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~ That’s why we created New York State’s first and only crossing guard training program.
~ Why we subsidized a family’s lengthy hotel stay when one of our injured members was hospitalized out of town.
~ Why we brought food and clothing relief to a county member after catastrophic flooding during a hurricane.

We go well beyond workers’ compensation to offer you everything from comprehensive risk management training, a personalized claims team, and patient advocates, to fraud detection, wellness programs and transitional duty services.

To find out more contact:
Leah Demo, Sales Executive
518-220-0342 • ldemo@perma.org

Tony Cassaro, Sales Executive
518-220-0324 • acassaro@perma.org
A NEW WAY TO INVEST FOR RETIREMENT.

Your Guide to Roth 457(b) Contributions

By now, you may have heard of the Roth IRA. You may have even set one up. Well, you also have the opportunity to designate all or part of your contributions to your governmental deferred compensation plan as after-tax Roth 457 contributions.

When you contribute to a Roth 457, you pay taxes on the portion of your salary that goes into the plan; but withdrawals of contributions and earnings can be tax-free during retirement if certain conditions are met.¹

If you wish, you can even split your contributions between traditional, pre-tax 457 contributions and Roth 457 contributions.

What’s the benefit of designating some or all of your contributions as Roth? It gives you the opportunity to pay taxes on your contributions now and avoid taxes later.

### Let’s compare

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Traditional (pre-tax) 457(b)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 15%)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 25%)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 35%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single contribution</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less federal taxes paid on contribution</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net total contribution</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$8,500</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value in 20 years</td>
<td>$46,610</td>
<td>$39,618</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$30,296</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less federal taxes at distribution (25% tax bracket)</td>
<td>$11,652</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net distribution</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$39,618</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$30,296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These examples are hypothetical in nature and assume a 25% tax bracket at distribution. It also assumes that the retirement plan’s value earns an average total return of 8% compounded annually. Investment return is not guaranteed and will vary depending upon the investments and market experience.

A single contribution of $10,000 will be worth the same amount in 20 years if the tax bracket remains the same.

However, if the future tax rate is greater, the amount distributed from the Roth account will be greater than the post-tax amount distributed from the traditional 457(b) account.
2020 NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 29 THROUGH MARCH 4
Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.

WORKSHOPS ANNOUNCED!

- Protecting the Vote: How to Secure Your County’s Election System
- Counties and the Census: Local Leadership in Reaching Historically Undercounted Populations
- Rural Grants 101: How County Officials Can Tap Into USDA Programs
- Painful Permitting: How Counties Can Successfully Navigate the Federal Permitting Process
- Positioning Your County for the Future of Work
- Creating a County Network of Support for Aging Americans
- Cyber Disaster Recovery: What’s the Hype All About
- Speaking Different Languages: Bridging the Generation Communications Gap
- And more!

REGISTER NOW! naco.org/Leg

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Happy New Year!

On behalf of NYSAC, I send my congratulations to the many newly elected county officials from across the state.

It is an honor to serve the public, a position that is entrusted to us as we act for the public good.

I am honored to serve as the president of this great association, and I appreciate the opportunity to work alongside my peers from across the state to help county government be both proactive and responsive in meeting the needs of residents right here in Ontario County and in other communities across New York.

As the association representing all 57 counties and New York City with its five boroughs, our focus in 2020 will continue to be on the needs of our members and to anticipate what is coming this year and in the years ahead.

What’s in store for 2020?

On the national level we have presidential and congressional elections. NYSAC will continue the work that we started with our congressional delegation last year to promote more complete cellular and broadband coverage in rural areas of the state, and together we will continue to battle the opioid crisis and address other addiction in our communities.

At the state level, 2020 will be a tough budget year, with uncertainty surrounding our state’s deficit. Despite that huge challenge, NYSAC members developed a comprehensive advocacy platform that our staff began implementing last fall. An abridged version of that platform is included in this magazine.

Meanwhile, state lawmakers are all up for election this year, with a first ever state primary in June and the general election in November, both with new early voting opportunities.

At the county level, we are all in the process of implementing the criminal justice reforms enacted last year and we are preparing to roll out new lower lead level requirements along with the public health case preparations that will come along with that new law. These are just two of several new state programs that we are providing or expanding at the county level this year.

As your Association of Counties, we take pride in supporting your work and advocating—in Albany and Washington—for the issues that impact our members, who are in office to make our communities better places to live, work, and raise our families.

I look forward to seeing many of you at NYSAC events throughout the year.

Jack Marren
NYSAC President
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New York State Municipalities Since 1967

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12/12/19
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• Over 800 counties, cities, towns, villages, school districts and special districts participate in NYSHIP

• More than 1.2 million public employees, retirees and their families have health insurance through NYSHIP

A unique health insurance plan developed for New York’s public employees

For additional information regarding The Empire Plan or the Excelsior Plan, public employers may visit our website at www.cs.ny.gov or email the Public Employer Liaison Unit (PELU) for the New York State Health Insurance Program at PELU@cs.ny.gov.

Employee Benefits Division of the New York State Department of Civil Service

The public sector is like no other. It has its own processes. Its own requirements. Even its own language.

With more than six decades as a leader in the space, PKF O’Connor Davies delivers insights and expertise that few firms bring to bear. We know what it takes to navigate the complex landscape and, more importantly, we’ve proven that we deliver the strategies and support to help our clients stay ahead of the curve.

It’s not bravado. It’s the confidence that comes from years of providing specialized accounting, auditing and consulting services to governments and agencies at the local, state and national levels. It’s a confidence our clients share.

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Nicholas DeSantis, Partner
David Gannon, Partner
Scott Oling, Partner
& The Partners of
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ninety-five years ago, the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) was created by county officials, for county officials, and of county officials.

At the beginning of 2020, this association welcomed nearly 200 newly elected officials who were sworn in to serve their county. That brings a three-year total (2018, 2019, 2020) of 450 newly elected county members welcomed into our association.

During times like these I reflect on our mission: to represent, educate, advocate for and serve New York’s counties and the elected and appointed county officials who serve the public. Our main message to those nearly 450 new members: NYSAC is your association.

We represent you and your colleagues from across the state before federal, state and local officials on matters germane to county governments. We work hard to inform our members, state lawmakers, the media and the public about the issues of importance to county governments.

We provide in-depth information, cutting edge training, and educational opportunities for our members at conferences, on our webinars, and from the series of reports we publish each year. In late January our annual Legislative Conference will bring together over 700 attendees to learn, network, and share best practices for governing at the county level. In September, Essex County will host this year’s Fall Conference in Lake Placid. We encourage you to get involved and attend your association’s conference training opportunities.

Make sure that you are receiving our daily Counties in the News email, our weekly County Perspective electronic newsletter, and this NYSAC News magazine. As you’ll see throughout this issue, we use these publications to keep members informed about noteworthy county programs, accolades, legislative updates, and what’s new in Washington, Albany and around the state.

We advocate for members during the state budget and legislative process and before members of Congress in the nation’s capital. Our legislative program direction comes directly from our members who serve on NYSAC’s standing committees. Members discuss and adopt a series of resolutions that become the framework for our Legislative Program (which is included in this edition of the NYSAC News). We are not traditional lobbyists. We work on behalf of our members, who work on behalf of the residents and taxpayers of the State of New York. We welcome your participation on our standing committees and in our advocacy efforts in Albany and Washington.

NYSAC is the county voice in Albany and that voice is stronger when county officials across the state speak together on behalf of our residents and taxpayers.
NYSAC’s mission is to represent, educate, advocate for, and serve member counties at the federal and state levels.

President
Hon. John F. Marren

Publisher
Stephen J. Acquario

Managing Editor
Mark F. LaVigne

Design Staff
Kate Pierce

Advertising Staff
Juanita Munguia

Published 3 times a year by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), the NYSAC News is the official publication of NYSAC, a non-profit, municipal association serving the 57 counties of New York State and the City of New York with its five boroughs for over 90 years. NYSAC's mission is to represent, educate and advocate for member counties at the federal and state levels.

Send submissions to kpierce@nysac.org. Submissions should be 750 to 1,000 words and include a high resolution photo of the author. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, content and/or length.

The advertisements and articles in NYSAC News in no way imply support or endorsement by NYSAC for any of the products, services or messages conveyed herein.
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**Cover Photo**

Wayne County Meteor Shower at Sodus Point

**Photo Credit**

Jeff Timmerman
County Government Organizations in New York State

By Mark LaVigne, NYSAC Deputy Director

Those outside of the local government world may not realize that not all county governments in our state look the same.

New York State’s 57 counties outside the City of New York have generally adopted one of three forms of government organization, including

• Charter counties with an elected executive or appointed administrative official,
• Counties with an appointed manager or administrator organized under county law, and
• Those operating under the administrative direction of an elected legislative body.

The State Constitution delineates county governments’ powers and responsibilities through the Local Government Bill of Rights and the Statute of Local Governments. County Law and the Municipal Home Rule Law establish the procedures and standards set forth by the State Legislature.

County Law makes no provision for an elected executive and places all authority for governance of a county under the auspices of the elected legislative body. Under County Law, the legislative body is empowered to delegate certain administrative functions to the chair of the body, to committees formed to oversee operations and administration or to an administrative assistant, as long as overall authority is retained by the legislative body.

County Charters and Non-Charters

The Municipal Home Rule Law delineates the general authority and restrictions on local government’s ability to enact local laws. The Municipal Home Rule Law also contains provisions known as the County Charter Law, which establishes the process by which counties may adopt a county charter to define the corporate powers of the local government.

Currently, 23 of the 57 counties outside the City of New York have organized their administrative systems under the provisions of a county charter. The 34 “non-charter” counties abide by the provisions of the County Law and the Municipal Home Rule Law to adopt their administrative structure. Of these counties, 26 have enacted local laws to create a county administrator or manager position to oversee the day-to-day administration of county government. The remaining eight counties have retained administrative control of the county through their legislative body.

The Municipal Home Rule Law gives non-charter counties the ability to change their administrative structure through the enactment of local laws. These changes are not subject to mandatory public referendum unless the local law abolishes diminishes or curtails the powers of an elected official. The legislative body may delegate certain administrative responsibilities to its chair or an appointed administrative official, as long as the legislative body retains overall administrative authority.

