

2023 Legislative Session Places Counties in Strong Position to Serve N.D.

Donnell Preskey | Government/Public Relations Specialist

The 68th Legislative Assembly wrapped up their work after 75 days, hearing 986 bills and resolutions and approving 583 of those bills. NDACo typically tracks 60% of the bills and resolutions introduced, and this session was no different. “As we reflect on this Legislative Session, we can say overall the Legislature trusts county government to drive and implement policy to make North Dakota a great place to live and work,” said NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst.

This is proven when you look at the testimony from county members and NDACo staff. Birst continued, “Counties had success on several fronts, not only in relation to securing funding or legislation that is beneficial to counties but also in the defeat of bills that would negatively impact counties.”

A few of the greatest “wins” for counties this session are:

- Reliable source of funding for infrastructure
- Emergency snow removal cost assistance
- Continued support for human services
- Increased funding for public health, extension, guardianships and law enforcement
- Defeat of harmful legislation related to elections, budgets and property taxes

The following are some highlights of key issues impacting counties.



ND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

One of the largest shifts in public policy this Session can be found in HB 1040, which closes a program that has been in existence for over 50 years. The public pension plan, also known as **Public Employees Retirement System (PERS)** provided defined benefits to both State and political subdivisions over the years. HB 1040 closes this benefit to **NEW** employees starting January 1, 2025 (or 2024 depending on the speed at which PERS can make the transition). Those new employees will enroll in a defined contribution plan with the employer paying 4% and the employee paying 4%. Additionally, those new employees will have the option to contribute an additional 3% with an accompanying

additional 3% from the employer. However, by closing the defined benefit program, new employees will no longer be contributing funds to pay for those currently in the PERS retirement plan. This of course creates a large

gap in funding which the Legislature is attempting to back fund over the next 30 years. For this biennium, the Legislature appropriated around \$200 million, but there will be a requirement for counties to increase their contribution by 1% per employee. With such a large change there will be continuous updates to provide counties guidance in the years to come.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The Legislature made a significant move in adopting a more permanent and stable formula for road and bridge funding for non-oil counties and townships. There are a few pieces of legislation that work together in accomplishing this: HB 1012, the Department of Transportation budget; HB 1379, the Legacy Fund Earnings or “Streams” bill; and SB 2113, which creates a state flexible

2023 Legislative Session
Continued on page 17

Annual Conference Update You Spoke, We Listened

Jeff Eslinger | County News Editor

The NDACo Annual Conference and Expo will be held October 8-10, 2023. Our staff is working hard on important decisions like theme, keynote speaker and workshop topics. We welcome your input. Contact me at jeff.eslinger@ndaco.org or 701-328-7332. After all, it’s YOUR conference!

So, what’s new? In the post-conference evaluations over the years, a few recurrent problems have been identified and will be addressed. The biggest are:

- **Caucus Meetings.** *What you said:* Caucus meetings are too important to be limited only to those who can attend the conference, and Sunday meetings offer insufficient time for thoughtful debate. *Solution:* We will schedule caucus meetings around the state so you can meet in person and offer virtual options if necessary.
- **Buses.** *What you said:* Begun in 2015, busing has seen usage drop off while complaints and problems have persisted. *Solution:* We have decided to end this expensive program. Please plan for carpooling and a short walk from the parking lots.

- **Conference Hotel Breakfasts:** Traditionally, we’ve held “official” breakfasts at the Radisson and Bismarck Hotels (formerly Ramkota) but participation has waned so we invite you early risers to explore the many wonderful options Bismarck offers. We will provide some kind of continental breakfast at the Event Center, but the details are yet to be determined. We’ll keep you posted.
- **Hotel Room Blocks:** We still have the room blocks we reserved at the Radisson and Bismarck Hotels last year, if you plan to stay at either of those hotels. However, without busing or breakfasts, it’s less important to designate “official” hotels or room blocks. We have requested a list of hotels that will honor the State Rate and will send that out as soon as we get it.
- **Door Prizes.** *What you said:* Over the years, you’ve been very generous about bringing home-grown or home-made products. Unfortunately, it’s a big hassle for many, and drawings interrupt your valuable networking time. *Solution:* We will work on new ways for you to win free stuff, and you won’t need to worry about bringing a door prize. There’ll be much more conference news coming your way soon.

County QUICK FACTS

YOUTH SHELTERS

	Attendant Care (Delinquent Youth)	Certified Shelter	Non-Certified Shelter	Service Provider
Grand Forks	X	X		Grand Forks County
Fargo	X		X	Youthworks
Bismarck	X		X	Youthworks
Minot	X	X		Youthworks
Dickinson	X	X		Sunrise Youth Bureau
Williston	X	X		Northwest Youth Assessment Center

See related story page 15



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Board Member PROFILE



VAL McCLOUD

Rolette County Auditor

What is your favorite thing about being an Auditor? I enjoy a challenge, and that is exactly what you get with the Auditor's position. I have enjoyed working with the public and knowing that I made a difference.

Family: Married for 42 years to Tom. We have three children, Tom (Brooke) with four children, Matt (Shelby) with one daughter, and Kelly (Mike) with three children.

Other things you are involved in: We keep busy running to activities that the grandchildren are involved in. I enjoy gardening and have recently been painting in my free time.

Favorite movie: *The Intern*, it shows the benefits of a multi-generational workforce.

Favorite music: 70s music and a variety of country music, I recently found SiriusXM 1000 top country songs.

Something people probably don't know about you: I grew up on a farm in Towner County, with four brothers and sisters. I learned to speak a little Finn from my father. My father's favorite saying I heard often "Kittos paljon" translated means "Thanks a lot".

Philosophy of life and/or work: My parents taught me: kindness. It costs nothing but means everything.

Favorite quote: People will forget what you said, people forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.



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NRG Technology Services Staff:

See page 5

FROM the COUNTIES

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly??

Yes, the 2023 Legislative Session is over!

I want to extend a big THANK YOU!! to all of you who made phone calls and sent e-mails to your ND House and Senate members. Your influence was huge and helped shape the legislation that came out of the capitol. A number of you took time to watch testimony and to testify on legislation that was important to counties.

Thank you to the NDCCA Legislative Committee that met each Friday afternoon during the Session to discuss the previous week's actions and to plan action on the coming week.

