.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT – COMMISSIONER SCOTT SCHULTE
• President’s Remarks – Looking forward to working for the AMC Board and wants to make sure efficiency and efficacy is met.
• NACo’s President’s and Executive Director’s Meeting – Commissioner Schulte and AMC Executive Director Julie Ring attended this annual meeting in Washington D.C.; earliest this month. Held meetings with many members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation or their staff.
• Executive Committee Update – Minutes from the November and December Executive Committees’ meetings were included in the board packets. The Executive Committee approved membership on three short term committees to provide guidance for legislative issues. Preliminary membership lists were included in the board packets, and updated lists were provided as handouts at today’s meetings. President Schulte asked the following commissioners to serve as chairs of these committees:
  o Todd Patzer, Lac qui Parle County Commissioner - County Considerations regarding Legalization of Recreational Marijuana Use
  o Don Jensen, Pennington County Commissioner - Transportation Funding Workgroup
  o Roger Indeke, Kandiyohi County Commissioner - Opioid/Substance Abuse Subcommittee

Secretary/Treasurer’s Report – Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire provided the Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.
• Approval of the Minutes
  MOTION by Mary Jo McGuire; seconded by Larry Lindor to approve the December 2, 2018, AMC Board of Directors’ meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried.
• Approval of the November Financial Report
  MOTION by Mary Jo McGuire seconded by Rich Sve to accept the November financial statement as presented pending the AMC 2017 annual audit. The motion carried.
• Approval of the AMC Annual Business Minutes
  MOTION by Mary Jo McGuire; seconded by Stan Kowalski to approve the December 2, 2018, AMC Annual Business meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried.

Board of Director’s Overview – Julie Ring
• An informal 30-minute orientation for new AMC Board of Directors was held prior to today’s meeting.
• Mission & Vision – With the return of former members, Julie noted AMC’s mission and vision statements has changed since they were members. AMC’s Mission: AMC unites Minnesota’s counties to achieve public service excellence. AMC’s Vision: Minnesota’s counties to be trusted partners in strengthening communities.
• Review Board handbook - The AMC board is the board of directors for our nonprofit 501(c)4 organization. In this role Board members provide leadership and governance for the organization and are a voice of the membership. The Board handbook includes a collection of policies that guide board work, and other information that members may find useful.
• 2019 Board meeting dates/Outlook scheduling – AMC decided to not send outlook calendar invitations for the 2019 board meetings dates to members this year due to issues where members made changes to their calendar and it affected everyone’s calendars. A copy of the 2019 meeting dates and locations were included in the board packet. They are also posted on the AMC website.
• Review Board Reimbursement Policy – The Board reimbursement policy for members was reviewed. A copy of the policy was included in the board packet.
• Review Conflict of Interest Policy – The Conflict of Interest Policy was included in the board packet. Voting board members were asked to sign a document certifying that they reviewed the policy.
• Board Contact Form – Board members were asked to complete the annual contact form noting their preference for urgent communication.
• Board bio/photos – Board members bio and photos will be included on the AMC website. Julie Ring asked new members to please provide their information to Donna Haupert in the next week.

Executive Director’s Overview – Julie Ring
• Staffing update –
  o The Environment and Natural Resources position has not been filled yet. Staff continues to work through the process of selecting a candidate for this position.
  o Dennis McGrann has left Lockridge Grindal Nauen (LGN). LGN is AMC’s contract lobbyists. Meghan Knight and Emily Trantor will continue to be AMC’s points of contact.
• Local Government Innovation Award video – President Schulte presented awards to the county award winners at the annual LGIA ceremony in December. Region V: Family Child Care Licensing Collaboration — Morrison County – a collaboration with Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena Counties and Sourcewell received an award. AMC shared the video with board members. You can view the videos for the top award winners on the LGIA website https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdFlPzsc4dS

Executive Director’s Overview – Julie Ring
• Letter to EPA regarding Section 404 - In December, AMC authorized staff to submit comments about the EPA Section 404 rulemaking. A copy of the letter was included in the board packet. AMC will be sharing this letter with key state and federal leaders in the coming weeks.
• Annual update – no update this month.
• Watershed Based Funding – An informational document developed by the Local Government Water Roundtable was shared. AMC has commissioners who serve on this committee, and AMC has generally supported more resources for the funding of voluntary watershed projects. Staff wanted to alert the Board to this document and the use of the AMC logo on it. Staff does not believe this is controversial specifically, but know 1WF1P is itself controversial with some counties. After discussion, consensus was that AMC needs to be at the table and individual counties need to be representative of their own different opinions.