Changes to a County’s Structure

Article 4 of the Municipal Home Rule Law empowers counties to adopt and amend a county charter. A county charter may be enacted to establish the structure of county government, as long as an elected legislative body is maintained to determine county policy through powers of legislation and budgetary appropriation. County Charter Law allows for the creation of a position of county executive, elected in a county-wide general election, with the power to veto actions of the legislative body.

The county charter adoption process may be initiated through resolution of a legislative body or through a petition process of county voters. The legislative body is empowered to draft a proposed charter under its direct supervision, delegate drafting authority to a committee of the legislative body, or through a commission established and appointed by the body to draft a charter resolution.
County Government Institute
Focus on Leadership, Integrity, and Accountability

By Kate Pierce, NYSAC Multimedia Specialist

The NYSAC County Government Institute (CGI) is a partnership between NYSAC and the Cornell University Community and Regional Development Institute.

The CGI curriculum is founded on the three pillars of good government: Leadership, Integrity, and Accountability.

Through courses and training within these pillars, CGI prepares rising and experienced county leaders for the challenges counties face, and equips them to engage in informed, constructive, and civil dialogue.

The core CGI curriculum includes required courses on building consensus, financial accountability, ethics, management, and the foundations of county government. CGI instructors are NYSAC staff, county leaders, and Cornell faculty members who are experts in local government structure and issues.

CGI courses are offered at NYSAC’s Fall Seminar (September), Legislative Conference (January), and Finance School (May).

In addition to the core CGI training, CGI’s continuing education courses enable county leaders to stay up-to-date on timely issues and opportunities in local government. The knowledge and skills gained through CGI will serve county officials throughout their time in public service and beyond.

County leaders that graduate from CGI have earned a certification that demonstrates their dedication to good government and to upholding CGI’s high standards of county leadership.

History

The NYSAC County Government Institute was founded in 2004 and celebrated its first graduating class in 2005. Originally founded as The Dennis A. Pelletier County Government Institute, CGI was inspired by a long-serving and highly respected Monroe County leader and member of the NYSAC Board of Directors.

Dennis A. Pelletier developed a strong reputation for his hard work in becoming fully informed on the issues facing county government. As President of the Monroe County Legislature, he encouraged active debate concerning the impact decisions made by elected leaders would have on the lives of the citizens they represent.

Even after the most contentious debates, he was renowned for visiting dissenting legislators, to ensure that the tone of the political discussion was never personal and to attempt to achieve consensus on the important work ahead.

CGI was founded in the spirit of Dennis Pelletier’s commitment to good government, informed discussion and civil discourse.

CGI GRADUATES: IN THEIR WORDS

“As an elected County Legislator, my primary responsibility is to represent my constituents and the needs of my community. This program provides never-ending information on government and the issues our residents face every day, as well as provides knowledge, tools and support to all participants, so that we, as elected officials, can be well informed, educated and qualified to represent our constituency, the laws of NYS, and our communities.”

- Hon. Kathy Stegenga, Orange County Legislator, September 2019 CGI Graduate

“The program has been a fantastic introduction into the organization and workings of county government. The course requirements, the instructors, and the interaction with other county officials has been an extremely rewarding educational experience. I look forward to additional training at each NYSAC conference.”

- Hon. Paul Collins, Chemung County Legislator, February 2017 CGI Graduate

“The wide variety of courses I took through the County Government Institute has helped me increase my effectiveness to serve my county as an elected official. I am so glad I took advantage of this invaluable tool to continue my municipal education.”

- Winona Flynn, Yates County Deputy Treasurer, September 2016 CGI Graduate
Enrollment Form

Name ________________________________

Title _________________ County __________

Address ______________________________________

City _________________ Zip _________________

Phone_______________ Fax_________________

Email ______________________________________

☐ Enclosed Check

☐ Bill Me

Method of Payment

Enrollment Fee: $55.00

Signature __________________________________

Please complete this enrollment form and return to:

The County Government Institute
C/O NYSAC
540 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12207

Required Courses
Core Courses (20 Credits)
1. Principles of County Budget & Finance
2. Foundations of County Government
3. Public Sector Labor Management Relationships
4. Ethics
5. Building Consensus in a Political Environment

Elective Courses (10 Credits)
Continuing Education (4 Credits)

For more information, contact Jackie Dederick, NYSAC Records Manager via email at jdederick@nysac.org or call 518-465-1473.
Welcome, Newly Elected County Officials!

The New York State Association of Counties welcomes 194 newly elected county officials that were sworn in to start their terms of office in January 2020. These new NYSAC members will serve various leadership positions in their counties. We look forward to getting to know our new members as we travel around the state, and at NYSAC events.

Please join us in welcoming the following newly elected county officials:

**Albany County**
- Beroro T. Efekoro, County Legislator

**Cattaraugus County**
- R. Donald Benson, Jr., County Legislator
- Kip A. Morrow, County Legislator
- Robert A. Parker, County Legislator
- Michael M. Brisky, County Legislator
- Ginger D. Schroder, County Legislator

**Chenango County**
- Jeremiah James, Town Supervisor
- Laurie A. Hunt, County Legislator
- Robert A. Parker, County Legislator
- Richard C. Smith, County Legislator
- Michael M. Brisky, County Legislator
- Ginger D. Schroder, County Legislator

**Chenango County**
- R. Donald Benson, Jr., County Legislator

**Cortland County**
- Joseph M. Hennenge, Town Supervisor
- Robert Whitney, Jr., County Legislator
- Jennifer A. Whalen, County Legislator
- Bill L. Ricard, County Legislator

**Cortland County**
- Jennifer A. Whalen, County Legislator
- Susan M. Wilson, County Legislator
- Richard C. Smith, County Legislator

**Cayuga County**
- Heidi A. Nightengale, County Legislator
- Tricia Ottley Kerr, County Legislator
- Hans Pecher, County Legislator
- Brian Schenck, Sheriff

**Clinton County**
- Richard Potiker, County Legislator
- Calvin Castine, County Legislator

**Chautauqua County**
- Stephen Abdella, Acting County Executive
- Thomas R. Harmon, County Legislator
- Bill Ward, County Legislator

**Columbia County**
- Tistrya G. Houghtling, Town Supervisor
- Donal Collins, Town Supervisor
- Brenda A. Adams, Town Supervisor
- Kelly A. Miller-Simmons, Town Supervisor

**Cortland County**
- Kevin J. Fitch, County Legislator
- Susan M. Wilson, County Legislator
- Joseph L. Nauseef, County Legislator

**Delaware County**
- John J. Cammarata, Town Supervisor
- Robert Whitney, Jr., County Legislator
- John J. Cammarata, Town Supervisor
- Richard C. Smith, County Legislator

**Dutchess County**
- Lisa Paoloni, County Legislator
- Faye Garito, County Legislator

**Essex County**
- Kenneth I. Hughes, Town Supervisor
- Jeffrey Alan Subra, Town Supervisor

**Erie County**
- Timothy Meyers, County Legislator
- Frank Todaro, County Legislator

** Allegany County**
- Dylan P. Foust, Coroner/ Medical Examiner

**Broome County**
- Michael Korchak, District Attorney

**Essex County**
- Jeffrey Alan Subra, Town Supervisor
- Russell L. Blaise, Town Supervisor

**Essex County**
- Jay Rand, Jr., Town Supervisor

Continued on next page
**Welcome New County Officials**

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<td>Corey Grant</td>
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<td>Phil Hathway</td>
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<td>Ian W. Gilbert</td>
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<td>Thomas A. Osbourne</td>
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<td>Eric J. Virkler</td>
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<td>Livingston County</td>
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<td>James Cunningham</td>
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<td>Margaret Milman-Barris</td>
<td>City of Oneida Supervisor</td>
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<td>Matthew A. Roberts</td>
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<td>Loren Corbin</td>
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<td>Monroe County</td>
<td>Adam Bello</td>
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<td>Rachel Barnhart</td>
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<td>Paul Dondorfer</td>
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<td>Michael B. Yudelson</td>
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<td>Jeffrey E. Daniels, Jr.</td>
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**Franklin County**
- Melinda Ellis: County Legislator
- Edward J. Lockwood: County Legislator

**Fulton County**
- Heather A. VanDenburgh: Town Supervisor
- Michael Bowman: City of Johnstown Supervisor
- Scott M. Horton: Town Supervisor

**Genesee County**
- Christian O. Yunker: County Legislator
- Jeffrey W. McIntire: Coroner

**Greene County**
- Peter J. Kusminsky: Sheriff

**Hamilton County**
- Betsy A. Bain: Town Supervisor
- Clay J. Arsenault: Town Supervisor
- Nick R. Mauro: Town Supervisor
- Christopher C. Shambo: District Attorney

**Herkimer County**
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- John Maguire: County Legislator
- Scott F. Scherer: Sheriff

**Lewis County**
- Jake Moser: County Clerk
- Phil Hathway: County Legislator

**Livingston County**
- Donald W. Wester: Town Supervisor

**Montgomery County**
- John Thayer: County Legislator

**New York City**
- Farah N. Louis: Brooklyn
- Melinda Katz, Esq.: District Attorney -Queens

**Niagara County**
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**Ontario County**
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- Catherine Menikotz: Town Supervisor

**Oneida County**
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- Jeffrey E. Daniels, Jr.: County Legislator

**Onondaga County**
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- Bill Kinne: County Legislator
- Venon M. Williams, Jr.: County Legislator

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**Rockland County**
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- Thomas Walsh: District Attorney

**Saratoga County**
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- Benny Zlotnick, Jr.: Town Supervisor
- Eric Connolly: Town Supervisor

**Schuyler County**
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- Wesley D. Laraway: Town Supervisor
- Alan Tavenner: Town Supervisor
- Alicia Terry: Town Supervisor
- Mary Ann Wollebe-Bryan: County Treasurer

**Schoharie County**
- Garry L. Gray: County Legislator

**Seneca County**
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- David Hayes: Town Supervisor
- Michael Ferrara: Town Supervisor
- Joseph Borst: Town Supervisor
- James Cleere: Town Supervisor
NYSAC's On Demand Training Program

NYSAC has developed a new and exciting education initiative to meet the ever-changing training needs of county officials through a program of On-Demand Training.