Last, but not least, a HUGE THANK YOU!! to the NDACO staff who spent countless hours (day and night) studying and monitoring legislation, meeting with legislators, explaining the possible effects of legislation on counties and suggesting amendments to make legislation more palatable to political subdivisions. Once again, our staff became a resource that legislators looked to for guidance in the legislative process. We are fortunate to have staff with this level of professionalism and political know-how.

NDACO was able to influence the demise of some legislation that was bad for counties, help amend some legislation to make it more acceptable and work to get some bills passed that were beneficial.

Some legislation included significant improvements for funding of road infrastructure, hopefully providing more dollars and more certainty of funding availability to improve counties' ability to do long-term planning of road projects.

The Legislature made a move toward providing more compensation equity in our social service zones. I believe the legislation didn't go nearly far enough toward providing equity, but at least it's a start and acknowledges that there are issues that need to be addressed, hopefully in the next legislative session.

Retirement: Defined Benefit vs. Defined Contribution... There were(are) a lot of disagreements about which direction the state should be going. With either plan, the cost to political subdivisions and the state are not at all clear in the long term, which leads to a lot of uncertainty



Steve Lee | NDACO President
McLean County Commissioner

as to which is the best option. The Legislature chose to close the Defined Benefit plan to new employees and start a Defined Contribution plan for those new employees, with current employees remaining in the Defined Benefit plan. Only time will tell if this was the right way to go.

Overall, I believe we had a good Legislative Session, because of the participation of all of you. Thank you again for your participation.

That's enough political stuff!! SPRING is here and SUMMER is just around the corner!!!

Relax, unwind, be safe and enjoy all that North Dakota has to offer!!

FROM the COMMISSIONERS

We've Got Less Than Two Years

The Session is complete, so it's time to start getting ready for the next one. I know. I get it. But much of our job as leaders is to prepare for what's next. This Session Bismarck listened to us in some ways, while at the same time we were left to fight for local control on countless issues. In some cases, it was the same battles we've been fighting forever; spending caps and tax statement aesthetics were back again. Overall, with so many new to Bismarck and increasingly complex local issues, I wish they asked questions and listened to us more.

The Legislature increased their spending to \$19.6 billion dollars. That's about a 20% increase, while at the same time screaming local government is 'out of control' at 4% average growth. Their hypocrisy aside, here's why this bothers me; who are we to say what level of state spending is reasonable? Whether it's in the form of a tax cut or state program funding, it's their job to decide where and to what degree to proceed. On things that impact us, I do wish we could work together more during and between sessions; but outside of that they should be trusted. I wish they trusted us more.

Much transpired in four months. From reinventing pensions to potential



Chad Peterson | NDCCA President
Cass County Commissioner

infrastructure funding, there was no shortage of what I know were opportunities missed. As our state continues to grow, there will be plenty more challenges in future sessions. It's our job to be available, build trust and keep telling our story...and hope they listen.

A special thank you to all the Bismarck NDACO team and the NDCCA Legislative Committee members that took personal time every Friday to meet. We all could have been doing other things, but you chose to make this Session and local government a priority. Thank you!

FROM the ASSOCIATION

That's a Wrap!

At 3 AM on Sunday April 30th, the 68th Legislative Session gavelled out for the last time. All legislative sessions are historic by definition, but this one certainly lived up to that moniker.

With two new majority leaders, along with about half of the standing committees having new chairs, this Session was bound to have a different feel from the last one. Whether it was closing the PERS retirement fund to new state and political subdivision employees or the largest tax cut in state history, there were some major policy changes that will impact all of us.



Aaron Birst | NDACO Executive Director

The end result was the Legislature heard 986 bills over 75 days (or 80 days, depending how you count it) and appropriated a record \$19.6 billion for the 2023-25 biennium.

Whether it was coming out for County Day at the Capitol or just connecting with your local legislator, throughout the process, I can tell you that your voices were heard at the Capitol. County government is a

respected leader in public policy debate and that would not be possible without all of your contributions.

Of course, anytime you put 141 people in the same room for that amount of time there will be disagreements, but at the end of the day, this Session was very positive for county government. Just to name a couple of successes, the Legislature provided support for local law enforcement, provided a much-needed shot in the arm to help offset snow removal costs, continued funding social services and they also created another fund for local road projects, all the while keeping the prior Prairie Dog bucket largely intact.

Although it might be easier to measure success by the number of bills passed, you also have to consider all the bills that were defeated that would have been detrimental for counties, which were plentiful. As the curtain closes on this Session, it is clear counties are still trusted to provide the critical services to all the citizens of this great state.

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TECH NEWS

Knowledge Versus wisdom: The Dawn of ChatGPT

ChatGPT Offers Quick Solutions to Everyday Tasks But Presents Challenges

Rita Reynolds | NACo Chief Information Officer

In the blink of an eye, ChatGPT, is already smarter than many of us. It's incredible how quickly this innovative technology has taken the world by storm. Launched by OpenAI in November 2022, the online tool has quickly garnered attention for its immediate and detailed responses across a vast array of online knowledge. You can type in any question and within seconds, you can watch the tool type out a well-written answer to your question. This technology isn't going away, and there are numerous implications to its use.

At its core, ChatGPT — Generative Pre-trained Transformer — is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot built on top of a family of large language models fine-tuned with supervised and reinforcement learning techniques. If you ask ChatGPT what it is, the tool will respond and tell you that it is: “capable of generating human-like text based on the input it is given.”

ChatGPT resembles an online customer service chat icon that lets you ask questions. Yet, it is much more. It immediately scans a massive array of online information to develop its answers. Then, it uses the questions and information you provide to fine-tune its future answers to other questions. This is called “reinforcement learning from human feedback.” Scary, right?

