

# ND Commissioners Association Plans Summit

Jeff Eslinger | ND County News Editor

North Dakota County Commissioners are about to do something they haven't done since 1985: Have their own meeting, *not* in conjunction with any other county officials.

At the December meeting of the ND County Commissioners Association (NDCCA) Board of Directors, members agreed that commissioners across the state should hear from key players in state government and other thought leaders and have a chance to confer with them and each other on issues like the new NDPERS retirement system, state audits of counties, and various funding topics.

In legislative years, the County Day at the Capitol is held in March, so this off-year presents a great opportunity for a meeting on interim legislative work and other issues of concern to commissioners.

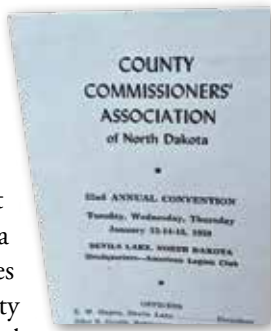
To be clear, this event is not displacing the Annual Meeting. Annual Meetings are held in October to discuss and vote on legislative resolutions and to elect officers to the NDCCA Board. The Summit planned for March will focus exclusively on policy issues.



A tentative agenda is being developed, and will include panel discussions with thought leaders on a variety of issues concerning county government, such as elections, retirement and more.

Commissioners formed the NDCCA in 1905 and have held annual meetings every year since then. The annual meetings of NDACo and NDCCA were first combined into one event in 1986.

Registration and a tentative agenda for the Summit will be announced soon via email to all commissioners.



Commissioners gathered many times from 1905 to 1985.

## Encourage Your Citizens to Apply for Property Tax Credit

Jeff Eslinger | ND County News Editor

North Dakota counties can play a key role in ensuring that our citizens take advantage of a \$500 property tax credit passed by the 2023 Legislature. Known as the Primary Residence Credit (PRC), the credit is not applied automatically – citizens must file an application with the ND Tax Department.

Counties are encouraged to use their social media, news releases and any other opportunities to be sure residents know the DEADLINE TO APPLY IS MARCH 31, 2024. Be sure your Veterans Service Officers, social workers

and others who deal regularly with the public know about this opportunity and can help residents take advantage of it.

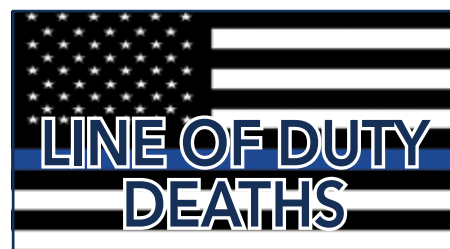
This credit is only available to primary residents; in other words, not absentee landowners, second homes, recreational properties, etc.

The credit will be applied to their 2024 property tax bill.

For all the details, encourage your residents to use the Tax Department's website: [www.tax.nd.gov/prc](http://www.tax.nd.gov/prc) (includes link to application form).

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**MARCH 20, 2024**

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Total County Sheriff's & Deputies .....	18
Total 2023.....	2

Dep. Paul Martin, Mercer County\*  
Officer Jake Wallin, Fargo PD

Source:  
[www.odmp.org/search/browse/north-dakota](http://www.odmp.org/search/browse/north-dakota)

\* See p. 23

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A link to this flyer is available at [www.tax.nd.gov/prc](http://www.tax.nd.gov/prc). Print, post, and distribute it to help your residents receive their credit in 2024.



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## Board Member PROFILE



### KIM JACOBSON

**Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director, Traill and Steele Counties**

**Family:** Married for over thirty years to my husband, Bruce. Together, we have two daughters. Morgan is a registered nurse at Sanford ICU. Alexa attends Mayville State University with the goal of becoming a mental health counselor. Plus, we have two dogs. They are fawn boxers and big babies.

**What is your favorite thing about being a Zone Director?** My favorite thing is supporting our citizens and seeing how we can help improve their daily lives. A close second is seeing growth and development of team members.

**Other things you are involved in:** As a family, we enjoy lake life and going on adventures with our side by side.

**Favorite movie or movie genre:** National Treasure

**What are you listening to right now?** Taylor Swift, Pentatonix, 2Cellos

**What are you reading right now?** *All the Light We Cannot See*

**Something people probably don't know about you:** I live in the historic farmhouse built by my great-grandfather after he arrived from Sweden in 1896. We are the third occupants of the home starting with my great-grand parents, grandparents, and then my family.

**Philosophy:** You choose your future with your actions each day! ~ James Clear

**Favorite quote:** Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize how good things really are. ~ Marianne Williamson



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 Trudy Ruland, 1st Vice President ..... Mountrail  
 Chad Kaiser, 2nd Vice President..... Stutsman  
 Nick Moser, 3rd Vice President..... Cavalier  
 Steve Lee, Past President..... McLean

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 Jamee Folk..... Mercer  
 Tony Grindberg..... Cass  
 Steve Forde..... Nelson  
 Becky Hagel..... Foster  
 Lori Hanson..... Mountrail  
 Kim Jacobson..... Agassiz Valley  
 Erica Johnsrud..... McKenzie  
 Wanda Knutson..... Mercer  
 Dana Larsen..... Ward  
 Shirley Murray..... Sheridan  
 Scott Ouradnik..... Slope  
 Kelly Palm..... Griggs

### Ex Officio Members

Perry Turner (McIntosh)..... NACo Board  
 Robert Wilson (Cass)..... NACo Board  
 Joan Hollekim (Mountrail)..... NDCCA President

### NRG Technology Services Staff:

See page 6



### NDCCA Executive Committee

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 Neal Messer, Vice President..... Stark  
 Glenda Collier, Treasurer..... Eddy  
 Chad Peterson, Past President..... Cass

### Directors

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 Tracey Dolezal..... Dunn  
 Cory Hanson..... Williams  
 Jim Kapitan..... Cass  
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 Perry Turner (McIntosh)..... NACo Board

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 Kaitlyn Bakken..... GIS Coordinator  
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 Jason Horning..... Next Gen 9-1-1 Program Manager  
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 Donnell Preskey..... Government/Public Relations Specialist  
 Linda Svihovec..... Research Analyst  
 Michelle Tabbert..... Administrative Officer  
 Angie Wentland..... Controller  
 Mike Wolf..... CEG Underwriting & Loss Control Manager

## FROM the COUNTIES

### Happy New Year Everyone!

I wish you all a successful and prosperous 2024! I, like most of you, have made a few resolutions going into the new year. I wish everyone the best of luck in getting to the gym, losing those 10 pounds, reading more, or working less and enjoying life more. Now that I've shared a few of my resolutions with you, I have one resolution that involves our involvement with county government that I would like everyone to consider. Please make the effort to spend time educating yourself, your peers and the citizens about county government and our importance.

Though we are in an off year for the legislature, we have a big election season ahead of us. There are rumblings that there may be an initiated measure that would put the fate of property taxes in the hands of the voters. We as county officials need to take the time to educate the citizens about the services that the taxpayers receive for the property taxes that they pay. I believe that this is a perfect time to educate those around us and show the taxpayers the value they are getting for their buck.

I think we must also look beyond 2024 and identify our priorities for the next session. Now is the time to cultivate relationships with our statewide legislators so they can look to us, as county officials, as experts that they can count on for the expertise and guidance in our local issues that may arise in the upcoming session.



Jayme Tenneson | NDACo President  
Nelson/Griggs County State's Attorney

Finally, NDACo has a few exciting announcements to make. Fifty-two counties signed joint powers agreements to allow NDACo to work with the telecommunication companies to distribute the 911 fees in a more efficient manner. This should be live soon. NDACo also has signed contracts to employ grant writers on a contract basis to assist the counties with researching and applying for grants to try to pull some funding to the counties.

Welcome to 2024! I'm looking forward to an exciting year.

## FROM the COMMISSIONERS

### A Moment of Silence ...

My deepest sympathies to Deputy Paul Martin's family, Mercer County co-workers, friends and all that were impacted by the horrific tragedy of losing an officer in the line of duty. Please keep Deputy Martin's family and the community in your prayers.

Just finished travels to the counties of Cass, Grand Forks, Steele and Traill. I want to thank everyone that took the time out of their busy schedule to attend these tours to give input on the challenges and problems counties are facing. I am certainly getting an education. We may not find an immediate solution to all our complex issues; but with the help of the NDACo Team, government leaders, employees, etc., we can move forward to make a difference.

I am urging everyone to stay on top of the referendum to eliminate property taxes. We need to be prepared to educate the public if petitioners gather enough signatures to put the question on the ballot. I recognize many will have a different opinion than mine, but I personally am not in favor of eliminating property taxes. I do believe taxes are too high in many areas of the state, but eliminating property taxes is not the solution. Property tax supports local government services. I can't imagine the ramifications for political subdivisions if this local control of funding is lost.

The December meeting of the ND County Commissioners Association was productive; lots of new ideas moving forward. One of my goals is keeping county commissioners informed on important issues that arise and asking for input.



Joan Hollekim | NDCCA President  
Mountrail County Commissioner

Your involvement means a lot. Speaking of involvement, the attendance was quite impressive at the NDACo Conference last October, with 144 out of 231 county commissioners attending. It would be even more impressive if we could get all the commissioners attending the conference to attend the ND County Commissioners Annual Business Meeting which is held in conjunction with the conference. If all falls into place, we will be holding a "mini conference" in March of 2024 for county commissioners. This will be a great networking opportunity.

In closing, thank you to all the commissioners that supported bonuses to their officers under the Back the Blue Grant Program provided through House Bill 1307. Our officers are more than deserving of this bonus pay. I have a great appreciation for all that put their life on the line to keep our communities safe.

## FROM the ASSOCIATION

### Happy New Year!

As we close the calendar on 2023, we at NDACo are looking forward to opening a new chapter in 2024. The new year marks another chance to start anew. In my case it's another resolution to eat better and lose some weight but usually my resolutions contain a disclaimer like "try."