Deputy Director’s Report – Laurie Klupacs
• Building Renovation proposal – The AMC building was built in 1989 and has had minimal updating. AMC staff recommends entering a contractual relationship with Green Construction and Adkins Architects to have blue prints drawn up for building updates and reconfigured office space at a cost not to exceed $30,000, which is approximately 10% of the remodel cost (excluding HVAC). Approval of this amount will allow for blue prints to be drawn up, subcontractors to be sought and permits to be obtained.
• Motion by Bob Kaptizke, seconded by Susan Morris to approve up to $30,000 to have Adkins Architects draw up blue prints for the remodel project to update the AMC restrooms to ADA compliance and add two new offices. The motion carried.
• 2018 AMC Annual Conference update – The DoubleTree in Bloomington is looking to continue business with AMC and has offered to buy out the St. Cloud contract for AMC’s 2019 annual conference. After discussion, the Board decided to honor the St. Cloud contract for 2019.
• Motion by Jim McDonough, seconded by Rick Anderson to honor the St. Cloud contract (2019) and the Hyatt contract (2020) and to negotiate 2021, 2022 and 2023 with the DoubleTree in Bloomington.

The friendly amendment was accepted by the motion maker and the seconder. The motion carried.

Upcoming conferences -
• Newly Elected Officials Conference – Held January 23-25 at the InterContinental Hotel in St. Paul. 80 people are currently registered. AMC Board members are invited to attend a reception at the AMC Building with the conference attendees on Monday, January 22nd from 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
• AMC Legislative Conference – The conference will be held at the InterContinental Hotel in St. Paul on February 13-14. 237 members are currently registered.
• NACo Legislative Conference update – The conference will be held on March 2-6, 2019, in Washington D.C. 40 representatives from MN are currently registered, which includes four AMC staff.

Strategic Discussion
• Ryan Erdmann, AMC Member Engagement Coordinator provided an update about the Tribal Affairs Committee at the Annual Conference. Discussion on next steps.

Governor Relations Report – Matt Hilgart
• Matt Hilgart, AMC Government Relations Manager, and AMC policy staff discussed legislative updates surrounding County Program Aid, Paid Family and Sick Leave, and Broadband. AMC emails a legislative update to all members every Monday.
• Bond Bill –Sen. Julie Rosen plans to reintroduce legislation that would create a licensing fee for manufacturers and wholesalers of opiates and direct funds directly to counties for child protection services. While the Board created a subcommittee to track 2019 opioid-related legislation, that group has not yet convened. Sen. Rosen has planned a press conference and requested AMC’s support for her initiative.
• Motion by Roger Indeke; seconded by Jan Callison – AMC supports Senator Rosen’s efforts to seek revenue from industry to pay for the harm to our residents and the increased costs to counties to respond to this addiction crisis. The motion carried.

SPRING 2019
Prescription drug transparency bill - discussion regarding whether AMC should support SF 1098 (Rosen) / HF 1246 (Morrison), which aims to improve the transparency of drug pricing, including joining a letter of support. The Council of Minnesota Health Plans is leading this effort. The League of Minnesota Cities has voted to support.

MOTION by Colleen Landkamer; seconded by Mary Jo McGuire - AMC supports the drug pricing transparency bill. The motion carried.

AFFILIATE MANAGEMENT REPORT – ANNE KILZER
AMC’s Affiliate Manager Anne Kilzer reported that AMC hired two new affiliate staff:
Leah Patton was hired as the Director & Legislative Liaison for MN County Information Technology Leadership Association (MNCITLA). Leah started Monday, January 7. Leah is a proud fifth generation Minnesotan who recently completed her master’s degree at Trinity College Dublin. After four years in the Minnesota House of Representatives, she is pleased to join AMC and MNCITLA in advocating for our policy priorities at the Capitol. Leah took up rowing in graduate school and is looking forward to spending more time on the water now that she’s back home in Minnesota.