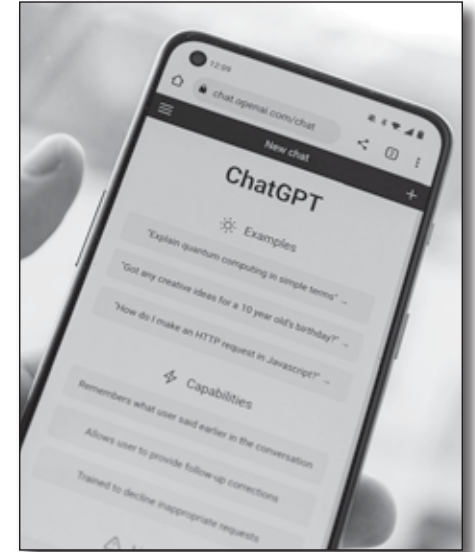
Now that you know what it is and are rightfully a bit wary and outright petrified, why care? Many people, including county staff, are using it to quickly solve everyday problems. Surveying local government IT professionals, I have heard a litany of great use cases including:

- Shortening research time
- Helping developers to write more efficient code and batch scripts
- Providing a way to write infrastructure routines
- Helping improve written communications

- Providing templates for policies, job descriptions, etc.
- Generating interview questions
- Responding diplomatically in a heated conversation.
- Creating surveys
- Writing resolutions
- Translating language

While there are tremendous benefits, there are challenges everyone should be aware of, including:

- Privacy – One needs to be very careful about what you are putting into ChatGPT. Confidential or personally identifiable information should not be included. Further, ChatGPT has already succumbed to sensitive data exposure.
 - Accuracy – Answers are only as good as the information available. Fact checking is important, because some of the information returned may be based on non-factual information.
 - Relevancy – As of this writing, ChatGPT is limited to data up to fall of 2021.
 - Misuse – Malicious and criminal actors are already using it. Hackers use it to create more convincing malware or phishing language, and it could be used to spread misinformation.
 - Critical thinking – As we all know, critical thinking is vital in resolution and problem solving, as well as in perfecting vision and implementing creative ideas. Will ChatGPT eliminate that crucial step in problem solving?
- Counties' use of ChatGPT is in its infancy. It is safe to say that certain strategies should be considered. Here are a few that should be reviewed and implemented with support from your county IT leadership:
- Develop a county policy on the use of AI that is responsible and ethical. Content should include



- the county position on:
- Privacy and data security
- Transparency and accountability
- Fairness and bias
- Informed consent
- Responsible use
- Educate staff on ChatGPT and how it can be used in a positive way, but also pitfalls
- For technical readers, implement ChatGPT for county solution development through the Azure OpenAI Service.

NACo will continue to watch as this innovative technology evolves. We are keeping an eye on How other countries are responding to ChatGPT, the frenetic pace of improvements of newer versions of the product and even the discussion **on whether AI should be paused.** A pause makes sense to many in order to give some time for the development of appropriate guardrails.

Will ChatGPT take your job? As Satya Nadella executive chairman and CEO of Microsoft claims “*this technology is going to reshape pretty much every software category.*” Considering whether ChatGPT will replace jobs is a valid question.

What do you think? Have you or will you use ChatGPT? Rita Reynolds, rreynolds@naco.org

DATA SPRAWL

What it is and How to Combat it

Amber Schriock | NRG Tech Service Manager

Data sprawl describes the exponential growth of information contained within an organization's digital environment. The conversion from paper files to digital has triggered a cascading effect on data retention. Managing the duplication of data may seem overwhelming, and backing up redundant or outdated data is costly.

Unsecured data locations are a security risk. Consolidate data into a central repository, or a single “source of truth.” This will help employees find information more efficiently and help record keepers determine if data is being duplicated or stored in risky areas. A

single data source can also streamline audits and classification.

Create a clear set of standards for data governance. If there were retention and classification policies for physical data, they need to be modified for digital data, or new policies developed for data types not previously covered. There are a myriad of services and software available on the market designed to help classify data, apply compliance standards, and implement retention policies.

Data sprawl is the responsibility of everyone on your team and will require company-wide acceptance and standardization.

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

Upcoming ILG Webinars

See www.ndaco.org/ilg for details and registration



MAY

- 15: County Budgeting 101 and Mill Levy Essentials
- 16: Got 15?! Office of State Tax Commissioner Monthly Webinar
- 23: Basics of Fund Accounting
- 24: Ethics in County Government

JUNE

- 7: Open Meetings & Open Records
- 13: CEG Monthly Safety Moment: Environmental Hazards

New Leadership Training Opportunity – Leading on Purpose

People are motivated by purpose. Purpose holds a unique importance to leaders due to our responsibility to positively influence members of our team, impact our organization's culture, and transform the communities in which we live.

When actions are aligned to purpose, we have a sense of belonging and as leaders, actions aligned to purpose help shape strategy and increase employee engagement. To create such purpose, we must ensure we are Leading On Purpose.

That is the focus of this 8-week fully facilitated training; establishing a sense

of purpose and fulfilling the meaning of who we are, in what we do, and why.

Intentionally designed from scientific evidence and proven practices of great leaders, Leading On Purpose will help existing and emerging leaders alike reappraise any longstanding purpose or uncover one for the first time with the use of self-assessments, interactive exercises, online and real-time peer discussions, cohort-based webinars, and self-reflection.

The outcome from the training will be increased clarity in your role as a leader and increased confidence in your ability to lead on purpose.

KICKOFF WEBINAR: October 16th

MODULE 1: October 16th–October 20th

The Power Of Purpose

Assessing your purpose and knowing its importance.

MODULE 2: October 23rd–October 27th

Human Motivation

From basic needs, to belonging, to contributing value.

MODULE 3: October 30th–November 3rd

The Theory of Work

It's people serving people, then mission, vision, values.

MODULE 4: November 6th–November 10th

Followership First

Providing great leadership from exemplary followership.

MODULE 5: November 13th–November 17th

The Decisions We Make

Aligning awareness, decisions, and actions for success.

MODULE 6: November 27th–December 1st

Touch-Point Possibilities

Realizing the opportunity in every point of connection.

MODULE 7: December 4th–December 8th

Facing the Giants

Living with the perpetual need to do more with less.

MODULE 8: December 11th–December 15th

From Purpose to Impact

Measuring leadership (and life) on impact not intention.

HR Collaborative to Kick Off Six-Session Summer Virtual Series in June

The HR Collaborative's Six-Session Summer Virtual Series will kick off at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7, featuring a question-and-answer session with ND Labor Commissioner Nathan Svihovec.

This first session will be moderated by a member of the HR Collaborative's Technical Assistance Committee who will ask previously submitted attendee questions from 2-2:45 p.m. and then open it up for on-the-fly questions from 2:45-3:15 p.m.

If you would like to submit a question for Svihovec to answer during this session, please send it to the HR Collaborative at HRCollab@ndirf.com by Wednesday, May 17.

As in year's past, the cost to attend this series will be \$50. Registration is now open at www.hrndgov.org.