As my old law professor always said, "The only way to hit the bullseye every time is to shoot first and draw the target later!" Although New Year's resolutions might not work out, I still believe it is important to reflect on the prior year and think of what we want to accomplish in this next year.

The prior year saw us get through a rough winter with too much snow, a Legislative Session with significant tax changes we're still trying to implement, and another county budget cycle with plenty of needs but not enough revenue.

Last year also brought us incredibly sad news when we lost a number of current and former county officials and, painfully, we will have to see a number of new names etched into the North Dakota Peace Officers Memorial – which again highlights that we all need to find better solutions to mental health and chemical dependency problems in 2024.

On the positive side, 2024 will bring a County Commissioners Summit March 20th here in Bismarck. Commissioners haven't met on their own since the 80's so I hope to see all you commissioners there! We are also undertaking a new approach to collecting 9-1-1 fees to help streamline and alleviate the administrative burden on both counties and the private sector.

We will also be working hard to help ensure the citizens of this great state understand all the important work county



Aaron Birst | NDACo Executive Director

government does on their behalf.

Those are just a few of the new things you will be seeing from your association this year. As we say goodbye to 2023, it is also an exciting time to see where we all go next together!



Aaron Birst, Managing Editor  
Jeff Eslinger, Editor

Clearwater Communications,  
Layout/Design

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## Navigating the Landscape of Part-Time Employee Classification and Compensation

Joanna Drennen, MASCM | HR Collaborative Executive Director

For many North Dakota local government entities, seasonal part-time employment opportunities are available to job seekers whose schedules or interests best align with a specific time of year. For example, golfers who want to spend more time on the links may seek a summer job at a local public course or a college student may pursue a flexible winter lifeguarding gig at your community's recreational center.

However, the classification and compensation of part-time workers present unique challenges that require thoughtful consideration.

Part-time employees are typically engaged in work for fewer hours than their full-time counterparts, and their roles may vary widely across industries. The first step in effective part-time employee management is accurate classification. Employers must clearly define the criteria that distinguish part-time positions from full-time roles, considering factors such as weekly hours, benefits eligibility, and the nature of the work performed.

The HR Reference Guide for Local Government (available at [ndirf.com/hr-collaborative/reference-guide](http://ndirf.com/hr-collaborative/reference-guide)) shares a job analysis that is the first step your entity should take to determine how to classify jobs. "The job analysis is a process that includes gathering information about the duties of each job, assessing the required qualifications, the work environment and



Joanna Drennen

physical requirements for job performance" (p. 3-2).

There are different job classification methods that can be used to develop a job classification system. The system is used to group "jobs into categories based on the type of work involved with each job. These categories can then be linked to salary ranges. For instance, all jobs classified at the same level will be paid within the same salary range. A job classification system could involve:

- Descriptions for each level or category of classification
- Descriptions for each position
- Assignment of pay grade for each specific job classification or assignment of pay ranges for each specific job classification

- Description of how or when modifications will be made to the classification or pay" (p. 3-2).

Compensation for part-time employees is a critical component of attracting and retaining top talent. It's essential for organizations to establish equitable pay structures that reflect the value of the work performed and align with industry standards. Striking the right balance between competitive compensation and cost-effectiveness is crucial in managing part-time employee expenses.

The Guide shares the goal of a compensation plan is to "provide competitive wages for attracting new employees and retaining current employees on an equitable basis" (p. 3-1) and advises local governments to "routinely review their compensation plan and salary range schedule." Your entity's job classification system may be one component of your compensation plan.

Benefits are another integral part of the compensation package. While part-time employees may not be eligible for the same benefits as their full-time counterparts, offering some form of benefits, such as prorated healthcare or retirement contributions, can enhance job satisfaction and loyalty.

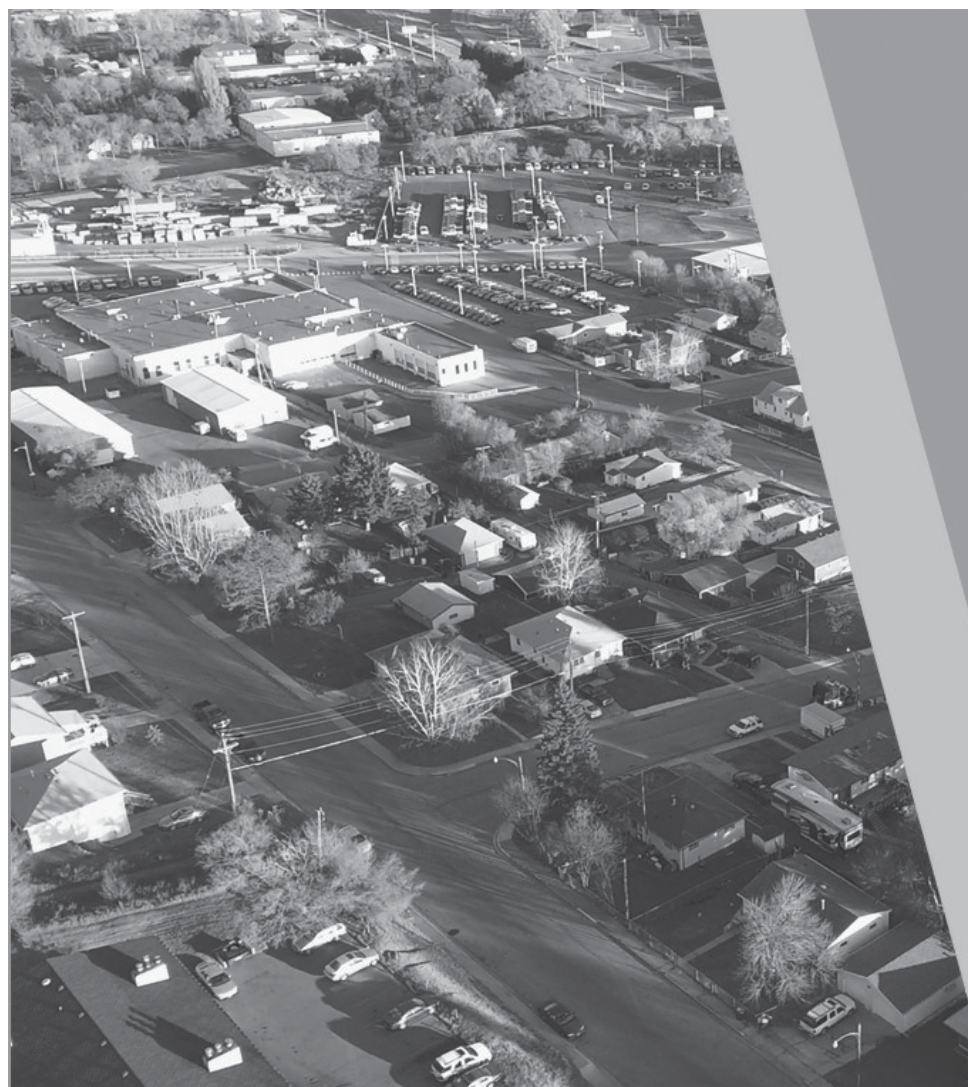
"Outside of state or federal requirements, eligibility for voluntary benefits is at the discretion of the employer. Policies should be very clear on what benefits are offered to full-time versus part-time employees and



what the eligibility requirements are for these benefits (number of hours, types of benefits, etc.) Policies should be administered in a fair and consistent manner" (SHRM.org, *Are we legally required to offer benefits to part-time employees?*, accessed Nov. 29, 2023).

Moreover, fostering a positive work environment for part-time employees is essential. Clear communication channels, opportunities for professional development, and a sense of inclusivity contribute to job satisfaction, which, in turn, can lead to increased productivity.

The effective classification and compensation of part-time employees require a strategic approach that balances organizational needs with fair and competitive practices. Your entity must recognize the value part-time workers bring to their teams and implement policies that not only attract but also retain a skilled and motivated part-time workforce.



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## Supply Chain Trends

Amber Schriock | NRG Technology Services Service Manager

In recent years, the world learned just how connected and dependent we are on specific supply chains. For example, one foundry in China slowed production due to the pandemic and brought microprocessor manufacturing to a standstill. The cascading effect was felt by manufacturers of computers, vehicles, cell phones and other electronics. Car dealerships had empty lots, causing the demand (and price) of used vehicles to rise.

We are still recovering from that rough patch. Substitutions and workarounds have been made for some parts. Manufacturing has resumed and a new foundry was built in 2022.



Labor shortages continue to affect supply chains. A large percentage of the population is nearing retirement age. Employee burnout and high turnover rates cause more stress in the workplace.

Lifestyle shifts have decreased the number of hours people are working per week as they look for a better work-life balance and higher wages. High school students that once held part time jobs are involved in a growing number of extracurricular activities, with no time to spare.

Supply chains are also affected by weather. With the holiday season and end of year quickly approaching, purchases have specific timelines. Businesses must sell their goods. Consumers want their gifts before Christmas. Government agencies have end-of-year, spend-down budgets. While we can purchase products more readily, we cannot guarantee shipping or

predict blizzards. Delivery services may have staffing shortages. Winter storms can close roads and airports.

There are lessons to be learned here, the first is to plan ahead. Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency for someone else. Determine what components of your business are required for operation and what can wait. The second lesson is diversifying your suppliers. Make sure your supply chain does not depend on one source for critical components. Third, have patience. Everyone has a story. We are only human, and you have no idea what someone else is going through. Be kind and have a safe and happy holiday season.

## Tech Tip – Click It!

Jacob Fricke is a Service Coordinator for NRG. When asked for a quick and easy tech tip that he finds people don't always know about, he immediately said that people have forgotten about double-clicking, and even fewer know about triple clicks.