Carli Stark has accepted the MACCAC Director/Public Safety Policy Analyst position and will begin with AMC on February 4, 2019. Carli is a 2014 graduate of Hamline University School of Law. She has worked in the public and non-profit sectors throughout her career. Most recently, she was a practicing criminal attorney with the Third District Public Defender’s Office in Dodge County. Carli hails from California but has lived in Minnesota for more than 10 years.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT REPORT – HEATHER BANDEEN
• The group viewed AMC’s new “A Day in the Life of a County Commissioner” video, which was developed with funding support from the Bush Foundation.
• 2019 Events and Resources handout for newly-elected officials was included in the packet
• 2019 Census 2020 prep session dates was included in the packet

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE REPORT – CHAIR GARY HENDRICKX
• The first Census 2020-prep sessions started this week with the Minnesota State Demographic Office. Susan Brower began in St. Paul and Staples to meet over 60 participants from cities and counties. AMC had its first “livestreamed” session from Sourcewell on Thursday. This allowed participants to learn about ways to help their county prepare without having to travel.
• AMC’s partnership with Metropolitan State University is continuing to grow with Capstone Proposals from counties and partners for spring semester. Registration for LEAD Academy and the new Public Sector Supervision Certificate launching in May, is now open and is filling very quickly.
• Continuing to partner with Lisa Negstad and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to provide online supervisor training options. There are several offerings throughout 2019 and AMC has arranged for a "member discount." Additionally, AMC once again, will have a counties-only section available this summer. In 2018, these trainings were consistently rated as "excellent" by members.
• Following County Government 101 in January, AMC will offer events specifically for newly-elected Commissioners throughout the year. All commissioners are welcome to attend. In March, there will be County Commissioner Roundtables in Mankato and Staples with Julie and Jim Coben, Mitchell Hamline School of Law Professor. In August, AMC will offer a joint session with MCIT on: Open Meeting Law, Data Privacy, and Managing Conflict at Board Meetings.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT – CHAIR MIKE SLAVIK
• Commissioner Slavik had to leave before his report, Commissioner Jack Swanson gave this report on his behalf.
• The Research Committee’s census of the AMC membership is ongoing. The committee finished 2018 with submissions from 350 of the 447 commissioners in the state. Next week, they will collect data from the newly elected commissioners at the County Government 101 Conference. The census data will be stored in two-year “cohorts” (2016-2018 and 2018-2020) so they can study the change over time and look at potential trends in who is serving as a county commissioner in Minnesota.
• New material about Minnesota’s child care crisis and what counties can do about it was added to the County Library Information Center. This winter, the committee will be adding material on two additional topics, the Health Care Access Fund and Dark Stores.
• The committee will meet this spring to explore a potential project on demographics in Minnesota and the US Census.

PREFERRED BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP REPORT – CHAIR SCOTT SCHULTE
The Preferred Business Partnership Program has brought in $110,000 so far in 2019, up from $92,000 in 2018. AMC has retained all Premier Business members and has added two more. The committee does not have a future meeting scheduled, but will continue to do business via email.

NACO/DISTRICT DIRECTORS/AFFILIATE MEMBERS REPORT
District Directors, Policy Committee Chairs, NACo and Affiliate representatives reported on key issues that affect their districts/associations.

ADJOURN
The AMC Board of Directors adjourned at 2:30 p.m.
MOBILE APP LAUNCH

Introduction
Accurate connectivity data is the foundation for investments in broadband infrastructure. Unfortunately, connectivity data provided to the Federal Communications Commission is often inaccurate and inflated – leaving many rural communities overlooked and disconnected.

NACo has partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) to develop a mobile app designed to identify areas with low or no connectivity to help ensure adequate funding for broadband infrastructure is provided across the country.

“TestIT” is an iOS/Android mobile app that leverages a broadband sampling tool designed by Measurement Labs (M Labs) to aggregate broadband speeds across the country from app users. With the press of a single button, users will be able to test their broadband speed from anywhere. Additionally, users will be able to compare their internet speeds to the national average and minimum standards established by the Federal Communications System. **No personal information will be collected through this mobile app.**

A snapshot of each sample will be sent to a database which will allow NACo and partners to analyze connectivity data across the country. The data collected through this app will help identify areas where broadband service is overstated and underfunded by comparing the data to the National Broadband Map.

Your help identifying gaps in our nation’s broadband coverage is critical to making substantive changes to the process for reporting broadband service. We hope you will help shed light on this critically important issue and encourage your friends, family and constituents to join in the efforts as well!

Get Started!

1. Locate the iOS/Android App Store on your phone

   ![Available on the App Store](image)

2. Search for “TestIT” in your mobile app store

   ![TestIT](image)

3. Download TestIT mobile app

4. Open TestIT mobile app and click: Test Speed Here

Contact
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