Links to each session's video recording will be emailed to all who register for the series.

All sessions will be held virtually. Following are the dates, times and topics:

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter
June 7	2-3:15 pm	Q & A with ND Labor Commissioner	Nathan Svihovec
June 21	10-11:15 am	Focused Interviewing: Finding the Right Person	Chuck Horter NDACo HR Specialist
July 12	10-11:15 am	Understanding the ADA and Responding to Accommodation Requests	Brian D. Schmidt Attorney at Law
July 26	10-11:15 am	Remote Work	Tanya Weiler, Walsh County HR Coord., Dakota Dynamics HR Consultant
Aug. 9	10-11:15 am	Supporting Workplace Well-Being	Katie Johnke, RDN, LRD, CLC Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Nutrition Services Coordinator
Aug. 23	10-11:15 am	Emerging HR Issues and HR Reference Guide Review	Kathy Hogan HR Collaborative Consultant

You don't hire engineers who are "good enough." You hire the very best.

Incidentally, so do we.



There is no B-Team.





Christopher J. Deery

Cass County Veterans Service Officer



Number of years in your role:
Two

Don't miss this in my county:
The Fargo National Cemetery, downtown Fargo and Duane's House of Pizza.

My biggest challenge: *Veteran homelessness and affordable housing.*

My motivation for signing up for the NACo Leadership Academy:
Be a better supervisor and leader to our veteran group.

My favorite part of the NACo Leadership Academy: *Meeting new people with the same attitudes towards helping others and sharing those thoughts each week.*

My favorite leadership rule of the NACo Leadership Academy:
Share credit.

My leadership oath: *Be confident and be on point. Get your message across to your target audience.*

In my spare time I: *Love to BBQ, watch NDSU and Green Bay Packer football games, travel and love being with my family and friends.*

I'm most looking forward to: *Find more veterans in our county to register them with our office and assist them with their deserved benefits.*

Are You Transparent, But Not Clear?

Maxine Herr | NDPIO Co-Founder/Vice President

The top fear of surveyed Americans every year over the past seven years is government corruption.* It beat out illness or death of loved ones and even a nuclear attack.

A fear of government corruption. This is *our* problem to fix. In recent years, government has flaunted the buzzword of “transparency” to imply that an agency is an open book and embraces accountability. But don't mistake “transparency” with “clarity.”

For example, if you publish your financials on your website but the user doesn't know how to decipher the information in front of them, or the spreadsheet is too complicated, you might feel you've been transparent, but the public is seeking clarity and they're not finding it.

Communication is more than typing up a social media post, sending a press release or answering a phone call. You are not actually communicating if the receiver of the information doesn't understand or is missing pertinent details.

Becoming a member of the North Dakota Public Information Officer Association (NDPIO) is a good first step toward better communication practices

through training, access to templates and resources, and networking with other government communicators working hard to bring transparency *and* clarity from their offices to the taxpayers.

NDPIO (www.ndpio.org) is a network of people serving local, state, tribal and federal government agencies, eager to learn and grow in their careers and support one another when concerns arise and messages need to be disseminated the right way. NDPIO offers professionals a place for counsel, proper messaging techniques and a helping hand. All of us are just one crisis away from the media showing up on our doorsteps. Belonging to NDPIO means you'll be trained and supported to manage even the most daunting communication tasks.

NDPIO will host its inaugural training conference July 18-19 at the National Center of Excellence on the campus of Bismarck State College. The conference is open to all; an agenda and how to register can be found at www.ndpio.org/events. International speakers alongside some of our members will present case studies, best practices and tools for communicating with clarity.

**Chapman University Study*

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**NOT JUST A COST PLAN
A BETTER COST PLAN!**

2023 Transportation Conference Brings Value for County Road Departments

Tom Jirik | Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute

The North Dakota Transportation Conference has become the go-to conference for local road professionals across the state who want to network and learn about the latest in road and bridge technology and policies.

This year, more than 800 transportation professionals attended the two-day conference in March at the Bismarck Event Center. Employees from county, tribal, and city agencies attended to learn and network with colleagues from the ND Department of Transportation (NDDOT), the Federal Highway Administration, engineering companies, contracting firms, and equipment and material suppliers. The conference was organized and presented by the NDOT in partnership with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) at North Dakota State University.

“Over the past two years, we’ve worked with the NDDOT in a concerted effort to bring together all of the players in North Dakota transportation at a single conference,” said Dale Heglund,



Keynote Speaker Nick Kittle

director of UGPTI’s ND Local Technical Assistance Program. “Our goal in doing so was to be able to enhance the educational offerings to attendees and provide a premier opportunity for all those players to network.”

Brady Haussler, the NDDOT transportation engineer who spearheaded

the conference planning for his agency, emphasized the conference theme, “Driving Change Together.”

“Our theme is partnerships, and we specifically designed breakout sessions for county staff and others that we wanted to attend,” Haussler said. “A major focus for this conference was to help attendees establish connections and build bridges – not just physical bridges, but relationship bridges.”

That goal has been met, according to Cass County Engineer Jason Benson. “The new format has really re-energized the conference,” he said. “In particular, the interaction during breaks has been really valuable. There are great opportunities to make connections and it’s always good to have discussions about common problems and issues.

Benson brought four others from Cass County’s staff to the conference. “Having the new format with breakout sessions is extremely helpful.”

Overall, there were 28 attendees from North Dakota counties at the

event. Highlights for Benson included opening remarks from ND Governor Doug Burgum and the presentation on “The Power of Sustainovation” by keynote speaker Nick Kittle, a nationally known thought leader, coach, and facilitator specializing in government innovation. Kittle began his career in local government.

Haussler noted that a session on state and local public agency partnerships was particularly well attended. The session focused on the creative and innovative ways agencies can collaborate to achieve a common goal and on finding efficiencies that benefit each organization and the public.

The exhibit floor included nearly 60 exhibitors along with several large, specialized pieces of NDDOT equipment.

“The goal of all the agencies that attend this conference is the same in the end: to provide safe, efficient and effective transportation solutions to the public,” Haussler said. “That’s why it’s important to have all of the partners there.”