Through a simple annual county subscription fee, NYSAC offers an extensive next level learning portal to a cornucopia of vital training topics essential to your county workforce.

Your county staff will be able to plug into private in-person training programs, on-demand webinars, and live video presentations from the convenience of your county and according to your own staff scheduling needs for unlimited usage.

To register for this new service, please visit our website at www.NYSACOnDemandTraining.org
Children with Special Needs
• Improve the Early Intervention Program by addressing the lack of providers in many areas through a state-funded 5% provider rate increase.
• Require school districts to transport preschool children to programs, and reimburse through an equal cost share between the county, state, and school district.
• Require providers to maximize third party payments prior to seeking payment from counties and the state.
• Cap county fiscal liability for preschool special ed.
• Expand Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) to include children with special needs.
• Expand the Bottle Bill to include more glass containers, such as liquor, wine, and iced tea bottles.
• Enact S.5655/A.7561-A into law, expanding the ZEV rebate for municipalities.

Community Colleges
• Set the base state aid formula allocation for each community college to 100% of the prior year or increase $100 per FTE, whichever is greater.
• Provide full state reimbursement for community college chargebacks for 4- and 6-year degrees at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT).
• Increase the state share for community college base aid.

Economic Development
• Support investments in shovel-ready sites.
• Authorize Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) to provide loans and grants.
• Prioritize and expand broadband and cellular coverage to unserved and under-served communities.

Elections
• Maintain the SFY 2019-20 financial commitment for early voting operations.

Environment
• Fund local educational initiatives related to recycling.
• Support battery stewardship legislation.
• Continue support for PFAS and water contamination remediation.
• Renew the $3 million appropriation for e-waste collection and disposal programs.
• Provide funding for counties to administer Septic System Replacement and release round 2 of funding.
• Enact “No New Unfunded Mandates” legislation and cap current state mandated costs at a rate that does not exceed the state-imposed property tax cap.
• Eliminate the use of “dark store theory” as a way to lower property tax assessments and create a task force to find solutions.
2020 Legislative Program

Medicaid
• Lower county and New York City statutory Medicaid caps to reflect current payments and savings provided by the Affordable Care Act.
• Expand the scope of special transportation services for children who are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.
• Preserve county Medicaid cost caps.

Public Safety
• Fully fund county costs related to implementing criminal justice reforms.
• Reimburse counties for detaining state parole violators at local jails for over 10 days.
• Oppose the HALT Act without state funding resources to expand rehabilitative units and fund treatment costs.
• Authorize court consolidation.
• Enhance counties’ share of the statewide 9-1-1 surcharge to support public safety answering points.
• Release the interoperable emergency communication funds in a timelier manner.
• Increase the state income tax credits for volunteer EMS and firefighter personnel.
• Prohibit the use of drones near jails.
• Amend the Raise the Age law to allow 16-and 17-year-olds to be housed in special designated areas of the county jail.
• Oppose S.2161/A.833 re: MAT in local jails without state financial resources.
• Allow county jails to have pre-arraignment holding.

Public Employee Relations
• Repeal the NYS Scaffold Law, or reform it to include a pure standard of comparative negligence.
• Grant county home rule authority to allow for county-wide EMS related districts.
• Amend Public Offices Law § 3 to allow for home rule authority to set employee residency rules.

Public & Mental Heath
• Fully fund local lead poisoning prevention and other public health initiatives.
• Restore Article 6 funds for NYC to 36%.
• Raise the base grant for Article 6 programs and increase funding to local health departments.
• Provide for a 50-50 state-local share for counties investigating unattended deaths.
• If adult-use cannabis is legalized, provide counties with resources for public education and technical assistance to manage the societal impacts. Counties should be allowed to apply their local sales tax rate on these transactions. In addition, the cannabis cultivation tax should be shared with the county in which the product is grown.
• Establish and fully fund permanent jail-based substance use disorder treatments and transition services programs in all county jails.
• Expand supportive housing beds, including housing for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Public & Infrastructure
• Repeal the NYS Scaffold Law, or reform it to include a pure standard of comparative negligence.
• Grant county home rule authority to allow for county-wide EMS related districts.
• Amend Public Offices Law § 3 to allow for home rule authority to set employee residency rules.

Public Infrastructure & Transportation
• Repeal the NYS Scaffold Law, or reform it to include a pure standard of comparative negligence.
• Grant county home rule authority to allow for county-wide EMS related districts.
• Amend Public Offices Law § 3 to allow for home rule authority to set employee residency rules.

Veteran Services
• Restore support for State Veteran Benefit Advisors.
• Expand Veteran Treatment/Diversion Courts.
• Share the DD-214 form with counties.

Rural Affairs & Agriculture
• Support a statewide dairy supplemental price system, promote consumption of milk in schools, and fund local agricultural assistance.
• Increase state support for Cornell Cooperative Extensions.
• Support agriculture education and teacher training.

Shared Services
• Make it more efficient for local governments to create health insurance consortia under Article 47.
• Continue state matching funds for savings generated through county-wide shared services (CWSSI) panels.
• Allow a portion of the CWSSI matching funds to be used for plan development and implementation costs.
• Adjust property tax cap provisions that work against local shared services and consolidations.

Veteran Services
• Restore support for State Veteran Benefit Advisors.
• Expand Veteran Treatment/Diversion Courts.
• Share the DD-214 form with counties.

NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
540 Broadway, 5th Floor  Albany, NY 12207
518.465.1473  www.nysac.org
New York State Legislative Session Calendar
January — June 2020

The New York State legislative session calendar establishes a schedule for the 2020 legislative session and provides dates important to the legislative process. The session calendar is intended to afford Members flexibility in conducting legislative business in Albany and planning activities within their home districts. The session calendar will foster orderly and timely consideration of legislation. Unforeseen events may require modification of the session calendar.

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January 8 2020 Legislative Session convenes
January 20 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 21 Final Day for Submission of Executive Budget
February 17 Presidents’ Day
April 1 Beginning of new Fiscal Year
May 25 Memorial Day

Indicates session day
NYSAC's mission is to represent, educate, advocate for, and serve member counties and the thousands of elected and appointed county officials who serve the public. The NYSAC Legislative Team works together to analyze legislation, develop lobbying action plans, and coordinate NYSAC’s Legislative Agenda to advocate for counties with a unified voice. Each year, the NYSAC Legislative Team follows a timeline of budget and legislative work to be accomplished on behalf of our members. The timeline aligns with the NYS budget process and legislative calendar.

The Legislative Team also works closely with the 12 NYSAC Standing Committees (Agriculture & Rural Affairs; Children with Special Needs; Economic Development, Environment and Energy; Intergovernmental Affairs; Medicaid & Human Services; Native American Affairs & Gaming; Public Employee Relations; Public Health & Mental Health; Public Safety; Resolutions; Taxation & Finance; and Transportation & Public Works). These member-chaired committees develop, discuss and adopt the series of resolutions that go before the full county delegation, and then become the basis of NYSAC’s legislative program for the coming year.

**JANUARY**

January marks the beginning of the New York State Legislative Session. The Session begins the first Wednesday after the first Monday of the New Year. The opening is usually marked by the Governor’s delivery of the "State of the State Message" in Albany. This message generally outlines the priorities and programs the Governor wants the Legislature to address during the year ahead. The Governor must submit his Executive Budget Proposal to the Legislature, along with the related appropriation, revenue, and budget bills, by the third week in January (or by February 1st in a gubernatorial election year).

Once the Governor’s Executive Budget Proposal is released, NYSAC’s Legislative Team identifies key issues for counties within, or excluded from, the Executive Budget Proposal.

The Legislative Team then develops a lobbying plan for each issue. This involves analyzing the bills, obtaining county feedback and data, and organizing strategic meetings with the Legislature, staff, DOB, and the Governor’s Office.

If there are any major county-involved items within (or excluded from) the Executive Budget Proposal but not part of our Legislative Platform, the Legislative Team drafts resolutions to be presented to the proper standing committee at the annual Legislative Conference at the end of January/beginning of February.

While the budget process continues, new bills are introduced daily by members of the Legislature. The Legislative Team reviews daily introductions and committee reports, and responds accordingly with memos in support or opposition.

Throughout the course of the legislative session, as new issues, programs and/or grants are announced or introduced, the Legislative Team analyzes the county impact and develops white papers, fact sheets, webinars, conference workshops and/or other materials to keep members abreast of changes. New research publications are emailed to members and posted on our website at www.nysac.org/issues.

If you are interested in joining a NYSAC Standing Committee, please contact our office or visit www.nysac.org/committees and complete a nomination form.
FEBRUARY – MARCH

At the conclusion of the NYSAC Legislative Conference, the Legislative Team sends the adopted resolutions to the Governor, Senate and Assembly leadership, each member of the Legislature, agency heads, congressional membership and any/all appropriate staff.

During February, the Legislature creates Legislative Budget Standing Committees and commences Joint Legislative Budget Hearings. The Legislative Team prepares testimony to be presented at the Local Government Hearing and coordinates meeting with the Senate and Assembly leadership and staff.

The Governor generally releases 21-Day Amendments and 30-Day Amendments to the Executive Budget Proposal bills by the end of February, depending on when initial bills are introduced. Once the 30-Day Amendments are released, the Senate and Assembly release their own budget proposals. The Legislative Team identifies key issues for counties within or excluded from the Legislature's budget proposals and revises the lobbying plan for each issue as needed.

Concurrently, NYSAC is also preparing our federal priorities platform to be presented to the Congressional Delegation during the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. During our trip to Washington, the NYSAC delegation and representatives from NACo member counties meet with federal lawmakers and staff to advocate for county interests at the federal level.

APRIL – JUNE

The Executive State Budget must be passed by April 1. Upon adoption of the final State Budget, the Legislative Team immediately prepares a full analysis of the final State Budget to provide to NYSAC members.

Budget priorities that were not completed in the final State Budget are transitioned into non-budget legislative priority items. The Legislative Team begins their lobbying efforts for the Legislature on counties’ key non-budget priorities.