### Double-Click

The first thing computer users learn is to double-click a file to open it. But that's not all a double-click can do:



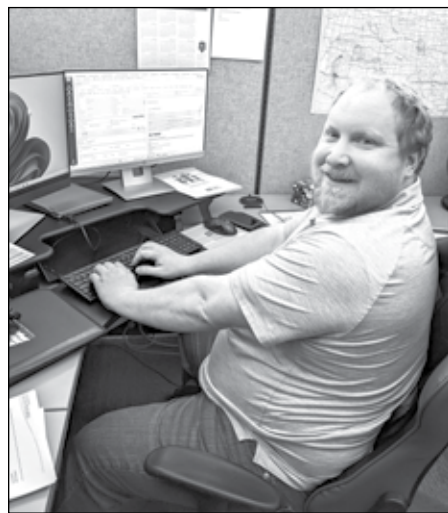
**Highlighting:** To quickly highlight a word so you can replace it or move it, double-click the word. This typically works in Microsoft Word, email programs and websites.

**Column adjustment:** To automatically widen a spreadsheet column to the size of the text in it, double-click the column divider.

### Triple-Click

Take it a click further:

**WORD:** To quickly highlight a




Jacob Fricke

sentence so you can replace it or move it, triple-click any word.

**Web Browsers:** Triple clicking on a web page will highlight everything in the "cell," which can be a sentence or a paragraph. You can't actually see cells on a web page, but when you triple click, you'll actually see what's in the cell.

Now you know, so get out there and click away!

## Saving feels better.



**The National Association of Counties (NACo) has enhanced the Live Healthy Discount Program to deliver greater healthcare savings to county residents at NO COST to the county.**

**No-cost Prescription Discount Program.**

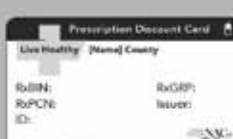
- Save up to 80%\* on generics and up to 40%\* on brand-name prescription medications for residents and their pets

**Low-fee health discounts nationwide.**

- Provides 24/7 telemedicine service and save 15% to 75% on vision services, hearing aids and screenings, diabetes supplies, prepaid lab work and more

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- Save 15% to 50% on check-ups, cleanings, fillings, crowns, x-rays, root canals and more at over 110,000 participating providers



**To learn more and enroll your county, visit [NACo.org/Health](https://NACo.org/Health)**

\*This is not insurance. Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy. The Prescription Discount Card is operated by CVS Caremark®. The Discount Medical Organization for NACo Health and Dental Discounts is Alliance HealthCard of Florida, Inc. All rights reserved. ©2022 CVS Caremark



## NRG TECHNOLOGY STAFF



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Garrett Bruner.....	Service Coordinator	Jeff McDowell.....	Systems Engineer
Dawson Dosch.....	Field Technician	Erik McGurren.....	Security Analyst
Dwight Driscoll.....	Account Manager	Amber Schriock.....	Service Manager
Travis Fandrich.....	Field Technician	AJ Snyder.....	Field Technician
Jacob Fettig.....	Field Engineer	Kay Ternes.....	Service Coordinator
Kendall Fey.....	Field Engineer	David Weiand.....	Systems Engineer
Jacob Fricke.....	Service Coordinator		

## New Year, New Partnerships

Kaitlyn Bakken | GIS Coordinator

With a new year kicking off, it brings exciting new responsibilities for NDACo's GIS Program. Perhaps you've kept up with the latest announcements from ND Information Technology (NDIT) or heard from me in person at your county meetings recently; but in case you missed it, I am now working closely with the geospatial side of NDIT to assist with the State Parcel Program.

The role that the GIS Program plays in this new contract with NDIT is:

- Act as a liaison between the State of North Dakota, their parcel vendor (\*Sanborn AppGeo) and county recorders/tax directors
- Assist in managing and advising on contact lists and reported issues from the parcel program portal
- Provide support services, including parcel data transfer issues (for example, large record count changes, script step failures and road connection failure notifications)
- Follow up with those involved to ensure solutions are in place in a timely manner
- Aid with county and vendor communications, along with ensuring parcels are being uploaded in a timely manner.



Kaitlyn Bakken

This contract is a very exciting opportunity for both NDIT and the NDACo GIS Program. The goal with this partnership is to support the State of North Dakota in their mission to provide accurate public data and corroborate their relationship with counties across the state. We are very excited to work together toward our common initiatives, in addition to transitioning to a mode of updating data and maintenance.

I look forward to serving North Dakota counties across the state a little closer than before!

\*App Geo division of Sanborn Geospatial



## \$3.5 Million Distributed to Show Support to North Dakota's Nearly 2,220 Local Law Enforcement and Corrections Officers

Donnell Preskey | Government/Public Relations Specialist

Just in time for the holidays, the State distributed \$3.5 million to counties and cities to go to licensed law enforcement officers and correctional officers. The 2023 Legislature approved \$3.5 million as part of a Back the Blue initiative to provide grants to local law enforcement agencies for recruitment and retention of officers.

The funds were distributed based on the number of licensed officers and correctional officers in each agency. Each agency was allowed discretionary control in determining how the funds should be distributed. The legislation requires the funds to be used for recruitment bonuses, retention bonuses or tuition payments for law enforcement trainees. A majority of Sheriffs' Offices plan to use the Back the Blue Grant for retention bonuses. Their plans for distributing the funds vary from allocating the bonus in one lump sum right away to providing the bonuses quarterly in each paycheck to holding it until the end of the year or grant period.

Of the \$3.5 million, Sheriffs' Offices and jails received \$1.8 million to be distributed to 1260 county employees (735 licensed officers and 525 county correction officers). The grant provided a higher dollar amount per officer (\$2,885) to agencies and jails with less than ten officers. There are 31 counties that fell into this category. \$1,419 per officer was distributed to agencies with ten or more officers.

Burleigh County used a portion of the funds for a recruitment effort. With the advertising of a hiring bonus, Sheriff Kelly Leben says they saw double the number of applicants that typically apply. Burleigh County also added county funds to the hiring bonus.

### Local Law Enforcement and Corrections Appreciate Back the Blue Grants

Golden Valley County Sheriff Dey Muckle testified on the importance of the Back the Blue Grants during the Legislative Session. In his small department of five, he is hopeful the retention bonus will encourage his deputies to stay.

Leben says he expects the grant will be good for retention efforts based on feedback from deputies. "Our main goal is to retain employees. If we don't have a retention problem, we won't have a recruitment problem."

Williams County used the Back the Blue Grant for retention only and distributed the funds to deputies and corrections officers quickly so they could have the bonus prior to the holidays. "I received a lot of feedback from staff of their appreciation of the bonus. It's too early to tell if the Back the Blue Grant will be effective in retention efforts."

Because the legislation was focused on licensed officers and corrections officers, Williams County also approved bonuses from the Sheriff's Office budget to support staff not eligible for the Back the Blue Grant. "I know it takes everyone in the Sheriff's Office to make things function at its best, said Williams County Sheriff Verlan Kvande.

Grand Forks County Sheriff Andy Schneider agrees that the grant sends a strong message to local law enforcement. "I hope that law enforcement across the state and across the country recognize that North Dakota is one of the best states to work as a law enforcement officer. When a legislative assembly specifically singles out one line of employment to offer additional funding to, that makes an impact. Our state supports the difficult position that law enforcement is in on a daily basis, and they have our back."



## Health Officers Gather for Annual Business Meeting

ND State Association of City and County Health Officials (NDSACCHO) met in Bismarck December 5-6. Amid unseasonably warm weather, the group celebrated their holiday spirit with a group photo and elected new officers for 2024, as follows: Chair – Brenda Stallman (Traill County Public Health), Vice Chair – Barbara Frydenlund (Rolette County Public Health), Past Chair – Sherry Adams (Southwestern District Health Unit: Dunn, Stark, Hettinger, Adams, Billings, Golden Valley, Slope & Bowman Counties), Member-at-large – Javayne Oyløe (Upper Missouri District Health Unit: Divide, McKenzie, Mountrail & Williams Counties), Member-at-large – Roxanne Holm (Dickey County)

## Advancing Vision Zero Partnerships

Theresa Liebsch | Southwest Vision Zero Coordinator

As Vision Zero approaches its 6th year, there comes new opportunities and growth within the initiative.

The southwest region of North Dakota has formed a partnership with tribal communities. As of November 2023, Vision Zero took part in Standing Rock Community School's Wellness Fair, participated in United Tribes Technical College Trunk or Treat, gave seat belt safety classes to Cannon Ball Elementary School, started the process of Standing Rock Community School becoming a Vision Zero School, and provided sober driving education and outreach to United Tribes Technical College during basketball games.

The biggest success from the list above is working with Standing Rock Community School to become a Vision Zero School. We met with Standing Rock's student council at the beginning of the year to pitch the idea of becoming a Vision Zero School and there was interest across the room.

One student shared her father was killed in a motor vehicle crash caused by an impaired driver when she was in elementary school. Due to how this affected her, she expressed immediate interest in becoming a student leader. Students were excited about the opportunity and wanted to show they were up for the challenge of changing

the driving culture in their school and community. They decided to focus on impaired driving as their area of emphasis.

Four student leaders were selected to appear in Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and photos for a banner. Later in the school year, the student leaders will hold a school assembly for grades 9-12 to showcase the PSAs and school banner with their sober driving message.

Vision Zero was able to connect with tribal communities through attending the 26th Annual Tribal Leader's Summit at the beginning of September 2023. Through events like the United Tribes Technical College International Powwow and Tribal Leader's Summit, we were able to reach many of the leaders on reservations and speak with them about the resources we have to offer their community.

Other agencies such as Safe Kids Bismarck Mandan, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Burleigh County Sheriff's Office, Morton County Sheriff's Office, Sioux County Sheriff's Office, and North Dakota Highway Patrol have also played a key role in making connections with the tribes in North Dakota.

Through the continued support of our partners, we are saving lives one connection at a time, one student at a time, one school at a time, and one community at a time.