Burgum Signs Bills Naming Bridges in Honor of N.D. Military Veterans

Gov. Doug Burgum, on April 11, signed the last of five bills naming several bridges on North Dakota state highways in honor of military veterans. Signs will be placed along the highways designating the names of the bridges. The legislation allows the North Dakota Department of Transportation to accept any appropriate signs or funds donated to the department for the placement of signs.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to our military veterans that can never be repaid. Naming these bridges in honor of those who fought and died for their country, and for those who continue to struggle with the mental scars of their military service, is a small gesture of appreciation and a highly visible reminder of their incredible service and sacrifice,” Burgum said. “We thank the bill sponsors, local veterans service organizations and the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs for their collective efforts to extend North Dakota’s deepest gratitude to our courageous men and women in uniform who protect our most cherished freedoms.”

The bridges and their new designations are:

- The Highway 18 bridge over the Tongue River in Cavalier has been designated as Veterans Memorial Bridge. (HB 1117)
- The Highway 1806 bridge over the Cannonball River just outside the city of Cannonball has been designated as the PVT. Albert Grass WWI Bridge.

Born in Fort Yates, Grass was 22 years old when he was killed in action on July 18, 1918, in France while serving in the Army’s 18th Infantry. (HB 1351)

- The Highway 30 bridge over the James River east of Fessenden has been designated as the Petty Officer Third Class Patrick G. Glennon Vietnam Bridge. Glennon, 23, was among 74 American sailors who drowned during a training exercise in June 1969 in the South China Sea when their destroyer was struck by an aircraft carrier. Because they were outside the combat zone, their names are not included on the Vietnam Veteran Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., though efforts have been made to add them to the wall. (HB 1352)
- The overpass at the intersection of Highway 281 and Interstate 94 in Jamestown has been designated as the Hidden Wounds Veterans Overpass. The name is intended to raise awareness of the mental health struggles that many veterans endure but may not outwardly display. (HB 1354)
- The Highway 6 bridge over the Cannonball River just outside of Breien will be known as the PFC Ronald C. Goodiron Vietnam Bridge. Goodiron, a U.S. Marine from Shields, was killed in south Vietnam on Feb. 28, 1968, at age 20. (HB 1355)



Counties Directly Eligible for \$848 Million Through New USDOT Protect Transportation Resilience Grants

PROTECT grants provide \$848 million for FYs ‘22 and ‘23

On April 21, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the availability of \$848 million in FY 2022 and FY 2023 funding for the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program.

Established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL/P.L. 117-58), PROTECT funds can be used to plan for and improve the

resiliency of local infrastructure. Counties are directly eligible to apply through USDOT until the deadline at 11:59 p.m. EDT on August 18.

For information on the categories of grants, direct links to the grants and other details, visit www.naco.org/blog/counties-directly-eligible-848-million-through-new-usdot-protect-transportation-resilience.

Time to Review Child Labor Laws and Regulations

Chuck Horter | NDACo HR Coordinator

Spring is finally here, and school will be getting out soon. Counties are ramping up summer projects, and many are already in the process of securing seasonal workers. Hiring talent has been very difficult, and many entities are going to great lengths in exploring creative ways in finding people to staff up appropriately.

Part of this equation often centers on hiring youth to fill positions that are clearly defined and task oriented. The proper utilization of a youthful workforce benefits everybody. Young workers gain experience in a variety of tasks and learn the aspects of responsible workplace behavior. Entities in turn benefit by getting menial tasks accomplished by using a temporary workforce that generally moves on after a defined duration.

While this is all positive, employers must be very careful not to abuse the privilege of overworking young people, exposing them to safety hazards or inserting them into an environment where they may encounter bullying by older workers. To say the least, this is easier said than done.

Child labor laws in North Dakota are intended to prevent the exploitation of minors in labor activities and ensure that education is prioritized over the aspect of work. Limitations on child labor vary by age and may include restrictions on the

types of work that can be done, maximum hours that may be worked, and limitations on late or overnight work.

EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATES

Employment certificates, also called work permits, are mandatory in North Dakota for minors under 16. The certificate must be acquired by the minor and presented to their employer to verify their ability to work before they are hired. Employment certificates are issued by the North Dakota Department of Labor to minors if they meet all the related criteria. Minors who are authorized to work are subject to restrictions on when they can work and how many hours they can work. The exact restrictions depend on the age of the minor and are designed to ensure that work does not interfere with the minor's schooling.

MAXIMUM HOURS OF WORK FOR MINORS

For Minors Under 16:

Eight hours of work per day, 40 hours per week, six days out of the week are permitted when school is off. During a school week, three hours of work are permitted per day and up to 18 hours per week if not exempted from school attendance.

For Minors Ages 16 and 17:

North Dakota has no restrictions on maximum working hours for minors aged 16 and 17.

FEDERAL CHILD LABOR PROVISIONS

It is also important that employers do an overview of the child labor provisions which are authorized by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Some of the regulations mirror the North Dakota Child Labor Laws, but there are a number of requirements which are industry specific. For example, 14- and 15-year-olds are restricted from activity in mining and manufacturing; but they are also prohibited from operating, setting up, cleaning or repairing any power-driven machinery. This includes lawn mowers, all-terrain vehicles, weed eaters, edgers, etc. Keep this in mind if you plan on hiring someone's 14-year-old grandson to mow the county courthouse yard. They are allowed, however, to operate most office machinery. There are a number of other areas that are restricted, and employers should look at these categories carefully. Office, delivery work, bagging groceries, and clean-up work are generally acceptable for 14- and 15-year-olds.

The FLSA provides a minimum age of 18 years for jobs that are considered

particularly hazardous. These jobs are considered to be detrimental for 16- and 17-year-old persons. Positions such as forklift operators, roofing operations, power-driven compactors would fall under these restrictions.

Another consideration that employers should undertake is to make sure that young people are not put into a toxic environment where they are subject to physical or verbal abuse by older and non-supporting workers. We would be naïve to believe that hazing rituals and practical jokes at the expense of new and young employees do not exist. I can remember one of my initiation rights as a grocery bagger was to carry a 100-lb bag of flour a block and a half on my shoulder to a local café. I was 15 years old and weighed 140 pounds myself. I almost made it, but fortunately a man on the street came by and helped me the rest of the way. We want to make sure we treat people the way we want to be treated. As employers we want to make sure the work environment is going to be a positive one for a new generation of workers.

It is a fact that young employees who have a positive experience in their temporary or seasonal job often stay or return to become career employees.