As the session concludes during the month of June, the Legislative Team assembles analyses of all legislation that has passed both houses and measures each bill’s impact on individual member counties. Once the analysis is complete, the Legislative Team compiles the “Passed Both Houses” report, which is sent to NYSAC members. This report explains all the key items from the final State Budget along with a description of all the bills that have an impact on counties. Our team continues to update the report through the end of the calendar year.

Once bills are transmitted to the Governor's office, NYSAC drafts letters to the Governor's Counsel to report counties’ support or opposition to the pending legislation.

Tips for communicating with legislators about a specific issue or bill.

**Impact**
Grab their attention by explaining the impact of the issue on individuals and your community.

**Request**
Describe the desired outcome for the issue, and request specific action from them.

**Appreciate**
Thank them for the meeting, and for their support in helping to resolve the issue.
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“I highly recommend Collar City to anyone looking to simplify the auction process and lighten your workload”
– Matthew Ossenfort, Montgomery County Executive

"highly qualified, experienced"

“Randy and his team are courteous, highly qualified, experienced and knowledgeable in all aspects…a team proven to be specialists in the business”
– Michael Slawson, Rensselaer County CFO

"professional, courteous, attentive"

"During the preparation, planning, and process of conducting the Auction, we found the Collar City Auctions Team to be professional, courteous, and attentive to our needs and requirements."
– Kevin Gardner, Oswego County Treasurer

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Each year, during the State Legislative Session, the three statewide municipal associations—NYSAC, the Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) and the Association of Towns (AOT)—meet to discuss legislative priorities of mutual concern. Here are some of the issues crossing our jurisdictions as we begin the 2020 State Legislative Session.

Health Insurance Risk Pools

Counties, towns, cities and villages have asked for several years that the state review its current legal and regulatory requirements that allow counties to establish shared health insurance consortia to help lower costs for our local governments. Only one such county-led pool has been established in the last three decades due to the strict and bureaucratic process established under state law and regulations.

During the County-Wide Shared Services Initiative process several county plans included an interest in establishing shared health insurance risk pools, but many of them found the state law barriers to be excessive and counterproductive.

All three associations are supporting state law and regulatory changes that will reform Article 47 to allow fewer contracted lives, reduced reserve requirements, and expanding eligibility to other public entities, such as library districts.

Expanding Residency Requirements

New York’s Public Officers Law (POL) §3 generally requires certain employees reside in the political subdivision or municipality in which he or she holds such public office. This law has a worthy intent, which is to promote that local officials interact with the community in which they serve, even in off hours, as well as to keep local tax-funded salaries within the community.

Since the 1970’s, the State has authorized over 70 exceptions to POL residency requirements, including for police officers, in recognition that for some job specifications it is important to increase the potential hiring pool to obtain highly skilled employees.

In recent years, the population of upstate New York has declined, shrinking the potential hiring pool. In this same period, the State has forced county governments to vastly increase skilled labor hires in order to implement new state reforms such as raising the age of criminal responsibility, public defense expansion, and criminal justice reforms such as bail, speedy trial, and discovery.

Local governments, who are best situated to know what job titles should have residency requirements and which should have flexibility to ensure efficient and quality county services, are asking the State to allow for Home Rule Authority to determine county employee residency requirements.

Increasing CHIPS Bidding Limits

The current competitive bidding threshold for highway projects is $250,000. The last increase to this threshold was in 2011 to bring the threshold up from $100,000. Legislation has been introduced in both houses to increase the amount of the current cost threshold from $250,000 to $500,000.

The three municipal associations are urging the Governor and legislative leaders to include this proposal in the 2020-21 State Budget. Local governments support an increase in the CHIPS bidding threshold to give municipalities the flexibility and the option to bid out or perform in-house projects that cost less than $500,000.

Expanding Design-Build Options for Local Governments

Design-build is a common method used in the private construction industry to deliver a project in which the engineering design and construction services are contracted by a single entity.

Especially in larger construction projects, allowing local governments to use this method would reduce costs and complete projects quicker. The State of New York has recently passed legislation allowing for more design-build options for State projects in order to reduce costs and streamline projects. Municipalities do not have this same flexibility under the law.
The associations support extending design-build authority to counties and larger municipalities.

**Tax Cap Capital Exclusion**

Since the enactment of the property tax cap counties and local governments have delayed or avoided critical infrastructure capital projects because they did not want to exceed the state-imposed property tax cap.

The longer these capital projects are ignored and forestalled, the more likely they will turn into emergencies and result in even greater costs to local taxpayers. The current property tax cap law allows an exclusion for school district capital obligations but does not include a comparable exclusion for counties and other local governments.

The three municipal associations are calling on State leaders to amend the property tax cap to exclude town and county highway, bridge, and infrastructure capital project costs from the State’s property tax cap calculation.

**PIT Increase for Volunteer Firefighters (S.6802) and EMS Workers**

The vast majority of people serving as firefighters and EMS personnel in New York State are volunteers. Of the State’s 1,795 municipal fire departments, 89 percent are volunteer organizations. Our system of providing these essential services varies by municipal jurisdiction.

Cities and most villages have municipal fire departments with a combination of paid and volunteer staff while towns usually have independent fire districts comprised of volunteers. Most of these entities are substantially smaller than those found in cities and villages and are often comprised of part-time volunteers.

Over the last decade, NYS has experienced several volunteer ambulance departments that have closed shop, transferring their certificates of operation to a for-profit provider or merging with other volunteer ambulance departments.

According to a NYS Comptroller report in March 2017, there were approximately 92,000 to 96,000 volunteer firefighters statewide. In 2007, the State Legislature and the Governor enacted a volunteer firefighters’ and ambulance workers’ credit (Section 606 of the NYS Tax Law). Active volunteer firefighters or volunteer ambulance workers are entitled to a credit against their State income tax equal to $200. Tax credits are a benefit that has been proven to help attract and retain volunteer firefighters and EMS workers.

The associations urge lawmakers to pass legislation or include State budget language to provide an increase to the Volunteer Firefighter and EMS Worker State Income Tax Credit to at least $500 annually.

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Essex County
As we head into 2020, county priorities are on the agenda for Congress and the White House as legislators weigh FY 2020 funding and major program reauthorizations important to counties. In this article, the NACo Government Affairs team previews the federal priorities on our radar in the New Year.

**FY 2020 Spending Negotiations Move Forward**

In December, congressional appropriators finalized an FY 2020 spending deal that includes several major wins for counties, including a repeal of the Cadillac Tax on employer-sponsored health benefits, additional election security funding, fully funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and increased funding levels for several vital block grants. The spending measure, which President Trump is expected to sign, funds federal agencies and programs through the end of FY 2020 on September 30, 2020.

**NACo Pushing For Long-Term Extensions Of Disaster Recovery, Welfare Assistance Programs**

Congress is prepping for various program reauthorizations in the New Year, including disaster recovery legislation and extension of critical human services programs.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides insurance coverage to property owners for damages resulting from catastrophic flooding. The program is currently operating under the 13th short-term extension following its expiration at the end of FY 2017. In the 116th Congress, multiple bipartisan reauthorization bills have been introduced in both chambers. In addition to enacting five-year reauthorizations, these proposals aim to enhance and modernize NFIP and increase funding for flood map improvements.

Similar to NFIP, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program expired on September 30, 2019 and is operating under a short-term extension. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), TANF is a federal entitlement program providing funds to states, tribes and territories for a wide range of benefits and activities to address both the effects and the root causes of poverty. In 10 states, including New York, counties play a significant role in funding and operating the program, including directly contributing to TANF’s maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements.

NACo is monitoring proposals to reauthorize surface transportation legislation and workforce development programs.

In addition to these programs, congressional efforts to reauthorize a surface transportation bill and workforce development legislation are expected to gear up in early 2020.

In summer 2019, the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee approved the America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA), which would reauthorize the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and provide new competitive grants to support construction of resilient infrastructure. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has signaled he’s open to a vote on the legislation, and the U.S. House could move on a surface transportation bill later in early 2020.

In addition, Congress is beginning discussions around reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which will expire September 30, 2020. A major county priority, WIOA provides federal funding to states and counties for a wide range of workforce development and job training programs and has been critically important to helping counties respond to economic downturns and other challenges.

Between finalizing a spending agreement and preparing for major program reauthorizations, Congress has plenty to do over the next few months and at any point could tie in other issues to these discussions.

Counties will be front and center as our federal partners move forward on these issues and NACo will continue to share updates as they unfold.
Making the Case for Increasing the Local Share of DMV Revenues

By Holly Tanner, Columbia County Clerk and Past President, New York State Association of County Clerks

County Clerks serve a constitutional role, established in the 1660s under the Dongan Laws, an act of the British Crown to establish the original counties in the Colony of New York. While the duties of the chief record and filing officer for New York State counties has remained relatively unchanged, the mechanisms for performing those duties have grown increasingly complex.

Fifty-one County Clerks across the state also serve as County Commissioners for the NYS Dept of Motor Vehicles, acting as an agent for the State DMV Commissioner. This title is set forth in Vehicle and Traffic Law, section 205 which requires those County Clerks in the 51 counties to perform as agents. A myriad of transactions is performed every day in these offices: registering motor vehicles, boats, motorcycles, mopeds, and ATV’s; issuing license plates, processing title transactions, driver licenses and non-driver ID cards, and enforcement transactions, to name a few. County Clerks are the “front line” of county government, as we have direct contact with a large number of constituents, every single day.

Vehicle and Traffic Law, section 205(3) states that local municipalities who run a DMV office in their county shall keep a share of the revenue for transactions processed in those offices. The current rate is 12.7% of most fee transactions, an amount that hasn’t been adjusted since 1999. You read that correctly, the current rate of reimbursement to county-run DMV offices has not been updated or adjusted for over two decades. There are also over 20 transactions that we process in our offices that have no fee at all, meaning that we get no revenue from those transactions.