Standing Rock Community School student leaders having their pictures and video taken for their sober driving message.



Local Law Enforcement at the United Tribes Technical College basketball game walking student volunteers through the 9-step walk and turn during half-time.



## Ice, Ice Baby

Patrick Engelhart | CEG Safety Specialist

What a strange winter we are having so far, weather-wise! Not a lot of snow, but good golly the ice! And not cold cold, but cold. The only thing good to come from all the ice was the videos on social media of folks skating around downtown Bismarck and Fargo, and maybe in your town too. That was pretty cool. All the slipping and falling wasn't though.

If you have met me in person or follow my Safety Moments webinars, you have probably heard me talk repeatedly about slips and falls on ice and snow. I talk about it a lot because it really is *the number one cause of injury in county government*. Roughly 40% of our workers' compensation claims result from slipping and falling down. Everything from bruises to broken wrists, from tweaked shoulders to traumatic brain injuries arise from these types of incidents. That's a lot of pain and suffering for ourselves, our friends and colleagues.

The problem with ice is that it is slippery. I know, I know – duh! When



Patrick Engelhart

we rush, when we don't keep our eyes on our path, when we carry things that alter our balance—and then are doing all that on a slippery surface, well, it's no wonder why we fall down. We all know why slips and falls happen. We just don't always realize how we can prevent them. Maybe, sometimes, when the winter is very long, and it's dark, and

cold, maybe sometimes we even get a bit fatalistic about it: "Gonna happen" or "Whatcha gonna do?"

But the truth is we can do something about it. I haven't fallen down on the ice in 15 years. I wear ice cleats. It's not just the ice cleats though. I keep my eyes on my path and avoid the slickest spots when I can. I get out and shovel and salt before my family gets going so they don't fall. I shovel and salt at work too if I beat the contractors in. I walk like a penguin, even with the cleats on. Walking like a penguin is when you keep your arms free and at your sides for balance, take short-maybe-even-choppy strides, and keep your knees loose and toes pointed out.

When I drop my kid off at school, I always remind him to use three points of contact when getting out of the truck. Two feet on the ground and hand on the door. Don't rush; slow is smooth, smooth is fast. He rolls his eyes a lot – he's 13. But he doesn't fall down, unlike some of the others in the dropoff line. I always feel bad for those kiddos.

They, most often, aren't hurt; but we can all remember the embarrassment that is existing as a middle schooler.

I guess the key to it all, the "one thing" we can all do to help prevent slips and falls at work, is to be intentional about it. Be intentional when walking in from the parking lot. Be intentional in wearing the right footwear. Be intentional in not rushing or looking at your phone. If we all do that, maybe we can help make sure we don't become a statistic.

**Check out CEG Monthly Moments**

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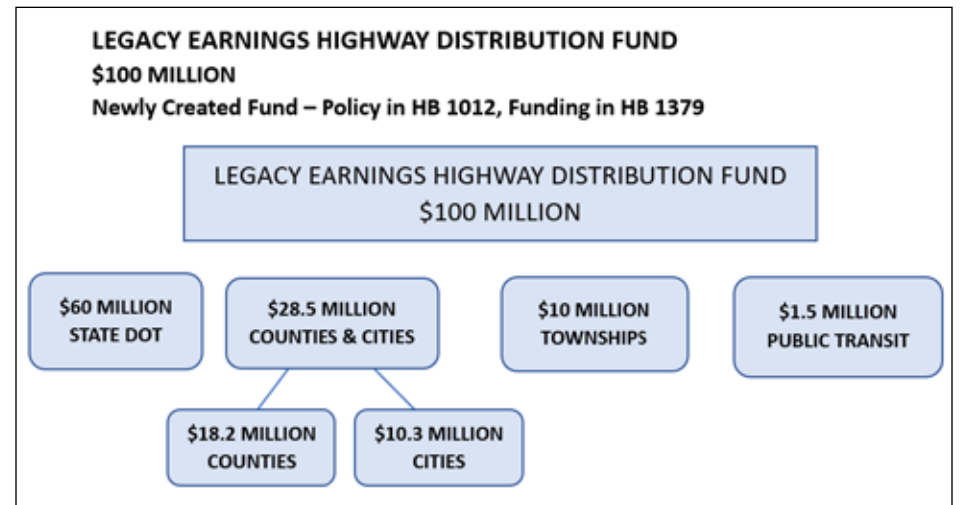
[AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](http://AARP.org/CommunityChallenge)

## Legacy Fund Earnings Shared with Counties to Support Roads

Counties and townships received \$28.5 million in December from the State of North Dakota through a new transportation funding program. The 2023 Legislature created a new Legacy Earnings Highway Distribution Fund as a mechanism to provide reliable funding to address road needs across the state. \$18.2 million was distributed to counties and \$10.3 million to townships (non-oil). The ongoing funding will be distributed in the first year of the biennium, so on each odd-number year. The allocations are made using the highway distribution formula for counties, and distributions to townships are based on road miles. Funds received can be used for any construction, reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of public highways, which

includes equipment, salaries, gravel, etc. The \$28.5 million to counties and townships is part of a \$100 million investment in infrastructure using Legacy Fund earnings.

North Dakota voters approved establishing the Legacy Fund in 2010. 30% of total revenue derived from oil and gas taxes is deposited into the Legacy Fund. Since 2017, the first year earnings from the Fund could be used, the state has transferred more than \$1.3 billion from the Fund's earnings to pay for infrastructure and other uses. \$486 million was transferred into the Legacy Earnings Fund in the 2021-2023 biennium. The Legacy Fund balance is just shy of \$9 billion with \$54 million a month on average being deposited. This new funding stream will create more certainty for local governments to plan road projects.



In addition to the Legacy Earnings Highway Distribution Fund, the Legislature also created a new Flexible Transportation Fund which will allocate \$221 million for state, county, and township road and bridge projects. Of the \$221 million, \$42.8 million will be dedicated to non-

oil counties and townships. The North Dakota Department of Transportation will administer the program, which includes establishing the criteria to distribute the funds utilizing a grant process for counties and townships. The application deadline was December 31, 2023.

## NDDOT Awards Township Assistance Program (TAP) Grants

### NDDOT Awards \$10M in Township Assistance Program Funding

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) selected 22 projects to fund through the newly created Township Assistance Program (TAP).

Legislation creating the TAP was approved by the 68th Legislative Assembly and signed by Gov. Doug Burgum last spring. The program provides \$10 million to NDDOT for improvements on township roads and bridges, using state funds to improve local corridors that are considered economic generators.

NDDOT worked with partners from Upper Great Plains Transportation

Institute, North Dakota Association of Counties and North Dakota Township Officers Association to develop the program.

“This program is providing much-needed funding to improve rural roads and bridges in townships across North Dakota,” Burgum said. “Investing now will help ensure our citizens have safe and reliable routes throughout the state for decades to come.”

Townships worked with the county to submit their applications. The TAP received applications for 284 projects totaling \$66.7 million in requested funds.

Twenty-one projects met program criteria and were fully funded. One alternative project will be partially funded and receive

any unspent funds from other projects. For a complete list of projects, visit [www.dot.nd.gov/townshipprogram](http://www.dot.nd.gov/townshipprogram).

“The response to the Township Assistance Program was immense,” said NDDOT Director Ron Henke. “We realize there is still a great deal of need for funding on the county level, and we will be reaching

out to unsuccessful applicants to gather information for consideration through the Flexible Transportation Fund.”

The Flexible Transportation Fund is a different funding formula also enacted by the legislature last session. For more information, visit [www.dot.nd.gov/flexfund](http://www.dot.nd.gov/flexfund).

#### Fully funded projects:

- Burt Township/Ward County - culvert replacement, \$140,800
- Grand Forks/Grand Forks County - reshape and gravel, \$291,500
- Buxton Township/Traill County - reshape and gravel, \$308,000
- Ward County/Cameron Township - reshape and gravel, \$197,800
- Mineral Springs Township/Slope County - reconstruction, \$550,000
- Divide Township in Dickey County - culvert replacement, \$126,000
- Westfield Township/Steele County - culvert replacement, \$141,600
- Hugo Township/Steele County - reconstruction, \$249,700
- Park Township/Pembina County - reshape and gravel, \$153,400
- Blooming Valley Township/Divide County - reshape and gravel, \$196,200
- South Minnewaukan Township/Ramsey County - reconstruction/grade raise, \$990,000
- Meadow Lake Township/Barnes County - reshape and gravel, \$582,800
- Pulaski Township/Walsh County - reshape and gravel, \$121,000
- Golden Glen Township/LaMoure County - reconstruction /grade raise, \$292,000
- Poplar Grove Township/Ramsey County - reconstruction /embankment repair, \$192,500
- Divide Township/Dickey County - culvert replacement, \$741,000
- Nora Township/LaMoure County - reconstruction, \$275,000
- Minnie Lake Township/Barnes County - reconstruction, \$1,650,000
- Lansford Township/Bottineau County - reshape and gravel, \$56,100
- Antler Township/Bottineau County - reconstruction, \$143,800
- Scotia Township/Bottineau County - reshape and gravel, \$75,200
- Partially funded project: Charbon Township/McKenzie County - reconstruction, approximately \$2.5 million

ND

# TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE 2024

MOVING NORTH DAKOTA FORWARD

**Tuesday, March 5 (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.)**

**Wednesday, March 6 (8 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.)**

**Bismarck Event Center, 315 South 5th Street, Bismarck, ND 58504**

The North Dakota Department of Transportation, in partnership with Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, is pleased to announce the 2024 ND Transportation Conference.