Young and Seasonal Workers - Let's Ensure Their Safety

Mike Wolf, Jennifer Morman and Patrick Engelhart | CEG Team

It's that time of year when counties hire seasonal crews in road, weed and other departments. Many have never performed the required job duties.

Conventional wisdom was that older workers are likelier to get hurt on the job. Recent research has debunked that myth. Those under 25 are the most vulnerable.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The largest percentage of the part-time, temporary and seasonal workers are between the ages of 15 and 24. They're a tremendous asset to many organizations, tackling jobs with energy and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, they also face unique and substantial risks for work-related illnesses and injuries. In 2020, the rate of work-related injuries treated in emergency departments for workers, ages 15-24, was 1.5 times greater than the rate for workers 25 years of age and older.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

It's not the *age* of young workers that puts them at risk of workplace injury; it's their *inexperience*. Injuries often result from workplace hazards. Limited or no prior work experience and a lack of safety training contribute to high injury rates.

When a young or new worker isn't certain how to perform a task safely, they might try to proceed without asking for help. This approach is extremely dangerous. So, if you are a supervisor, you need to be approachable; and workers should feel comfortable to ask questions.

Each year, North Dakota has an average of 775 claims filed for workers 19 years old and younger. A majority of WSI's claims, for all ages of workers, occur within the first year on the job. It is the employer's legal obligation to train all workers on potential hazards to help reduce injuries.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Parents of working teenagers play an important role in their teen's safety. It is crucial that parents take an active role in keeping their teens safe. Know who they are working for as well as the type of work they do. Meet with your child's employer, if necessary, to gain an understanding of the hazards they may be exposed to and ensure that your child is aware of potential safety hazards and has received adequate safety training and equipment.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUNG AND SEASONAL WORKERS:

When it comes to safety, knowledge is power. New and young workers should be encouraged to ask questions about workplace safety.

Before tackling a new job or when hiring a new employee of any age, be sure to provide the necessary training and answers to any questions. Sometimes new employees don't ask questions; therefore, provide new employees with the following information:

1. Identify hazards of their job.
2. Inform them of equipment or machinery that could put them at risk for injury.
3. Provide all necessary training.
4. Provide them with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).
5. Inform them about the county safety program and that safety is a priority.
6. Provide information on what to do if they find themselves in a violent situation.
7. Let them know who they should talk to if they don't understand how to perform any of their tasks.

8. Inform them how to recognize and report unsafe conditions.

9. Inform them what to do if they are injured on the job and how to report injuries and incidents.

10. Inform them they are expected to follow all safety rules.

11. Have them watch the annual training video prior to letting them go to work. It can be accessed at www.ndaco.org/ceg. Meet with the employee after watching the video to see if they have any questions.

FINAL WORD:

Regardless of the age of seasonal workers, we need to ensure their safety. A safe workplace is a team effort. Speak up if you observe young or seasonal workers committing unsafe acts or failing to wear appropriate PPE. If it appears your young or seasonal coworker has not received adequate training or hasn't understood it, tell a supervisor. And set a good example. Show new workers the right way to perform a job: The safe way.

If you are a young or seasonal worker, don't be afraid to ask questions. We want everyone to remain safe and injury free. Remember to always ...

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Minority Leaders Rep. Josh Boschee and Sen. Kathy Hogan

County Day at the Capitol

Our maiden launch of a reimagined County Officials Academy, now called County Day at the Capitol was nearly a casualty of this record-shattering winter, but not quite. About half of those who registered for the event were able to make it. Despite the weather, those who were able to attend responded positively to the legislative content and the opportunity to rub elbows with legislators at the social and at the Capitol. Our post-event survey yielded enthusiastic responses, indicating the new direction is on the right track.



Majority Leaders Rep. Mike Lefor and David Hogue



NDACo Legislative Team Q & A



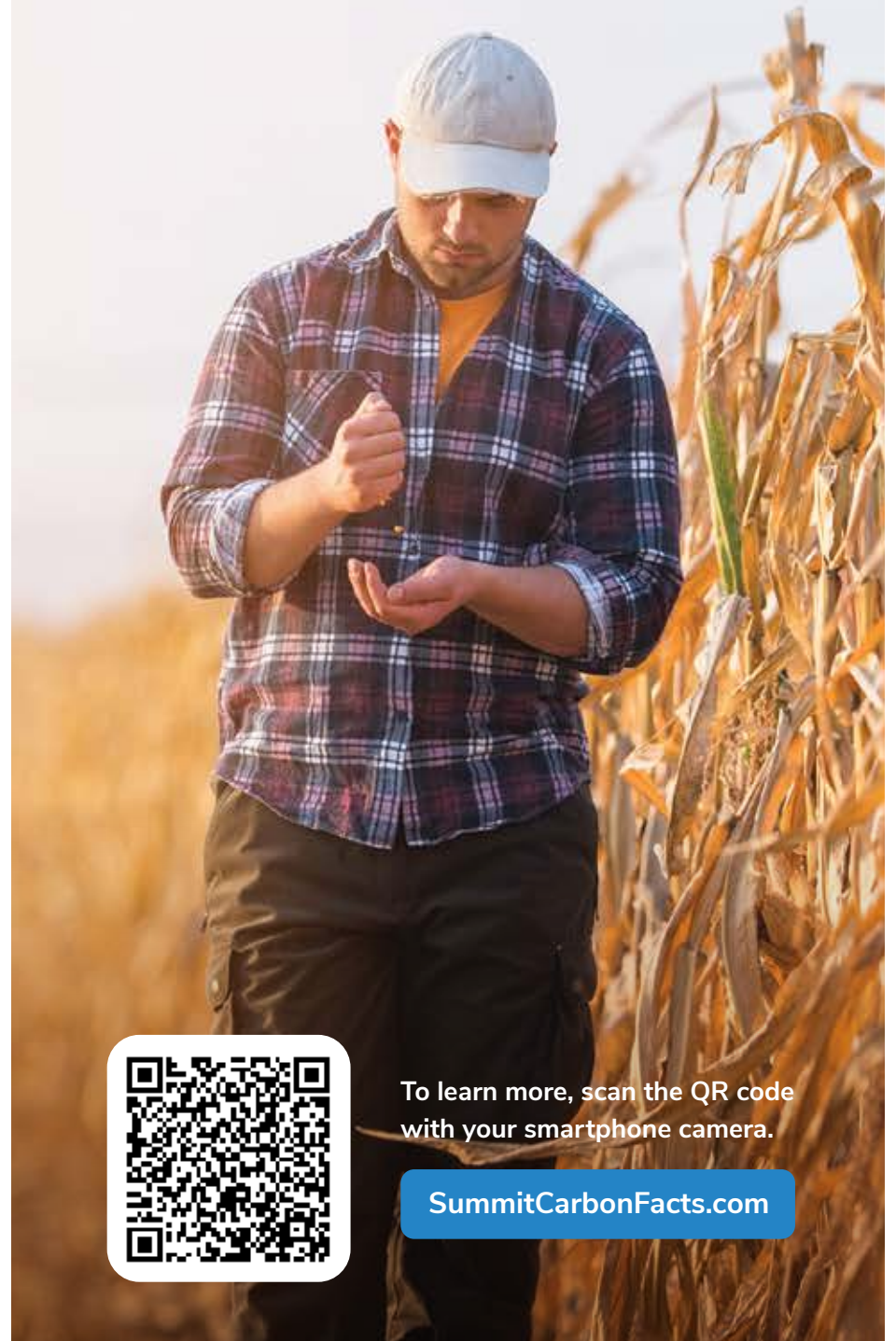
WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Summit Carbon Solutions is an agricultural company, and we are proud of our Midwest roots. Our project was created out of a desire to protect the value of our farmland and support North Dakota's two most important industries – agriculture and energy.