Complex Staff Responsibilities

Meanwhile, the duties of the staff (who are county employees, not state), have changed drastically while that reimbursement rate remains stagnant. In addition to a more complex role due to technology and documentation requirements, several recent legislative acts have greatly impacted local DMV offices. First, with the passage of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative and the Homeland Security Act, those duties went from completing transactions for registrations and licenses, to reviewing documentation of citizens for veracity, accuracy and legality, often having to make difficult decisions that may mean the difference between someone getting their license or ID, or not. The requirements thrust upon local governments under the Real ID law are intended to ensure that those citizens obtaining a license are who they say they are, and who live where they say they live. One wishing to obtain a Real ID or Enhanced License document must provide documentation to the cashier that shows, among other things, citizenship, proof of date of birth and proof of legal name.

While this is done under the guise of public safety and may lead to that admirable end, what it amounts to in local DMV offices is lines out the door as each two-step transaction takes two staff people and at least 20 minutes per transaction for the review and scanning of the documentation. That does not account for the actual processing of the document.

The grand total for an individual transaction that goes to the county where the document is processed? A whopping $8.19, which is the 12.7% of the $64.50 cost of a Real ID non CDL license (it is $10.22 in revenue from the $80.50 cost of a standard license/ID in counties that have MTA fees). That same 20-minute transaction for a non-driving Real ID document? On average, it’s $.82 cents for a $6.50 transaction.

There have been even more changes to the processing of vehicle registrations and documentation is more complicated than ever, despite technology advances that should decrease paperwork and streamline the process.

Growing Revenue Gap

Another revenue challenge for counties? More and more New Yorkers go online for their DMV transactions. NYS keeps approximately 98% of all online DMV transactions and remits a minimal share to counties that operate DMV offices. The State promotes online transactions with taglines like “skip the trip” and programs like “My DMV,” all aimed at encouraging people to stay out of expensive,
crowded, and inefficient state-run district offices but with the ill-advised aspect of keeping people out of locally-run offices as well. As with most internet transactions, it is typically used for the simpler transactions, leaving the more difficult and time-consuming transactions to be handled at local offices. The competition for fee-based business is real and is real money.

In 2014-15 the NYS DMV generated $1.3 billion in transactional fees, while the 51 county-run DMV offices combined generated only $39.7 million. This growing revenue gap will leave New Yorkers with more complicated DMV transactions having fewer places to go because local DMV offices cannot continue to operate under a business model that is seeing steady declines in revenue. Running a DMV office is a heavy burden on the local taxpayer, with overhead such as utilities, maintenance, and the cost of employees and benefits. Oftentimes these departments can cost the county money to run.

Green Light NY

On June 17, 2019 the State Legislature passed the “Driver’s License Access and Privacy Act,” more commonly known as “Green Light NY,” which was subsequently signed by Governor Cuomo. This went into effect on December 14, 2019 and allows for the issuance of a NYS driver’s license for undocumented immigrants. This will again add additional burdens to an already burdened staff.

As of early December, County Clerks had not received any communication from NYS DMV in regard to implementation of this new law. Questions remain such as: will we have translators to read foreign documents? What documents are acceptable as proof? Will there be changes for the proof requirements for citizens wishing to obtain the “standard or not for federal purposes” license? And much more. With potentially 265,000 undocumented immigrants statewide this could be the straw that breaks the proverbial camel’s back, with unprecedented numbers flooding DMV offices statewide, and no mechanism as of now for funding for additional staff and equipment.

It is time for a pay adjustment for counties who fully support and fund DMV offices on behalf of the State of New York. We are not talking about fee increases; County Clerks and county-run DMV offices are asking to be compensated fairly for the work performed on behalf of the State of New York every day, from the revenues we collect. Since the inception of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles in 1961, untold numbers of transactions have taken place in the counties across this great State, for very little in return.

As more and more counties struggle with unfunded mandates, the 2% tax cap, and providing needed services for their constituents, any reasonable increase in funding will only help those counties and their residents. County property taxes are at an all time high, the cost of doing business keeps going up, and the DMV workload has increased tenfold. The time is ripe to make those counties that run DMV offices whole or at least more equitable to the valuable work we are performing.
Recycling Crisis and Solutions

County Impact of the Global Recycling Crisis

By Alexandra LaMonte, NYSAC Research Analyst

Counties play an important role in sustainable waste management in New York State. However, the future of these operations is threatened by global market volatility that has resulted in unsustainable cost increases.

The Impact

In 2017, China began implementing import policies, often referred to collectively as National Sword, that restrict the importation of foreign recyclables. For years, China had been the United States’ largest customer for household recyclables. However, under National Sword, the country established a 0.05% contamination standard for plastics and fiber. This new standard effectively banned U.S. imports because roughly 15-30% of our recycling stream is contaminated, meaning up to a third of the materials we place in the blue or green bin do not belong there or are disposed of in the wrong way. Top contaminants include glass, Styrofoam, plastic bags, batteries, single-use items, textiles, and single-serve coffee pods.

New York State has been severely impacted by China’s scrap import policies and other market changes. Many localities have seen more than a 1,000% increase in their recycling costs since 2017. Municipalities across the U.S. have responded to turmoil in the global market for recyclables by cancelling curbside collection programs, limiting the types of materials they accept, or agreeing to large price increases. This is a step in the wrong direction. As we enter the 2020 Legislative Session, NYSAC will continue to advocate for state lawmakers to provide relief to local recycling efforts that are essential for conserving natural resources and keeping unnecessary waste out of landfills.

The Solution

NYSAC and other advocates have proposed short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to the recycling crisis.

Education and Equipment Grants

The first solution is to provide municipalities with additional grant funding for education and equipment upgrades to improve the quality of the recycling stream. State and local education campaigns help to reduce contamination by letting residents know what is recyclable, what is not, and why it is important to “Recycle Right.” At the same time, investments are necessary to bring our aging recycling infrastructure up to modern standards and capabilities, which will allow solid waste entities to capture more materials and access higher-value markets.

Limited Bottle Bill Expansion

Another way for state lawmakers to provide relief to local recycling programs is to expand the NYS Returnable Container Act, or “Bottle Bill,” to include additional glass containers. Glass is a problem for curbside recycling programs because it is expensive to transport and contaminates other materials (like paper) when it breaks. The recycling crisis has exacerbated problems with glass in the recycling stream because the negative value of glass can no longer be absorbed by the commodity value of other materials. Placing a deposit on glass containers would increase glass recycling, lower municipal recycling costs, and reduce contamination in the curbside bin. It is estimated that extending the Bottle Bill to include wine and liquor bottles would divert over 150,000 tons of glass to the deposit system.

While state lawmakers have also proposed adding additional plastic and aluminum containers to the Bottle Bill, NYSAC does not support this wholesale expansion because it would take critical revenue away from local recycling programs.
Adding sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit and vegetable beverages, and ready-to-drink coffees and teas to the Bottle Bill would place an undue burden on municipal recyclers by removing as much as 50% of plastic and aluminum containers from the recycling stream. Solid waste entities cannot afford to lose a critical revenue source at a time when global market changes have already made it difficult to continue providing curbside collection programs.

Market Development & Product Stewardship

Finally, in the medium- and long-term, New York State should enact additional product stewardship legislation and work with federal and regional partners to encourage market development. Product stewardship is a policy approach under which producers that put products in the marketplace are responsible for the entire product management lifecycle, including the post-consumer phase. Shifting responsibility to producers reduces the financial burden on local governments and can help reduce the environmental impact of products and packaging. Market development activities are also important to create new markets, stimulate demand for recyclable materials, and foster businesses that manufacture and market recycled-content products.

Adopting these and other policies to support local recycling programs is an essential way to reduce waste, protect our environment, and make New York State less susceptible to future market downturns.

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Our integrated planning, architecture & engineering team designs:

- Housing units as normative environments
- Intake areas to support de-escalation
- Visitation spaces to encourage rebuilding relationships
- Safe and secure facilities
A local veterans’ service agency has the authority to assist members of the armed forces and veterans who are residents of New York with education training and retraining services; health, medical and rehabilitation services and facilities; employment services; and provisions of federal, state and local laws affording special rights and privileges to veterans.

In addition to assisting veterans with obtaining state and federal veteran benefits, many counties have created additional programs and services to assist the veteran population.

In What Innovative Ways Are Counties Supporting Veterans?

In Albany County, the annual capital region Stand-Down is just one of the many efforts to connect veterans to services. Stand-Downs are collaborative events, coordinated between local VAs, government departments, and community agencies that serve the homeless. The Albany Stratton VA Medical Center which participates in these stand-downs, offers an array of programs to assist veterans in maintaining housing and stability in the community.

Dutchess County has implemented the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veteran Support Program. The program brings veterans together in a secure, anonymous setting in order to help one another cope with the effects of PTSD and TBI. The program provider hired two veterans who will also participate on any veteran coalition or collaboration in Dutchess County.

Agencies in Onondaga County have partnered to form a task force specific to ending veteran homelessness. One of the partners created a full-time Outreach Case Manager position, which is held by a veteran. Staff members from the Onondaga County Comptroller’s Office, as well as the Rescue Mission Director of Emergency Services, have accompanied this case manager on outreach efforts in Syracuse.

Nassau County has created a special program to assist veterans who have violations or Notices of Liability returnable to the Nassau County Traffic and Parking Violations Agency (NCTPVA). Starting October 24th, NCTPVA will hold a monthly hearing session dedicated to assisting veterans and active duty military members with resolving these claims.

County Recommendations for Veteran Benefits, Programs and Coordination of Services

NYSAC Executive Director Stephen Acquario, along with Ontario County Veterans Service Agency Director Jeremy Marshall, testified before the New York State Assembly Veterans’ Affairs Standing Committee on county veteran services.

The legislative testimony covered innovative approaches that counties are already using to serve our veteran population as well as a series of budget and legislative recommendations for the state to consider.

County Recommendations for Providing Veteran Services:

Share the DD-214 Forms with County Veteran Service Agencies. During Veteran out-processing a DD-214 should be automatically sent to their local county veteran service agency. The NYS Division of Veteran Services should share the DD-214 they receive from the U.S. Department of Defense with the respective counties (service members have the option to send the DD-214 automatically to counties already, however, many service members are not aware of the benefits available to them and skip or ignore this option). NY Military Law, Section 250 has provisions to protect the privacy of veteran information, including certificates of honorable discharge. The DD-214 should be added to that section of Military Law.