The conference theme is *Moving North Dakota Forward*. The two-day event will feature:

- multiple tracks of presentations
- vendor/sponsor exhibit hall for networking
- sponsorship opportunities
- conference social with entertainment

Conference Registration is Open. For conference information, contact:

- Pam Burkes at [pburkes@nd.gov](mailto:pburkes@nd.gov) or 701-787-6510
- Jody Jones at [jody.jones@ndsu.edu](mailto:jody.jones@ndsu.edu) or 701-328-9855
- Bryon Fuchs at [bryon.fuchs@ndsu.edu](mailto:bryon.fuchs@ndsu.edu) or 701-328-9857

## NACo Board Meeting Report

Robert Wilson | Cass County Administrator, NACo Board Representative

The NACo Board of Directors meeting was held Thursday, November 30 to Saturday, December 2 in Ramsey County, MN. Perry Turner and I attended from The Board meeting consisted of several tours and symposiums on Thursday and Friday morning, a formal Board meeting Friday afternoon plus a review of NACo's strategic plan on Saturday morning. Overall, it was an excellent meeting.

### THURSDAY EVENING

We toured the Innovations Lab at the 3M complex in St. Paul. The facility and the organization's innovation culture is impressive. They have a '15% Rule.' All engineers and designers are encouraged to spend 15% of their working hours on projects of their choosing, unrelated to direct work assignments. The company estimates 40% of all product revenues originated as a concept someone developed during their 15% time.

At 3M we also heard from Ramsey County officials who described several programs developed in the last couple years using ARPA dollars to connect youth to mentorship, training and job skills programs and streamline juvenile justice programs. These seemed like solid programs that have documented success. The unanswered question was future funding once the ARPA funds are fully expended.

I always find 'hallway conversations' at NACo events are important and beneficial. Chatting with NACo Director Matt Chase and one of the association's passed presidents, I described the changes ND will face with the upcoming PERS transition. Mr. Chase told me there's a group within NACo that has worked through similar situations in other states and may be of assistance. I was introduced to the person who leads the NACo financial services division, and I will connect this individual and Aaron Birst to assess any potential opportunities for NDACo.

### FRIDAY MORNING

This time included several speakers and panel discussions focusing on strategies for reducing conflict and improving communications between elected boards and constituent groups. None of us are strangers to occasionally having conversations, but this was a good reminder of how fortunate we are in ND to generally be able to have civil conversations internally and externally within our respective organizations and communities. The stories and examples that have prompted this work around the country are difficult to hear and hard to imagine working within.



### FRIDAY AFTERNOON BOARD MEETING

As a new board member, I found the 'business side' of the organization very interesting. NACo has a diversification of income sources that allows it to provide an array of member services that would not be possible if it was simply dues supported. A couple of points I found most interesting:

- NACo member dues account for \$5m in revenue supporting a \$27m budget.
- NACo receives as much income from sponsoring partner Nationwide as it does from member dues.
- NACo Director Chase told me over many years NACo, 'has followed the North Dakota model of developing multiple

*North Dakota has two seats on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Counties, by virtue of the fact that all 53 North Dakota counties are NACo members. This page is dedicated to the activities of your national board and other national involvement of our counties.*

revenue sources that allows for more member services.'

- NACo employs about 80 people – 30 of whom can lobby on behalf of counties. By contract the National League of Cities employs nearly 100 – 4 of them lobbying for cities. (The difference is many of the League of Cities positions are grant funded and prohibited from lobbying).
- NACo financially supports state associations.

Much of the business meeting focused on the overall NACo budget and the status of various profit generating activities (pharmacy benefit plan, Public Promise Procurement, NACo Edge).

The Executive Committee also proposed, and the membership approved, a NACo Event Code of Conduct. At recent major conferences an average of 10 instances of inappropriate conduct per event have been reported. Severities have ranged from needing to immediately send participants home and banning them from future events to follow up discussions and reminders of appropriate conference conduct. The policy will direct that all participants acknowledge and agree to follow

the code of conduct both when they register and when they check in and receive badges onsite.

### SATURDAY MORNING

This time focused on a review and discussion of the NACo strategic plan. In 2018 and 2019 the organization went through a dramatic transition when the ownership partnership (that included NACo) of US Communities dissolved. The dissolution resulted in the immediate loss of 25% of NACo's annual revenues. With the dissolution NACo sold its share of US Communities and has spent the time since developing the current revenue streams (businesses). Most of those businesses went live at the beginning of 2023 and will take several years to get up to expected profitability. In the meantime, the organization is using proceeds of the sale to support deficit spending. Three more years of deficit spending are planned as the businesses grow their market share and profitability. The strategic plan is the guide for how NACo will navigate this period of transition. Most of the actual discussion during this time was a review of a recent member survey that will shape future organization activities.



NACo Board members gather for a "class photo" to commemorate their meeting Nov. 30-Dec. 1 for the NACo Fall Board Meeting and ForwardTogether Symposium in Ramsey County, Minn., home to NACo President Mary Jo McGuire.

## County Officials Travel to Meet with Sen. Cramer

### Future projects and grant applications were among topics discussed

In November Cass County Commissioner Chad Peterson and Cass County Administrator Robert Wilson had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer. The focus of the meeting was to provide Cass County project updates, discuss future plans, and review the county's current grant fund applications.

"We always welcome opportunities to engage with our federal partners like Senator Cramer," explains

Commissioner Peterson. "And keeping them well-informed makes sure we have advocates for local government on the federal level. It's also important for them to know we are available and accessible should they ever have questions for us."

Future Cass County projects include bridge replacements and improvements, traffic operation and highway safety improvement programs, and carbon reduction programs through the recycling of construction materials. Updates on the FM Diversion project

were also provided.

Commissioner Peterson and Mr. Wilson also had the opportunity to visit the White House to hear from several Presidential Advisors and to meet with representatives from South Dakota and Nebraska to share impacts that the Biden Administration has had in the communities throughout Cass County. Over 50 representatives from the three states were present.



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**Bensen County**



**Pierce County**



**Sioux County**



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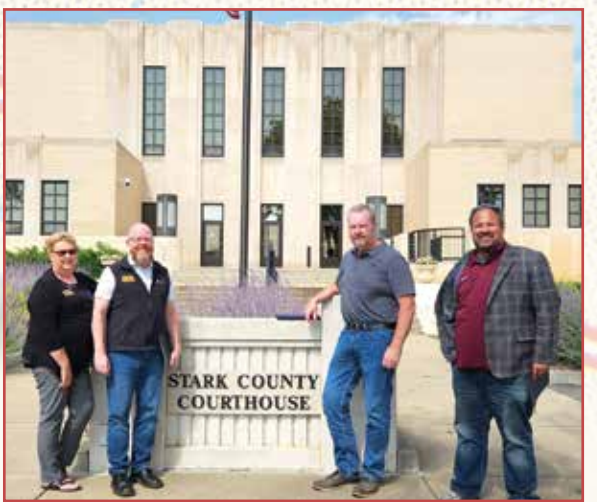
**McKenzie County**



**Golden Valley County**



**Rolette County**



**Stark County**



## Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course

Experts will review the latest developments in playground safety and participants will have the opportunity to become a certified playground safety inspector. Learn how to reduce hazards for your community's children by attending this course, sponsored by the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association (NDRPA), North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department and the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDRF) and hosted by the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District.

### Scholarships available

Limited scholarships are available to NDIRF and NDRPA members who register for both the course and the exam. The scholarship (\$425 value) will cover the cost of course registration. Members who receive a scholarship only pay \$120 for the exam fee. Deadline for scholarship requests is Jan. 26.

The registration deadline is Feb. 16. The schedule, registration and scholarship details are available on the NDRPA website. Contact Shannon at NDRPA at 701-355-4458 or ndrpaoffice@gmail.com with questions.

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INSPECTOR  
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Learn how to ensure  
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## National Association of Counties Leadership Development: *Learn From the Best*

We would like to acknowledge and congratulate the August NACo Leadership Academy graduates from North Dakota. They join over 10,000 graduates and current participants from across the country benefitting from the 12-week online program enabling existing and emerging county leaders to achieve their highest potential.



### INVEST IN YOUR TEAM WITH LEADERSHIP TRAINING!

Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the High Performance Leadership Academy with us - each County can enroll 10 leaders for \$15,000 in 2024. Our next cohort starts April 22.

*Developed by General Colin Powell, the Professional Development Academy and NACo, the High Performance Leadership Academy is an online 12-week program that helps your workforce develop fundamental, practical leadership skills to deliver results for counties and residents.*



- Richard Sherlock, Chief Deputy, Walsh County*
- Shane Gallagher, Sheriff, Cavalier County*
- Stacie Hansen-Leier, Director of Equalization, Barnes County*

# 10 YEARS

MAKING LEADERS BETTER SINCE 2014  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

You are invited to celebrate with us in 2024. It is our High Performance Leadership Academy's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We can think of no better way to celebrate than investing in your workforce. Significant celebration scholarships will be available for existing leaders looking to get better and emerging leaders looking to get ready to navigate change and overcome the challenges of work today.

Email Luke ([lukea@pdaleadership.com](mailto:lukea@pdaleadership.com)) to secure your scholarship, enroll your team, and celebrate with us. Let's make leaders better, together, in 2024 and beyond.



## Purchasing Pulse: Print and Mail

Sherry Neas | Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Central Services Division

Costs related to printing and mail have increased substantially in recent years. Prices for paper, ink, and postage continue to rise. We have also seen longer delivery times for paper products, like certain types of envelopes.

Does your government entity purchase printed materials from commercial printers? It is important to know that North Dakota has a preference law for resident North

Dakota printers. This type of preference law is commonly known as a “set aside.” North Dakota public entities must purchase printing from in-state vendors, unless it is “not practicable” to do so.

NDCC Section 46-02-15 Public printing resident bidder preference.

If practicable, all state, county, and other political subdivision public printing, binding, and blank book

manufacturing, blanks, and other printed stationery must be awarded to a resident North Dakota bidder as defined in Section 44-08-02.

NDCC Section 44-08-02 defines “resident North Dakota bidder” as a “bidder, seller, vendor, offeror, or contractor who has maintained a bona fide place of business within this state for at least one year prior to the date on which a contract was awarded.”