During construction, Summit Carbon Solutions will invest an average of \$81 million in every North Dakota county where the project operates. Once in operation, the project will contribute an average of \$465,000 in new property taxes in those same counties to support local schools, infrastructure, public safety and more.

We're based here in the Midwest, we hire local workers and suppliers, and we're here to help drive the future of agriculture.

To get the facts about carbon sequestration and learn more about the Summit Carbon Solutions project visit SummitCarbonFacts.com.



To learn more, scan the QR code with your smartphone camera.

SummitCarbonFacts.com



NDACo Legislative Team



Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier and NDACo Government/Public Relations Specialist Donnell Preskey join other supporters of HB 1307 for the bill signing by Governor Burgum.



Ward County Highway Engineer Dana Larsen testifies to the House Appropriations Committee on importance of infrastructure funding.



Golden County Sheriff Dey Muckle testifies on HB 1307 "Back the Blue" grants.



Public Health Day



Fun in the Photo Booth at Public Health Day at the Capitol. L-R: Sherry Adams, Sen. Kathy Hogan, Theresa Will, Brenda Stallman, ND SACCHO Executive Director Mary Korsmo.



Governor Burgum signs bill supporting \$20 million in emergency snow removal grants. NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst joins bill signing ceremony (4th from left).



Renville County Sheriff Roger Hutchinson sits with his District 6 legislator, Rep. Paul Thomas.



NDACo Government/Public Relations Specialist Donnell Preskey visits with Rep. Jared Hagert about NDACo priorities.



NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst testifies before the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee.



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McKenzie County Auditor/Treasurer Erica Johnsrud along with Burleigh County Election Manager Erika White provide an explanation of the election process and a demonstration of election equipment to the Senate State and Local Government Committee.

NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH

APRIL 2023



DUNN COUNTY
Killdeer 5th graders asked great questions and were rewarded with plush dogs.



COUNTIES THRIVE!
NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK
April 17 - 21, 2023



Walking Tacos & Ice Cream Floats
Tuesday, April 18
11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Barnes County Courthouse

ALL WELCOME
FREE OF CHARGE

BARNES COUNTY



MCINTOSH COUNTY
Zeeland students and faculty tour



MCINTOSH COUNTY
Committee members Deanne Bertsch, Eva Becker, and Carol Fey.

Forde Joins Garrison Diversion Board of Directors

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District welcomed four new members to their board of directors in January, including NDACo Board Member and Nelson County Commissioner Steve Forde. Forde will serve out the term of former Nelson County Commissioner Nancy Marquart. He represents Commissioner Region 4 on the NDACo Board.

“(Forde) will be a wonderful addition to the Garrison Diversion Board and will fit in well with the other directors and staff,” Marquart says of her replacement.

Forde is the CFO of Nelson County Health System. He is a community leader, serving as Osago Township Clerk and on the boards of the Nelson County Commission, Red River Regional Council, Nelson County Job Development Authority, Red River Community Action and Pekin Community Center.

“Garrison Diversion plays a vital leadership role in the management and direction of the water resources of North Dakota. I am honored to be a



Steve Forde

part of the board, learn my role, and positively contribute to the mission and vision of Garrison Diversion,” Forde says.

He and his wife, Rebecca, live in Pekin. They have three children.

Other new Garrison Diversion members are Jeff LeDoux, Cass County; Margo Knorr, McLean County and Jason Siegert, Traill County.

Grand Forks County Youth Shelter Certified

Will Provide Safe, Temporary Shelter to Divert Children From Foster Care While Families Receive Support

North Dakota’s Health and Human Services (HHS) agency has announced that the Grand Forks County Youth Shelter has become certified to provide temporary shelter for children ages 10-17 to help prevent foster care placements. The goal is child safety and well-being, while strengthening and stabilizing families.

The certification means that Grand Forks County now has a “one stop shop” for youth picked up by law enforcement regardless of their classification. Youth classified as “Children in Need of Services” (i.e. ungovernable behavior or runaways) or “Children in Need of Protection” can be placed in certified shelter care when temporary placement is needed. Grand Forks County also maintains placement options for delinquent youth that are picked up by law enforcement through the operation of its secure juvenile detention center and non-secure

alternative, Attendant Care. Services for all situations are provided in one location with separation as applicable.

Announced in January 2022, certified temporary shelter care helps meet immediate needs while support and services are put in place for families. Certification enables shelter providers to receive state funding for the care of children.

The Grand Forks County certified youth shelter program can currently serve up to four children, with an expansion to six beds planned. It will primarily serve children from Grand Forks, Walsh, Ramsey, Pembina, Nelson, Steele, Traill, Cavalier, Benson, Towner, Richland, Ransom, Sargent, Rolette and Cass Counties.

The facility joins other certified youth shelters in Stark, Williams and Ward Counties.



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Buckle Up! North Dakota Passes Primary Seat Belt Law

Ryan Gellner | NDACo Vision Zero Outreach Manager

North Dakota legislators have voted to strengthen the state's seat belt laws and approved a bill that adds the requirement for all vehicle occupants to buckle up.