Benefits of sharing the DD-214 with County Veteran Service Agencies include:

- Increasing awareness about newly relocated veterans within a county;
- Safeguarding and creating an easily accessible path for veterans to obtain a copy of their DD-214 when needed;
- Increasing ability for county VSAs to reach veteran populations; and
- Allowing county clerks to create a list and better serve or reach veterans.
Expand Veteran Court Availability throughout the State

Currently, New York has 33 veterans’ treatment courts located in 25 of 62 counties. There are approximately 1/3 of veterans living outside of a county with a VTC. In support of our veterans, NYSAC believes we need to expand these courts to all counties. Veterans’ courts are diversion courts that understand the challenges that combat veterans have readjusting to civilian life. It is for these individuals that perhaps counseling and other assistance is a better option than criminal punishment.

Local Sales Tax Exemption for Vehicle Purchase/ Adaptation

Some states provide a disabled veteran who receives a VA grant for the purchase and special adaptation of a vehicle to be exempt from paying the state sales tax on the vehicle. NYSAC would recommend that the state provide this benefit as well as allow counties to enact similar local laws to provide this benefit as well.

Veteran Trust Fund

In 2010, Saratoga County created a Veterans Trust Fund. The Trust Fund was established to accept donations and make disbursements to Saratoga County veterans and veteran’s organizations in need of assistance. The fund provides grants to Saratoga County veterans or their families for training, education, health care, housing assistance and essential services and for the benefit of groups, organizations, programs, and projects dedicated to the welfare and support of the Saratoga County veterans. Donations to the fund are tax deductible, and all funds stay local.

- The Trust Fund was created with assistance of a local benefactor who donated seed funding. The fund is supplanted with donations and fundraisers such as the “Revolutionary Run for Saratoga County Veterans Trust Fund.” The state should consider providing counties who create Trust Funds at local option a one-time seed fund equal to $1/ per veteran as of the last U.S. Census. This targeted investment will help aid the continued operational success of the Trust Fund.

- This is one example of how the trust fund could be used: During a recent survey of county veteran service agencies, respondents indicated that veterans, particularly in rural areas of the state, often have difficulty obtaining transportation for medical, doctor, and veteran service appointments. Establishing a trust fund with a private/public partnership model to assist veterans with transportation costs can help ease the burden of those trying to attend veteran services.

- The trust fund can also be used to create a database of contractors to help veteran related projects. In order for counties to help spearhead veteran construction projects, initial seed funding is needed to reimburse contractors and then additional fundraising efforts would supplant the resources used to compensate contractors.

Additional Recommendations for Enhanced Veteran Benefits

- Expand the definition of a “veteran” to include Reserve/ National Guard members.
- Authorize local governments to allow veterans to receive exemptions from paying hotel/motel occupancy taxes.
- Expand the discount for Hunting and Fishing Licenses.
- Expand the discount on State Park Entrance Fees.
- Create a veteran green energy jobs program to train and link veterans with sustainable, environmentally friendly jobs to meet the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.
- Improving coordination with SUNY, CUNY and County Community Colleges can help to improve job replacement and recruitment options for veterans.
- Grant a Local Sales Tax Exemption on Vehicles for Veterans Who Are Partially Disabled.
Several years ago, St. Lawrence County joined the P-Card program and committed to make it a success. That commitment has paid dividends. Now we have a steady and growing revenue stream just from changing the way we pay for things we were already buying.

Mike Cunningham, Director of Governmental Services

Start saving today with the NYSAC's Payment Solutions (P-Card) Program, in partnership with PFM, provides counties with a tool to create an annual revenue stream, simply by paying your bills. The P-Card, which is a special type of credit card, streamlines the purchase of supplies, furniture, construction materials, utilities and much more, saving time and money for your county.

For more information, please email PCardTeam@pfm.com

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This NYS Parenting website is funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative, Grant Number 90TP0019-01-01, from the Department of Health and Human Services, as a one-stop, digital parent portal for information on parenting, child care options, concerns about child development and how to talk and work together with your child’s teachers.
“Several years ago, St. Lawrence County joined the P-Card program and committed to make it a success. That commitment has paid dividends. Now we have a steady and growing revenue stream just from changing the way we pay for things we were already buying.”

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Motorists and businesses that rely on our state and local networks of roads and bridges are painfully aware that, despite best efforts, state and local highway departments find it a daunting task to keep up with the maintenance and rehabilitation demands of these aging and ailing transportation systems. That is why NYSAC’s partnership with the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) in joint advocacy efforts is so important.

There are over 20,000 centerline miles of roadways owned by counties in New York State. That’s 25% more than the total mileage of the state-owned system alone. Add in the roads owned by towns, villages and cities and you get over 97,000 miles of roads that are the responsibility of local governments; more than 87% of the statewide total. And, over 50% of the bridges in this state are owned by local governments.

The ongoing resource requirements to keep this vast interconnected system of roads, bridges and culverts in a state of good repair and safe for public travel is proving to be beyond the capacity of most local governments to finance. Now that the Northeast winter snow is blowing again, our dedicated crews are out plowing not only our huge local system, but over a quarter of the state-owned system as well. How then do we begin to address these needs that far exceed the highway budgets of localities?

As the State Department of Transportation’s current Five-Year Capital Program comes to an end this March, it technically means the end of these programs: Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS); Marchiselli; Emergency Winter Recovery (EWR); PAVE NY; and BRIDGE NY.

As any county official knows, the CHIPS program is the financial lifeblood of any local highway department, distributing vital and reoccurring state funding through a formula to every local government in the state. Yet, the CHIPS base level has remained flat at $438M for seven consecutive years. While providing a reliable base amount of state funding for local roads and bridges, CHIPS funds fall well short of what is needed to keep the locally owned system from falling further into a state of disrepair. And, BRIDGE NY (that provides funds for critical local bridge and culvert projects) and PAVE NY (with funds limited to local paving projects) have been helpful to our local highway departments, utilizing methods to distribute monies statewide. But it is simply not enough.

A lack of bridge funding has had a crushing impact on local bridge conditions. In 2009, NYSDOT staff projected that approximately 600 local bridges would become deficient over the following five-year period. In 2017, the latest year of available data, NYSDOT projected 1,075 local bridges would become deficient over the next five-year period--nearly doubling the number of deficient bridges in just eight years.

Roads are no better off. One study reveals that nearly half of our local roads are in fair or poor condition. Outside of New York City, localities need to spend an additional $1.75 billion annually just to bring our system into a 12-year paving cycle.

The state provides transportation funding assistance to local governments through state and federally funded local assistance programs. But this level of funding continues to be inadequate to meet the demands of not only the locally owned transportation system but the state’s as well.
New York must make transportation infrastructure investment a top priority

Transportation funding enjoys bipartisan support among the Governor and State Legislators because all New Yorkers benefit from a functional and safe transportation system. Indeed, EWR funding has been added to budgets to help all local highway departments to repair damage caused by our brutal winter weather. The Governor’s PAVE NY and BRIDGE NY initiatives and recent successes in securing EWR funding in the state budget is a credit to this bipartisan effort. Of course, there is still much more to be done.

The next Five-Year Capital Program is a crucial opportunity to put the state on a steady multiyear path to restoring and modernizing its infrastructure, improving condition ratings and applying timely pavement preservation treatments. NYSCHSA is urging that the new program include a $150 million annual increase for CHIPS and a doubling of funding levels for PAVE NY and BRIDGE NY, among other enhancements. The Governor has committed to a $150 billion Infrastructure spending plan for the next five years, compared to $100 billion over these previous five years. This additional funding level should allow for the allocation of significant new capital funding to local transportation systems that is so desperately needed.

Economists have long recognized and quantified the strong link between public investments in transportation systems and the economic vitality of communities. Studies show that $1 billion of infrastructure development creates more than 28,000 jobs. New York’s drivers just want a functioning system in a state of good repair to get to and from work, homes, schools, hospitals and other destinations safely. It is therefore critical that the next state Five-Year Transportation Capital Program boosts investment in our transportation infrastructure to ensure its continued safety and functionality and to secure New York’s competitiveness for economic development and job creation for all communities throughout the state.
What Sectors of the Economy Contribute the Most to Local Sales Tax

By Dave Lucas, NYSAC Director of Finance & Intergovernmental Affairs

As diversified as the communities of New York State are, from bustling cities to bucolic rolling hills of farmland to numerous suburban centers, they have a lot in common when it comes to sales tax. For most counties the top sales tax generators by sector are similar, including automobile dealers, gasoline stations, restaurants and other eating establishments, building material and supplies stores, and clothing and big box stores/warehouse clubs.

These individual sectors fall into larger buckets that dominate sales tax collections across the state, such as:

Auto Related
Automobile Dealers; Auto Repair & Maintenance; Gasoline Stations; Petroleum Products

Utilities
Electric Power Generation & Distribution; Wired and Wireless Telecommunications; Natural Gas Distribution

Food & Drink
Restaurants & Other Eating Places; Grocery Stores; Beer, Wine Liquor Stores

General Retail
General Merchandise & Warehouse Stores (big box retailers); Building Materials and Supplies; Electronics and Appliances

Personal Goods
Clothing Stores; Department Stores; Health & Beauty; Sporting Goods; Hobbies, Toys, Musical Instruments, etc.

Even though New York City stands alone in its economic diversity and sheer volume of transactions, you will see similar categories populating its top sales tax categories as the 57 counties. The chart below shows the top 5 sales tax contributors for the 57 counties and New York City from 2014 through 2019.

The bigger and more diverse the entity, the less reliant they become on any one category of sales tax revenue. For example, in regard to the five sales tax “buckets” described earlier, just over 40 percent of total taxable sales in New York City would come from these groups. However, for a more rural county, up to 75 percent of their total taxable sales would come from the five buckets.

Top Sources of Taxable Sales in the Counties Outside New York City

The top five sources of taxable sales are virtually the same in each region of the state (and generally for each county), but their order may change from region to region. The only exception is the Mid-Hudson Region (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester) where these counties share a top five category of “Clothing Stores” with New York City.