The State Procurement Office has several state contracts related to commercial printing that are available to North Dakota government entities. If your organization is doing “in-house” printing and mailing, there are also state contracts for printing equipment and supplies.

For a list of State Contracts, visit:

[www.omb.nd.gov/doing-business-state](http://www.omb.nd.gov/doing-business-state).

- Business Cards, 2 Color - State Contract 191
- Business Cards, 4 Color – State Contract 158
- Envelopes, Plain – State Contract 151
- Envelopes, Printed – State Contract 151-1
- Paper, Cut and Check Stock – State Contract 002
- Copiers, Printers, and Related Devices – State Contract 131

### POSTAGE RATE INCREASE

The U.S. Postal Service announced new postage increases will take effect on Jan. 21, 2024. The increases will raise First-Class Mail prices approximately 2%. The price changes include:

## State Surplus Property News

Need new furniture? How about a new truck, laptop, tools, or cold weather gear? You can find all that and more through State Surplus Property. Looking for something specific? State Surplus Property may be able to find what you need at affordable prices through surplus sources.

Website: [www.omb.nd.gov/surplus](http://www.omb.nd.gov/surplus)

The State Surplus Property warehouse is located at 1278 Hemlock Street, Bismarck ND. Stop to view vehicles, heavy equipment, generators, pumps, laptops, furniture, military property, tools, appliances, food service equipment, and so much more!

### STATE PROPERTY

All state agencies and institutions to transfer their surplus property to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) State Surplus Property. State property is then made available to government entities and other eligible donees. State property not acquired by donees is offered for sale to the public. Some state property is sold through online auctions.

### FEDERAL PROPERTY

State Surplus Property also acquires federal property from all over the

national and even overseas locations. Staff screens federal inventories to identify property that would benefit North Dakota entities. Federal property can only be sold directly to government entities and eligible donees. Federal property is made available to the public through online auction.

### DONEE APPLICATION PROCESS

State Surplus Property has a free application process to become a “donee” who is eligible to purchase state and federal property. Government entities, certain nonprofits, and certain veteran-owned and 8A contractors are eligible to become donees. Contact State Surplus Property to check if your organization is already registered as a donee.

### EMAIL LIST

Join our email list for monthly newsletters and occasional updates on new state and federal property by going to [www.omb.nd.gov/signup](http://www.omb.nd.gov/signup).

### CONTACT STATE SURPLUS PROPERTY

For more information: [surplus@nd.gov](mailto:surplus@nd.gov) or call 701-328-9665.

Product	Current Prices	Planned Prices
Letters (1 oz.)	66 cents	68 cents
Letters (metered 1 oz.)	63 cents	64 cents
Domestic Postcards	51 cents	53 cents
International Postcards	\$1.50	\$1.55
International Letter (1 oz.)	\$1.50	\$1.55



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## NDSU Extension Parent Educators Help Parents Enjoy Being Parents

As an Extension parent and family educator, Jacey Wanner's mission is to equip parents with tools to confidently handle challenges and make parenting more enjoyable. Thanks to a recent grant from the North Dakota Department of Human Services, she and her colleagues were able to accomplish this goal in a new way through Parent Refresh, a full day retreat for parents and their children.

Held at the North Dakota 4-H camp in Washburn, the retreat provided a unique opportunity to engage both parents and children. While parents were learning evidence-based parenting strategies and connecting with other parents, the children were engaged in 4-H learning activities led by NDSU Extension agents.

"It was fun to host an event at 4-H camp, where we were able to introduce kids to 4-H, provide parents with opportunities to learn and relax, and facilitate fun activities for families to do together," Wanner says.

NDSU Extension Parent Resource Centers in the western half of the state collaborated to design the retreat. Parents attended three educational sessions led by Wanner and fellow parent and family

educator Deb Theurer. Lessons included tips for giving clear directions, fostering positive characteristics in children, adjusting parenting style based on the individual child, and empowering children through encouragement.


Another important component of the parent sessions was the opportunity for attendees to connect in meaningful conversations with other parents.

"Parents were able to bond over personal stories of parenting challenges and successes," Wanner says. "Being able to share this with others who are going through something similar helps parents be better parents."

In between the parent education lessons and 4-H activities, families reunited to share in meals and a family scavenger hunt around the camp.

"At the end of the day, we wanted parents to go home feeling refreshed with good memories of time spent with their children and new tools to help them better enjoy being parents," Wanner says.

For more information: [www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education](http://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education) or contact: Jacey Wanner, 701-667-3342, [jacey.p.wanner@ndsu.edu](mailto:jacey.p.wanner@ndsu.edu).



North Dakota  
**Livestock Alliance**  
[ndlivestock.org](http://ndlivestock.org)



***The North Dakota Livestock Alliance is a non-profit organization led by farmers and ranchers focused on transparency with North Dakota's Counties about:***

- *The economic and community benefits to welcoming livestock operations to your county*
- *What to expect when a livestock operation is proposed in your community*
- *State and local livestock zoning procedures*
- *Modern livestock management, barn design and environmental stewardship*

**Contact us or invite NDLA to your next County Commission meeting at [ndlivestock.org](http://ndlivestock.org) or 701-712-1488 Follow us on Facebook @LivestockND**

The **McKenzie** County Food Pantry (MCFP) recently told the Farmer that their greatest need was for a walk-in freezer, and on Monday, December 11, they were excited to announce that they had been given the funds to purchase one by ConocoPhillips. During the interview he did with the Farmer two weeks ago, volunteer Mitch Haugeberg explained, “We are always short of freezer space, and I mean always, between handout days. Our long-term goal is to have a food pantry here in Watford that has a walk-in cooler or freezer. We haven’t had to recently, but in the past, we have had to use the high school’s freezer, the Rough Rider Center’s freezer, the extension office’s freezer, even the freezers and coolers in people’s houses. We find places, but it is hard. Currently we are using around 1,300 square feet and running seven fridges and 13 freezers there. We also have two additional freezers at the county extension office.” He added, “You never know, in Watford, if you can dream it, sometimes it happens.” Less than two weeks later, what was considered a long-term wish became a reality.

- *McKenzie County Farmer*

**Logan** County Commissioners approved to enter into a joint powers agreement (JPA) for a TruNarc device in conjunction with **McIntosh** County. Logan County Sheriff Andrew Bartholomaeus attended the regular monthly commission meeting to re-discuss the device, which is a handheld narcotics analyzer, in which he received approval to help the adjoining county with \$3,000 of funding of the TruNarc, if a JPA was entered into. Bartholomaeus said with the previously approved \$3K, McIntosh County is about \$3K away from the funding goal to purchase the device. “They’ve (McIntosh County) been great to work with; helping with the K9, giving around \$10K,” he said, and requested if the county can help with the last of funding in the TruNarc device. After discussion all three commissioners (Chairperson Blanche Schumacher, John Wald and Charlie Johs) approved to draw up the JPA and the rest of the funds for the JPA in the purchase of the substance analyzer.

- *Napoleon Homestead*

Individuals driving down Highway 83 in **Bottineau** County east of Lansford will see a new sign that is dedicated to the Lansford’s Ghost Riders, which was a group of young horse riders that performed military drill riding in the 1950s at fairs, rodeos and horse shows and were so extraordinarily good as a drill team they were featured on The Wonderful World of Disney Show, which was on

ABC each Sunday evening. This summer, the Ghost Riders were inducted into the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame for their exemplary history and riding skills. Jack Sidener, who was a rancher, farmer and horseman from Lansford, established the Ghost Riders after he returned from WWII. In the early 1950s, he had an idea of creating a youth drill team that would perform choreographed routines on horses. In the first year of the Ghost Riders, Sidener saw 20 riders who were 6 to 18 years old become part of the team. The drill team became so famous for their riding abilities, Walt Disney Studios came to Lansford and filmed the group for the Walt Disney television show. The sign that was placed on Highway 83 is courtesy of the Kenmare Vets Club, Brano Bar, Lansford Jaycees and the Bottineau County Commissioners.

- *Bottineau Courant*

During their August 1, 2023, regular meeting, the **Williams** County Board of County Commissioners unanimously voted in favor of assuming full responsibility for the countywide dispatch center, known as the Upper Missouri River Regional Dispatch Center (UMRRDC), effective September 1, 2023. Day-to-day business of the Dispatch Center will be unaffected by the administrative changes. Williams County and the City of Williston have partnered to operate and fund UMRRDC since its formation in April 2018. Beginning in September 2023, the City of Williston will no longer provide funding towards dispatch operations and staff will become county employees. Countywide dispatch, also known as a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), is staffed with trained professionals, telecommunicators, who are responsible for responding to 911 emergency calls and non-emergency calls. Telecommunicators are trained to dispatch appropriate agencies, support callers while gathering additional information from the scene, and assist responding agency personnel.

- *Williams County News Release*

**McKenzie** County: The preliminary results of the Alexander Public School Special Election were released on December 20, and they showed a tie of 89 votes for the School Bond Referendum and 89 votes against it. The referendum requires a 60 percent majority to pass. In November, Alexander School District Superintendent Leslie Beiber sat down with The Farmer to explain what the referendum would be used for if it passed. She stated that there were still parts of the school that have the original 1965 wiring and sprinkler system. If the bond had passed, it would have allowed

for updating to be done on the areas that have the original wiring and have all the sprinklers in the school updated to current standards.