A visible trend in many counties is the impact of gasoline prices. When gasoline prices hovered near four dollars a gallon during 2011, 2012 and 2013, taxable sales from gasoline stations became the top source of sales tax in most upstate counties or finished a close second. As prices have fallen, so has the ranking for gasoline stations. Categories like this that are heavily impacted by changes in commodity prices tend to be more volatile and will move up and down a county’s list accordingly. Grocery stores, electric power generation, and natural gas distribution, fall into this group as well.
Another major trend is related to changes in consumer behavior that are often linked to the emergence of new technologies and retail platforms. Over the last decade, retail transactions over the internet have grown dramatically, impacting local retailers and county sales tax receipts. The chart above provides a breakdown of how the Top 10 taxable sales categories have evolved from 2014 to 2019 with "Electronic Shopping & Mail Order" moving into the Top 10 for the 57 counties outside of New York City. When New York City sales are included the growth in internet retail narrows somewhat, but it still leads the pack.

We expect this category to grow even faster in the next few years due to recently enacted state laws that require internet-based retailers to collect sales tax on most of their online sales. The new laws stem from a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2018 that clarified that sales tax is legally owed on these transactions. Prior to these changes, the State of New York estimated that only about half of the tax due from internet purchases was being collected in recent years.

![Chart image](chart.png)

### New York State - Top 10 Sales Tax Category Change, 2014-2019 ( Ranked by % Change )

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses</td>
<td>$7,049,823,058</td>
<td>$8,653,909,099</td>
<td>$38,848,377,194</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>$3,428,265,509</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Computer Systems Design and Related Services</td>
<td>$4,708,321,000</td>
<td>$5,008,763,081</td>
<td>$25,253,086,929</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>$1,823,238,501</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Restaurants and Other Eating Places</td>
<td>$37,800,642,665</td>
<td>$39,847,378,126</td>
<td>$210,307,812,126</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>$10,129,759,203</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers Building Material and Supplies</td>
<td>$6,502,159,425</td>
<td>$7,272,890,100</td>
<td>$38,133,295,559</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>$1,446,175,777</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dealers</td>
<td>$13,600,977,583</td>
<td>$14,308,759,370</td>
<td>$77,236,683,003</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>$2,823,783,820</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>$4,325,635,829</td>
<td>$4,413,918,273</td>
<td>$23,589,893,245</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>$859,525,542</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Automotive Repair and Maintenance</td>
<td>$5,723,452,188</td>
<td>$6,002,460,588</td>
<td>$32,949,244,082</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>$1,158,255,119</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Automobile Dealers</td>
<td>$29,785,611,782</td>
<td>$30,573,518,220</td>
<td>$169,957,182,220</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>$5,787,906,438</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gen. Merch. Stores, incl. Warehouse Clubs &amp; Supercenters</td>
<td>$12,649,254,867</td>
<td>$12,968,850,660</td>
<td>$71,508,552,877</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>$2,186,772,545</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores</td>
<td>$4,217,414,089</td>
<td>$4,367,503,964</td>
<td>$24,147,553,182</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>$707,858,749</td>
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</tbody>
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| Subtotal Top 10 Taxable Sales | $126,363,292,486 | $133,418,102,549 | $711,931,649,416 | 37.6% | $30,237,369,647 | 47.7% | 37.6% |
| Total Taxable Sales | $328,778,817,566 | $350,409,553,159 | $1,893,999,871,718 | 17.6% | $63,399,867,250 | 100.0% | 100.0% |

We expect this category to grow even faster in the next few years due to recently enacted state laws that require internet-based retailers to collect sales tax on most of their online sales. The new laws stem from a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2018 that clarified that sales tax is legally owed on these transactions. Prior to these changes, the State of New York estimated that only about half of the tax due from internet purchases was being collected in recent years.

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Local Government’s Critical Role in Achieving an Accurate Count in 2020

By Rebecca Sanin, President/CEO, Health and Welfare Council of Long Island (HWCLI)

Counties play a crucial role in provision of public safety, health and human services and quality of life for constituents. Every ten years, counties have the opportunity to bring additional resources into the region and help set a ten-year funding precedent.

Participating in the 2020 Census and leveraging the public-facing nature of county government to reach communities that are historically undercounted is imperative to the sustainability of communities and health and human service programs.

The data collected through the Census affects the quality of life that counties seek to protect. Census data is used for funding schools, roads, infrastructure, transit, Head Start, Medicaid, disaster relief and so much more. During a time in which constituents of every political persuasion are experiencing concern about national and global issues, New York’s voice and representation is at-risk in the event of an undercount. With just a 0.6% undercount, New York stands to lose two congressional representatives, putting our fair share of representation and our voices at risk. The time has never been more crucial; the initiative never more impactful.

Complete Count Committees, consisting of government partnering with nonprofits, libraries, education systems, businesses, and faith-based institutions, are organizing bodies that develop strategy and action items and work to co-educate community messengers about why Census participation matters, barriers to a Complete Count, and the protections afforded by Title XIII. Creating a Complete Count Committee and regularly convening and planning is an essential first step for effective Get Out the Count (GOTC) efforts. Given the far-reaching effects of the 2020 Census on federal funding and representation, it is imperative that strategic planning is underway now.

Significant barriers exist to securing an accurate count in New York State, but one of the primary barriers is simply a lack of knowledge about the funding implications of Census completion. Counties and local government are uniquely positioned to get the word out about the Census by utilizing their broad reach in creative and innovative ways.

What can counties do beyond traditional outreach?

First, many counties are participating in the Governor’s Shared Services Initiative. This presents an opportunity to coordinate efforts across municipal governments as they communicate with residents and employees about the importance of completing the Census. Utilizing shared service portals and communication mechanisms for Census education is a valuable opportunity to reach a broad audience of constituents using existing resources.

Counties can also inventory internal staff to identify public facing opportunities to reach residents. Most governments oversee a wide range of communications channels such as newsletter distributions, calendars, recreational pamphlets, parking passes, park concerts, festivals and so much more.
The goal of such an inventory is to identify all possible locations, channels, and events through which governments interface with residents, each of which provides an opportunity to get the word out about the Census.

Once the county’s communications channels are identified, messaging should be developed that concisely demonstrates the impact and the importance of the Census. Across the State, there are stories about the impact of previous undercounts—from school districts whose inaccurate population projections created fiscal and operational difficulty, to cities whose inaccurate population counts made them ineligible for top-tier city funding from NYS. Stories are impactful, but when it comes to dollars and cents, familiarity with the impact of data can be powerful. Downward pressure on taxes requires ensuring every individual is counted – identify the components of the county budget that are funded using Census data and look for opportunities to elucidate this to residents. Share the programs that Census data drives to show taxpayers the impact of being counted. The decennial Census has a significant impact on the fiscal health of every county—and every school—and every hospital: all members of the community have a vested interest in an accurate count.

Government’s greatest asset is its human capital—the men and women who have chosen public service as the focus of their careers. Consider ways to leverage the creativity and commitment of the workforce. For example, identify an interdepartmental team and coordinator to manage and oversee Census efforts. This team will play an umbrella role in ensuring that public-facing departments are educated about the Census and prepared to serve as trusted messengers to the public, encouraging Census completion. During the Census count, this team can establish war rooms in county offices to check completion data on a nightly basis to garner information and target outreach in areas with low completion rates. Consider hosting internal contests asking staff to suggest creative ways to use government platforms to elevate awareness about the far-reaching impacts of the 2020 count. Work closely with union leaders to use their network to raise awareness and encourage Census completion. Significant gains could be made on Census completion rates if every county employee completed the questionnaire.

Census completion will be driven by an effective communications plan. With the oversaturation of information that smart phones and technology create, consistent and frequent messaging is critical if a message is to break through and be absorbed. Identify key communications-related positions in the county, including public affairs, public information officers, and others. Task them with creating short videos with elected officials and community leaders asking the community to complete the Census. Build an electronic communications strategy that includes various platforms, such as email signatures, profile pictures, and voicemail messages, as well as social media. Develop a pledge that can be linked in county email signatures where people can pledge to complete the Census and use the captured information to educate and remind constituents about this important civic duty. By building an effective communication strategy, you can create Census ambassadors throughout your county.

Similarly, as elected officials and senior government employees are featured at events, use these opportunities to mention the importance of the Census. Every topic that public officials speak about has a link to Census—disaster recovery, infrastructure, transit, health and human services, education, child development and so much more. Never miss an opportunity to use these platforms to raise awareness.

The stakes for our region couldn’t be higher and our success depends on our communities coming together and building momentum around the 2020 Census. Although there are significant challenges to a Complete Count in 2020, we can stand together to ensure that New York State is fairly and fully represented next year. Counties are key stakeholders in securing the sustainability of this great state. By tapping into the resources and connecting power of your county government, you can help achieve a Complete Count in 2020.

"Census data is used for funding schools, roads, infrastructure, transit, Head Start, Medicaid, disaster relief and so much more.

With just a 0.6% undercount, New York stands to lose two congressional representatives, putting our fair share of representation and our voices at risk.

The time has never been more crucial; the initiative never more impactful."
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For more info about the poster, email NYS.KWIC@ccf.ny.gov.
Climate Smart Communities

Southern Tier Municipalities Receive Help From Cornell Cooperative Extension

By Katherine Herleman, Disaster Education Coordinator, Cornell Cooperative Extension

As part of a celebration of Climate Week last October, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo recognized 16 newly certified Climate Smart Communities. A highly collaborative program involving state and local agencies, the Climate Smart Communities program encourages, assists, and rewards local governments that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate, while offering free technical assistance, grants, and rebates for electric vehicles.

"Achieving the goals of New York's nation-leading plan to fight climate change will only be possible if state and local governments work together to reduce emissions and protect our communities," Cuomo said.

Among the collaborators shepherding communities toward improved energy efficiency standards in pursuit of Climate Smart Communities certification are energy resource educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) county associations. In the Southern Tier, those municipalities include Broome County government, a bronze-level community that serves around 200,000 residents, and Tompkins County, a silver-level municipality that serves around 100,000 residents. Within Tompkins County, CCE educators also have assisted the towns of Caroline, Dryden, Ithaca, and Ulysses and the City of Ithaca in their achievement of bronze-level certification.