- *McKenzie County Farmer*

The **Divide** County Planning and Zoning Board honed in on several more possible concerns over potential solar energy facilities at its latest meeting, resolving to make more additions between now and January. The board discussed modifying the current ordinances about solar energy facilities in the county and reclamation bonds for abandoned properties. This comes after Pine Gate Renewables expressed interest last summer in buying property in Stoneview Township for a 2,000-acre, 300-megawatt solar farm. One of the main questions brought up was how far a proposed solar farm would have to be from county residences. In the latest version of the zoning ordinances, facilities must be set back anywhere from 100 to 250 feet from lakes or streams, adjacent property lines, or township, county, state or federal roads. The ordinance does not mention residential properties. Chico Eriksmoen, a board member and county commission chairman, said that other similar ordinances regarding solar facilities put setbacks at half a mile. Eriksmoen also suggested adding setbacks for airports to help eliminate the risk of glare off the solar panels for planes taking off or landing nearby. One of the board’s biggest initial concerns was Pine Gate Renewables abandoning the project after purchasing the land. “The reclamation bond is just to protect, essentially, the county if they go bankrupt,” Planning Director Jody Gunlock said. “It’s protecting the landowner initially, but in the end, it protects the county from being stuck with a huge reclamation bill.” The board voted to recommend approval of the reclamation bond ordinance to the county commission.

- *Crosby Journal*

If the residents of Grafton, in **Walsh** County, liked the mural located on the corner of 12th Street and Edgewood Avenue on the Back In Motion building there is more to come. Grafton Beautification Committee (GBC) briefed the Ways and Means Committee (WMC) regarding plans for two more murals. The first one will go on the north side of the Carnegie Regional Library building. Just what it will be hasn’t been determined yet. Vonda Collette and Laura Glanner represented the GBC and briefed WMC on their plans. They had previously approached the library board for its approval of the project. While the library board gave its tentative

approval regarding the project pending what the design will be, the building is owned by the city and hence will need the council’s approval. “The reason we are here tonight is because the project is going to come to fruition as we have the funding in place now,” Collette said. The GBC met with the Mayor’s Committee on Economic Development earlier this year and has received matching funds from them to do Phase I of the project. Collette said the committee has received tentative approval from a private entity, but that location hasn’t been released. The other two locations are the library and on the north side of city hall. GBC is hiring the Community Mural Institute to coordinate one professional and high-quality community mural in Grafton. These professionals have completed more than 135 murals across the country. During the mural process, they will bring together community members to identify themes for the mural. The community will provide input on the design through community meetings which will be open to the public. Once the design is approved by project coordinators, it is projected onto poly tab sheets, similar to a paint-by-numbers sheet. The poly tab sheets are brought into the community for painting parties where people of all ages can participate.

- *Walsh County Record*

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## North Dakota Attorney General's Opinions

These and all other Opinions issued by the ND Attorney General's Office can be seen at: [attorneygeneral.nd.gov/attorney-generals-office/legal-opinions](http://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/attorney-generals-office/legal-opinions).

### COUNTIES ARE NOT REQUIRED TO PREQUALIFY BIDDERS FOR TAX LIEN FORECLOSURE AUCTIONS

**Opinion #:** 2023-L-01

**Date issued:** November 20, 2023

**Issued to:** Ramsey County State's Attorney

**Request:** Did Ramsey County conduct its 2022 annual tax lien foreclosure sale in accordance with NDCC title 57-28 in that it did not qualify bidders prior to the auction sale and did not provide a contract for deed template prior upon demand?

**Conclusion:** Ramsey County conducted its 2022 annual auction sale of property acquired by the county through tax lien foreclosure in accordance with the provisions of chapter 57-28 of the North Dakota Century Code. A county is not obligated to qualify bidders for the auction prior to the auction sale. A county, in the circumstance presented, does not have an obligation under the law to provide a contract for deed template upon demand and down payment. A county, in the circumstance presented, does not have an obligation under the law to have set the interest rate for the contract for deed prior to the beginning of the auction.

### AGENCIES NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR OPEN RECORDS REQUEST THEY DID NOT KNOW ABOUT

**Opinion #:** 2023-O-08

**Date issued:** November 20, 2023

**Issued to:** Office of the Governor, ND Department of Agriculture, ND Information Technology

**Request:** Whether three entities violated the open records law by failing to respond to requests for records.

**Conclusion:** Neither the Governor's Office, the Agriculture Department, nor the NDIT violated the open records law when they failed to respond to a request for records that they did not receive. Requests to these agencies by Karen Jordan were filtered by the state's spam filter. The emails were quarantined for 30 days, then deleted.

### OPEN RECORDS LAW DOES NOT COMPEL OFFICIALS TO RELEASE PERSONAL BILLS

**Opinion #:** 2023-O-07

**Date issued:** November 20, 2023

**Issued to:** Morton County State's Attorney's Office

**Request:** Whether the Morton County State's Attorney violated the open records law by denying a record request.

**Conclusion:** The State's Attorney's

personal water bill was not a record of the Morton County State's Attorney's Office. The record request to the Morton County State's Attorney's Office was properly denied.

### BOARD PROVIDED RECORDS IN A TIMELY MANNER

**Opinion #:** 2023-O-06

**Date issued:** November 20, 2023

**Issued to:** North Dakota Board of Chiropractic Examiners

**Request:** Whether the Board provided records within a reasonable time.

**Conclusion:** Following a special meeting, held to discuss exempt information in the responsive records, the Board sent a cost estimate for redactions to the requester. The Board provided the records and legal explanation for the redactions the day after payment was received.

Twenty-one days from the request to the response was reasonable given these facts.

### OPEN RECORDS LAW DOES NOT COMPEL OFFICIALS TO RELEASE PERSONAL BILLS

**Opinion #:** 2024-O-02

**Date issued:** January 3, 2024

**Issued to:** City of Mandan Fire Department

**Request:** Whether the Mandan Fire Department violated the open records law by denying a record request.

**Conclusion:** The Mandan Fire Department Chief's personal water bill was not a record of the Mandan Fire Department. The record request was properly denied.

### AGENCIES ARE RESPONSIBLE TO RESPOND TO RECORDS REQUEST

**Opinion #:** 2023-O-09

**Date issued:** December 27, 2023

**Issued to:** Morton County Sheriff's Office

**Request:** Whether the Morton County Sheriff's Office violated open records law when it failed to provide records.

**Conclusion:** Beginning at least in March 2022, Karen Jordan sent Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier several lengthy emails interspersed with allegations against various governmental entities. On June 30, 2022, Ms. Jordan emailed Sheriff Kirchmeier a message including a request for a copy of "a report that should've been written." Based on the context of the email, it seems Ms. Jordan was referring to a report of an investigation of the City of Mandan. Sheriff Kirchmeier did not respond to that request. The Morton County Sheriff's Office should have informed the requester that requested records did not exist.

## Burgum Appoints LaMoure County State's Attorney James Shockman to Southeast District Judgeship

Gov. Doug Burgum appointed LaMoure County State's Attorney James Shockman to an open judgeship in the Southeast Judicial District.

Shockman has served as LaMoure County State's Attorney since January 2019 and has owned and operated a private law firm in LaMoure since 2015, practicing and litigating in general civil matters. As state's attorney, he is the LaMoure County's lead prosecutor and also serves as legal counsel and advisor to the county and its boards and commissions. Shockman previously was in private practice in Bismarck and Phoenix. He also has worked as a law clerk for the Hennepin County (Minn.) Attorney's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minneapolis and the Minnesota Attorney General.

Shockman grew up in Berlin, ND, where he continues to manage field operations for his family's farm, and is a board member and owner of Larson Grain Co. in LaMoure. He also serves as an advisor and volunteer for JakeStar Inc., an organization he cofounded in 2012 to enrich the lives of children through quality entertainment and creative community involvement.

Shockman earned his bachelor's degree in business management from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., and his law degree from the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul.

The Southeast Judicial District opening was created by the appointment of Judge Cherie Clark to a judgeship in the East Central Judicial District. Three attorneys were named as finalists for the Southeast Judicial District judgeship, which is chambered in Jamestown. The Southeast Judicial District consists of 14 counties: Barnes, Dickey, Eddy, Foster, Griggs, Kidder, LaMoure, Logan, McIntosh, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Stutsman and Wells.



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## 401(k) Limit Increases to \$23,000 for 2024, IRA Limit Rises to \$7,000

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service announced today that the amount individuals can contribute to their 401(k) plans in 2024 has increased to \$23,000, up from \$22,500 for 2023.

The IRS today also issued technical guidance regarding all of the cost-of-living adjustments affecting dollar limitations for pension plans and other retirement-related items for tax year 2024 in Notice 2023-75.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF CHANGES FOR 2024

The contribution limit for employees who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans, as well as the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan is increased to \$23,000, up from \$22,500.

The limit on annual contributions to an IRA increased to \$7,000, up from \$6,500. The IRA catch-up contribution limit for individuals aged 50 and over was amended under the SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 (SECURE 2.0) to include an annual cost-of-living adjustment but remains \$1,000 for 2024.

The catch-up contribution limit for employees aged 50 and over who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans, as well as the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan remains \$7,500 for 2024. Therefore, participants in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans, as well as the federal

government's Thrift Savings Plan who are 50 and older can contribute up to \$30,500, starting in 2024. The catch-up contribution limit for employees 50 and over who participate in SIMPLE plans remains \$3,500 for 2024.

The income ranges for determining eligibility to make deductible contributions to traditional Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs), to contribute to Roth IRAs, and to claim the Saver's Credit all increased for 2024.

Taxpayers can deduct contributions to a traditional IRA if they meet certain conditions. If during the year either the taxpayer or the taxpayer's spouse was covered by a retirement plan at work, the deduction may be reduced, or phased out, until it is eliminated, depending on filing status and income. (If neither the taxpayer nor the spouse is covered by a retirement plan at work, the phase-outs of the deduction do not apply.) Here are the phase-out ranges for 2024:

- For single taxpayers covered by a workplace retirement plan, the phase-out range is increased to between \$77,000 and \$87,000, up from between \$73,000 and \$83,000.
- For married couples filing jointly, if the spouse making the IRA contribution is covered by a workplace retirement plan, the phase-out range is increased to

between \$123,000 and \$143,000, up from between \$116,000 and \$136,000.