One of the Southern Tier's biggest successes, though, has come from one of its tiniest communities. Home to fewer than 1,800 residents, the Village of Montour Falls in Schuyler County became the second smallest municipality to achieve CSC certification, which it achieved in October 2019.

With median household income that is $40,000 less than that of the 34 other currently certified Climate Smart Communities, Montour Falls residents and businesses worked with local officials to win a $50,000 NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant allowing the village to undertake major renovations to the Village Hall, inventory and reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions, and develop plans to procure 100 percent renewable energy for the entire village. It’s estimated that over the next 20 years, the village will save over $310,000 by converting all streetlights and building light bulbs to LEDs - an estimated 55 percent reduction in lighting energy use.

Meanwhile, the village also is working to prepare the broader community for extreme weather events which bring hazards such as flooding or high heat – which can put vulnerable residents, farms and businesses, and the local economy at risk.

Montour Falls Deputy Mayor James Ryan has been a driving force in these efforts. Ryan recognizes that the Climate Smart Communities program is a win-win for municipalities interested in improving their bottom line via energy efficiency measures and engaging in hazard mitigation strategies. He led a team of village officials, community volunteers, and the staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension associations in Schuyler and Tompkins counties to form a local municipal umbrella organization for multi-stakeholder, sustainability and climate change initiatives called Sustainable Montour Falls to ensure the work continues moving forward.

Ryan's leadership was instrumental in benchmarking the village's energy use, streamlining solar, permitting, updating code enforcement official training, and installing the first electric vehicle charger in Schuyler County. What takes most communities six to 18 months, was accomplished in six weeks by Ryan's team.

"I see this program as an opportunity to support a resilient local economy, protecting resident safety and rebuilding aging infrastructure,” said Ryan. “I have a great deal of gratitude for Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension.”

Judy McKinney-Cherry, Co-Chair of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and Executive Director of the Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development was equally impressed: “The Village of Montour Falls and their Board for the CSC bronze certification award … are setting the bar in our region by their leadership role in taking a long-term view and creating a community that is resilient, sustainable and attractive to green economy businesses.”

Supporting the Village of Montour Falls and the CCE staff were Cornell University's NYS Water Resources Institute, All-Hazards Preparedness and Response Program, and students from the Institute for Climate Smart Solutions, all out of Cornell University, as well as Syracuse University's Environmental Finance Center.

Local governments can join the program by adopting a resolution that encompasses ten pledge elements. Since 2009, 388 local governments have passed the pledge, representing over 8.3 million New Yorkers. Southern Tier Municipalities interested in free technical assistance and consulting services can email Katherine Herleman: kch227@cornell.edu or check out the new regional website: www.southerntiercec.org.
Early Voting Arrives in NYS

Last year was transformative for Election Law reform. Notably, New York State became the 39th state in the nation to implement early voting.

The State and County Boards of Elections were given nine months to implement early voting and approximately six months to create a procedure for procuring, testing, and certifying electronic poll books. By all indications, including press coverage and feedback from election administrators, and even special interest groups, early voting implementation was successful. Voters reported enjoying the convenience of selecting a day and having time to go and vote. Wait times were minimal and the experience was streamlined.

Elections at their core are run by people. Election administrators take great care in the accuracy of the job they do and stand ready to take all the steps needed to ensure that voters are registered, ballots are produced, and the votes are counted in a fair, open and transparent process.

County Boards of Elections are to be commended for the amount of effort, hard work and determination to implement a new program in such a narrow time frame and with minimal fiscal support. They worked diligently in their outreach to residents, voters and community organizations. County Boards of Elections promoted early voting in many different manners in an attempt to broaden outreach efforts.

Outreach was conducted by County Boards through posting information on their websites, and/or through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, holding new technology demonstrations at the State and local fairs, holding community outreach meetings to local groups, and by hosting open office meetings for the public and media to discuss early voting and electronic poll books.

Each County Board was required to create a communication plan to inform eligible voters of the opportunity to vote early. The plan could include the use of media outlets and social media. It was required to: publicize the location and dates of all early voting polling sites, an indication of whether each polling place is accessible for voters with physical disabilities, a clear notice to voters that if they cast a vote during early voting that they may not vote on election day, if polling places for early voting are limited to voters from certain areas, the location of polling places for early voting that serve voters of particular cities, towns or other subdivisions.

Communications plans are required to be filed annually by June 1st of each year with the State Board. Every County Board of Elections submitted a communications plan.

Media across New York State contributed greatly to voter outreach. The counties worked with local media to create coverage of early voting prior to and during early voting that was unprecedented and widespread.

The strength in our election system is in our decentralized structure. There is no single point of weakness that can be co-opted. State and local election officials work tirelessly to ensure the integrity of the election system and to implement early voting statewide.

Election officials not only prepared for the implementation of early voting and, at some locations, the roll out of electronic poll books and on-demand ballot printers, but also have set contingency plans in place to continue to run the election and report the results, should an issue arise.

The State Board of Elections provided testimony to the New York State Senate and Assembly Election Law Committees at a joint hearing held in New York City on November 20, 2019, and held a series of statewide roundtable meetings in December 2019. We are using the feedback from election administrators, interest groups and technology vendors to report further findings to the Legislature.
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NYSAC tracks and makes available local laws that have been passed by our member counties. Understanding how New York counties are addressing their local issues and resident needs through local laws can provide ideas for you, our government leaders, to use in some variation in your county.

Below is a description of unique and recently passed local laws by our members as well as a web address link to find the entire local law.

**Suffolk County Enacts Local Law Banning the Release of Helium Balloons**

On October 8, 2019 Suffolk County passed a local law prohibiting the release of helium balloons in certain instances. Using studies provided by the Ocean Conservancy, the Legislature found determined that latex and Mylar balloons are the most common form of floating garbage within 200 miles of American shorelines. Additionally, this study found that balloon debris is frequently mistaken by sea life as food which when consumed by marine life can injure or even kill the animal.

To address this issue the Legislature determined the most effective way to reduce balloon debris in the county’s waterways is to prohibit the intentional release of helium-filled balloons entirely.

Prohibited release is understood to mean: “No person, nonprofit organization, firm, corporation, or municipality shall knowingly release, organize the release of, condone the release of, or intentionally cause to be released into the atmosphere helium or lighter-than-air gas balloons within the County of Suffolk.”

The local law also places a notification requirement of this prohibition of release to any entity that sells helium balloons. The notification requirement reads as follows: “Any business organization, including, but not limited to, any individual, corporation, unincorporated association, proprietorship, firm, partnership, joint venture, joint-stock association, or other entity of any kind who or which sells or offers for sale helium or lighter-than-air gas balloons to any person within the County of Suffolk for compensation shall disclose, in writing, the restrictions set forth in §310-2 of this chapter by conspicuously posting a statement of these restrictions at each point of sale (all capital letters not less than two inches in height on a contrasting background). This statement shall read as follows: IT IS UNLAWFUL TO RELEASE [MORE THAN 25] HELIUM OR LIGHTER-TAN AIR GAS BALLOONS IN SUFFOLK COUNTY.”

To find the local law in its entirety please find the following link: [http://bit.ly/HeliumBalloonsSuffolk](http://bit.ly/HeliumBalloonsSuffolk)

**Nassau County Creates a Sheriff’s Department Health and Wellness Division for Correction Officers**

On October 21, 2019 the Nassau County Legislature enacted a local law creating a Sheriff’s Department Health and Wellness Division for its Correction Officers. The Legislature found that "corrections officers face unique occupational stressors that pose serious threats to both mental and physical health … and these stressors include the nature of working in a closed environment and the constant threat of violence or injury that inmates can pose for corrections officers." Due to the stress the local law states "corrections officers experience elevated rates of heart disease, hypertension, high blood pressure and diabetes, and suicide rates for corrections officers far exceed the national average."
To address this pressing issue the county established the Health and Wellness Division with the Sheriff Department. This Division will be responsible for health and wellness training and resources to the members of the Nassau County Sheriff’s Department.

Specifically, The Health and Wellness Division shall:

1. Maintain a smartphone application and website for active and retired Sheriff personnel to provide information on the signs of depression, signs of suicidal behavior- links to the American Foundation of the Prevention of Suicide and additional information as determined by the Sheriff to assist retired and active members of the Department of Sheriff;

2. Establish and determine funding for a formal peer support program for Sheriff Department personnel;

3. Provide in-service wellness training and resources for all Nassau County Sheriff Department personnel for a minimum of one-hour per calendar year;

4. Establish a mental health action plan, to be evaluated by the Nassau County Sheriff annually, to examine the mental health policy, procedures, and resources of the Department and identify necessary updates;

5. Establish guidelines to protect the privacy of police officers to the maximum extent allowable by law;

6. Perform such other duties as determined by the Sheriff.”

To find the local law in its entirety please find the following link: http://bit.ly/SheriffWellness

Broome County Passes Local Law Establishing a Program to Help Enforce Failure of Vehicle to Stop for a School Bus

On December 1, 2019, Broome County established a program which will enforce monetary liability on owners of vehicles for failure to stop at a school bus equipped with a stop sign when said stop sign is enacted. Early this year the State of New York added to Vehicle and Traffic Law, granting the ability for counties to establish such a program. Specifically, the county is empowered to install and operate school bus photo violation monitoring systems on the bus/stop sign which may be stationary or mobile, and which may be installed, pursuant to an agreement with a school district within the county on school buses owned and operated by such school district.

The local law places safeguards to protect the privacy of drivers, passengers, pedestrians and cyclists whose identity and identifying information may be captured by a school bus photo monitoring device.

Penalties include that the owner liable for a violation of subdivision (a) of section 1174 of the New York Vehicle and Traffic Law pursuant to this local law shall be liable for monetary penalties in accordance with the following schedule of fines and penalties,

- Two hundred fifty dollars for a first violation;
- Two hundred seventy-five dollars for a second violation committed within eighteen months of the first violation;
- Three hundred dollars for a third or subsequent violation all of which were committed within eighteen months from the first violation; and
- An additional penalty of twenty-five dollars for each violation for the failure to respond to a notice of liability within the prescribed time period.

To find the local law in its entirety please find the following link: http://bit.ly/EnforceBusStop
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