- For an IRA contributor who is not covered by a workplace retirement plan and is married to someone who is covered, the phase-out range is increased to between \$230,000 and \$240,000, up from between \$218,000 and \$228,000.
- For a married individual filing a separate return who is covered by a workplace retirement plan, the phase-out range is not subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment and remains between \$0 and \$10,000.

The income phase-out range for taxpayers making contributions to a Roth IRA is increased to between \$146,000 and \$161,000 for singles and heads of household, up from between \$138,000 and \$153,000. For married couples filing jointly, the income phase-out range is increased to between \$230,000 and \$240,000, up from between \$218,000 and \$228,000. The phase-out range for a married individual filing a separate return who makes contributions to a Roth IRA is not subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment and remains between \$0 and \$10,000.

The income limit for the Saver's Credit (also known as the Retirement Savings Contributions Credit) for

low- and moderate-income workers is \$76,500 for married couples filing jointly, up from \$73,000; \$57,375 for heads of household, up from \$54,750; and \$38,250 for singles and married individuals filing separately, up from \$36,500.

The amount individuals can contribute to their SIMPLE retirement accounts is increased to \$16,000, up from \$15,500.

Additional changes made under SECURE 2.0 are as follows:

- The limitation on premiums paid with respect to a qualifying longevity annuity contract to \$200,000. For 2024, this limitation remains \$200,000.
- Added an adjustment to the deductible limit on charitable distributions. For 2024, this limitation is increased to \$105,000, up from \$100,000.
- Added a deductible limit for a one-time election to treat a distribution from an individual retirement account made directly by the trustee to a split-interest entity. For 2024, this limitation is increased to \$53,000, up from \$50,000.

Details on these and other retirement-related cost-of-living adjustments for 2024 are in Notice 2023-75, available on IRS.gov

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## HHS Expands Access to Naloxone for ND Medicaid Members

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a standing order making the life-saving drug naloxone available at no cost to North Dakota (ND) Medicaid members. Naloxone is a medication used to block or reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

The statewide standing order allows ND Medicaid enrolled pharmacies to dispense over-the-counter naloxone products at no cost to Medicaid members. The standing order will be used by the enrolled pharmacy to submit a claim for reimbursement to ND Medicaid. Participating pharmacies are required to comply with counseling requirements and follow the legal requirements for prescriptions, labeling and recordkeeping.

“Naloxone is a critical tool in addressing the overdose epidemic,” said HHS Medical Services Division Director Sarah Aker. “Making this

lifesaving medication available at no cost means more Medicaid members will have a meaningful chance to receive services and supports to improve their health and well-being.”

HHS worked in partnership with the ND Board on Pharmacy to create the standing order, which is in effect for one year and must be renewed annually. The agency has sent correspondence to all enrolled pharmacies with instructions on how to use the standing order to provide this life-saving medication to ND Medicaid members.

Agency data shows, ND Medicaid has paid for over 200 prescriptions of naloxone in a three-month period.

“By working together and focusing on prevention, treatment and recovery, we can continue to address the opioid crisis,” said Behavioral Health Executive Director Pamela Sagnes. “Increasing access to naloxone for Medicaid members is a step in the right direction.”



### Recognizing the signs and symptoms

An overdose requires immediate medical attention. Individuals who show these signs and symptoms may be experiencing a drug overdose:

- Unresponsive and/or heartbeat or breathing is slow or has stopped,
- Body is limp and fingernails or lips have a blue tinge, and
- Individual is vomiting or making gurgling noises.

If an individual observes these signs and symptoms in someone, they should call 911 immediately and administer naloxone if available.

### Resources to save lives

The agency’s Behavioral Health Division offers additional resources on effective overdose prevention, including the ability to request a two-dose naloxone kit at no cost. Visit [//hhs.nd.gov/opioids](https://hhs.nd.gov/opioids) or call (701) 328-8920, 711 (TTY) to learn more. Naloxone is also available through many North Dakota public health units or primary care providers.

### Treatment options

Various treatment options are available for individuals with a substance use disorder including HHS’ eight regional human service centers, four licensed opioid treatment programs and other private providers. Find a North Dakota treatment provider at [hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/find-services](https://hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/find-services).

## Garrison Diversion Matching Recreation Grants Awarded

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District’s (Garrison Diversion) Recreation Committee recently met and awarded matching recreation grants to 21 projects, totaling \$692,521.

“Garrison Diversion’s Matching Recreation Grant Program is an immeasurable benefit for our member counties. We enjoy assisting communities with bringing their projects to life and adding to their activity opportunities,”

says committee Chairman Bruce Klein.

The following county projects were included in the fall of 2023:

- McLean County Commission - \$1,618 to install a public stairway at Dynamite Bay
- Ramsey County Fair Board - \$75,000 to construct a multi-purpose event center at the Ramsey County Fairgrounds
- Sheridan County Park Board -

- \$2,850 to replace picnic tables and install a courtesy dock at the Hoffer Lake Recreation Area
- Ward County Parks - \$8,071 to make improvements within several of the county’s parks

Garrison Diversion dedicates two-tenths of its mill levy to the Matching Recreation Grant Program. Funds from this program have been awarded to install new playground equipment and

develop parks, campground facilities and walking paths, among other projects. Throughout the life of the program, over \$9 million has been awarded to recreation projects.

The spring deadline, March 1, is the next chance to apply for grant funds.

For additional information, please visit [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org).

## NDCA Announces Request for Qualifications for Placemaking in Region 6

Arts Across the Prairie (AAP) is a first of its kind, statewide Creative Placemaking program, developed by North Dakota Council of the Arts (NDCA).

Eight large-scale art installations will be created that reflect the unique history, landscape, and cultural heritage as defined by Stakeholder Groups in each of these regions.

All eight artworks will be placed in decidedly rural locations. (Rural = no buildings, no people!) The art installations will reference and represent the natural setting, as well as the cultural and economic history of each region.

Each of the eight installations will be selected through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process which includes two phases with separate application deadlines. The first phase is a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from artists and/or creative teams. During the second phase, the top three candidates will be asked to submit proposals. The RFP process has been completed in Regions 1 and 4 with

artists chosen and installation plans in development. Region 2 is in the second phase of the process. Region 6 is next to begin with a Request for Qualifications.

### Region 6 - Flyways, Byways, & Waterways; Fourth AAP Installation

The South Central Region – Region 6 – is comprised of Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, LaMoure, Logan, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells Counties. Stakeholders - regional and local leaders from business, arts, education, and various communities - were recruited to formulate a roadmap for the development of one site to be the artistic, historical, and cultural representation for the nine counties. The Stakeholders Group came together and met online for over a year to plan the fourth statewide Arts Across the Prairie project.

### Vision - Flyways, Byways, & Waterways

The vision is for a permanent large-scale art installation, and the finalist’s proposals should reflect their affection for and attention to place. Rural

communities/residents will be living with the artwork for a long time, perhaps generations. The selection process for this project will also require the finalist’s ability to teach and share with others as we train future North Dakota artists in the outdoor installation process.

### Who we are looking for, Timeline

An artist or creative team may apply; the total fee for the project will not alter. You must be an established artist, with experience in large-scale outdoor installations, public art, placemaking or placekeeping, community work, and teaching.

The initial submission of materials deadline is Friday, January 26, 2024. From the submitted applications, only three finalists will be selected to submit project proposals. The Selection Committee will announce the artist/creative team for the Region 6 - Flyways, Byways, & Waterways, Arts Across the Prairie project at the end of March 2024.

### The goals of Arts Across the Prairie are to:

- Strengthen cross-county networking and regional collaboration
- Promote tourism for in- and out-of-state visitors
- Stimulate economic activity and development in rural areas of North Dakota
- Build stronger arts communities across the state
- Invest in North Dakota artists by providing professional training and support
- Celebrate and leverage existing assets with an infusion of creative expression
- Heighten visibility of North Dakota’s creative sector and talent

Full Request for Proposal is at [www.arts.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/PDF/AAP\\_Region\\_6\\_RFQ.pdf](http://www.arts.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/PDF/AAP_Region_6_RFQ.pdf)



NDACo honors the service of Deputy Paul Martin. The Mercer County Deputy was killed December 6th, 2023. Our deepest condolences to Deputy Martin's family, friends and fellow Mercer County employees.



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# 2024 COUNTY CALENDAR

## January

- 17-19 \_\_\_\_\_ ND State's Attorneys Association Winter Conference  
Minot Sleep Inn
- 23-25 \_\_\_\_\_ Energy Progress & Innovation Conference (EPIC)  
Bismarck Event Center
- 31-Feb 2 \_\_\_\_\_ ND County Roads Conference, Fargo Holiday Inn

## February

- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Taxation Committee Meeting, Roughrider Room, Capitol
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Relief Advisory Committee Meeting, Harvest Room, Capitol
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Retirement Committee Meeting, Roughrider Room, Capitol
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ NDIRF Board Meeting, NDIRF Building, Bismarck
- 10-13 \_\_\_\_\_ NACo Legislative Conference, Washington DC
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Meeting  
Roughrider Room, Capitol
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Presidents' Day
- 20-23 \_\_\_\_\_ ND Safety Council Safety + Health Conference  
Bismarck Event Center & Virtual Track

## March

- 5-6 \_\_\_\_\_ ND Transportation Conference, Bismarck Event Center
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Daylight Savings Starts
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Judiciary Committee Meeting, Roughrider Room, Capitol
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Health Services Committee, Roughrider Room, Capitol
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Tentative – Government Finance Committee
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Juvenile Justice Committee, Harvest Room, Capitol
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ First Day of Spring
- 20 \_\_\_\_\_ County Commissioners Summit, Bismarck Ramada Hotel
- 20 \_\_\_\_\_ Budget Section, Senate Chamber, Capitol
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_ Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review Committee  
Roughrider Room, Capitol



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