Current law requires front-seat occupants to be buckled, but the new legislation would require backseat occupants to use a seat belt too - a move supporters say will save lives and significantly decrease serious injuries on North Dakota roadways.

"More people die in motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota from being unbelted than other common contributing factors," said North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) Director Ron Henke. "Buckling up in every seat, every trip, every time is one way we can decrease the number of motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries."

The new law also allows law enforcement the authority to pull someone over if they see a person not wearing a seat belt.



Vision Zero Supporters gather in the Governor's Office following passage of the Primary Seat Belt bill. L-R: Theresa Liebsch, Burleigh County Vision Zero; Governor Doug Burgum; Carma Hanson, Safe Kids Grand Forks; Ryan Gellner, NDACo and Mason Sisk, Governors Office.

"This legislation sends a strong message that seat belt use is an expectation in our state," said North Dakota Highway Patrol Superintendent Brandon Solberg. "The hope is that primary enforcement will result in more vehicle occupants buckling up."

The NDDOT Highway Safety Division reports that 69% of the 68 fatalities that were eligible to be wearing seat belts in 2022 were not buckled up. Some legislators referred to lives lost as statistics, which seemed to strike a nerve with others in the floor debate.

"The idea that we are talking statistics, in my opinion, is offensive," said Representative Austin Schauer, West Fargo, during the debate on the House floor. "Statistics are human beings, and human beings connected to families is powerful, and that needs to come first."

House Speaker Mike Lefor, Dickinson, said "With a primary law, North Dakota could save approximately seven lives and 61 serious injuries... Driving a motor vehicle is not a right, it's a privilege."

"Seat belts do matter," said Representative Emily O'Brien, Grand Forks, "One life saved by wearing a seat belt is enough."

The bill passed the Senate by 17 votes and passed the House with a vote of 53-38. It was signed by Governor Doug Burgum on April 4.

The new primary seat belt law goes into effect on August 1.

Vision Zero Benefits From National Lifesavers Conference

The Lifesavers Conference is the largest gathering of highway safety professionals in the United States, bringing together a unique combination of public health and safety professionals, researchers, and advocates committed to sharing best practices, research, and policy initiatives that are proven to work. This year, the conference was held in Seattle, Wash. and over 1,900 were in attendance.

Four Vision Zero team members attended the nationwide conference to learn about new ways to grow traffic safety in our beloved state of North Dakota. Sessions covered topics on distracted and impaired driving, criminal justice, and networking and communications, as well as testimony from traffic crash victims and how their lives were impacted by serious and fatal vehicle crashes.

One session, "Teaching Driver Education in an Autonomous World," explained that new technology has resulted in kids watching their parents drive less because they are on their phone while their parents are driving them. This makes it more difficult when it comes time for teens to learn how to drive. Many parents have to start completely from scratch - teaching teens where the gas and brake are, how to put the car in drive, etc.



To avoid this, parents can explain to their child the rules of the road and the features in the vehicle before they begin driving. Research shows parents who set, monitor and enforce safe driving practices have teens that are less likely to crash and violate the law.

Vision Zero also had the opportunity to share what has been successful in North Dakota with its traffic safety initiatives. One of the greatest programs we offer in North Dakota is one that originated from California called Impact Teen Drivers. The "What Do You Consider Lethal?" program from Impact Teen Drivers is an hour-long, evidence-based presentation designed

for teens to change their driving behavior in a positive way. All four of North Dakota's Vision Zero Outreach Coordinators have been trained in the program and have reached nearly 3,000 teens in the state to date. This program is proven to work through surveys acquired from the students after the presentation to gauge whether they plan to change their behavior in the vehicle. If you are a teacher, principal, driver's ed instructor, or a parent of a teen and would like this free program presented to your students, please contact the Coordinator for your region. You can also visit ImpactTeenDrivers.org to learn more.

One of the most compelling sessions at Lifesavers was the "Tragedies on Our Roadways, A Look at Risky Driving Behaviors from the Victim's Perspective: Victim Impact Panel." Tammy McGee is the mother to late Connor Guido. On October 26, 2019, Connor was leaving his homecoming dance at Tabb High School to go to a supervised after party. Connor got in the vehicle with a classmate who was driving his parents' high-performance BMW. The classmate did not have a driver's license and proceeded to drive recklessly by going 75 miles per hour in a school zone. The driver of the vehicle lost control while navigating

a curve and hit a tree. Conner was killed instantly. Tammy's own story of grief inspired her to be an advocate for more distracted driving education in Virginia's Driver's Ed curriculum. Her story is just one of the many we heard whose life was tragically altered from a fatal crash. Stories like Tammy's helps us understand our why and gives us the motivation to keep moving forward with our goal of zero fatalities.

The Lifesavers Conference was a beneficial experience for Vision Zero as we learn more about how we can share the importance of buckling up, driving distraction-free, always having a sober ride, and always driving the speed limit and for road conditions. As advocates with a passion for traffic safety, our goal will always be zero because when it comes to the lives of your family and friends, is any other number acceptable?

For more resources, please visit VisionZero.ND.gov.

**VISION
ZERO**
Zero fatalities. Zero excuses.

2023 Legislative Session

From page 1

transportation fund. The illustration is a good way to help understand the infrastructure package. Together, these bills will provide at least **\$81 million a biennium to counties, townships and cities.**

- HB 1012 utilizes 50% of the **revenues from the motor vehicle excise tax** for road funding. This is a major shift in infrastructure funding sources. 75% of that will go to the State Department of Transportation and 25% to “non-oil” counties and townships; the local share is estimated in the next biennium at **\$42.8 million.** These funds will be allocated by the DOT director, and the director will establish criteria for the funds. The dollars can be used for maintenance and improvements to county and township roads and bridges. Priority is to be given to roads and bridges that serve as corridors and those that need a federal match. These funds will be available August 1, 2023.

- SB 2113 **establishes a new state flexible transportation fund**, which is intended to increase the flexibility and availability of state funding for transportation to support building and repairing a statewide interconnected infrastructure system for all users, on and off the state highway system. The funding is included in HB 1012 which lays out that these funds can be used for matching federal grants. The **\$221 million** will be allocated to the Department of Transportation; however, the funding may support local projects as well.

- HB 1379 establishes new buckets for appropriating a portion of the Legacy Fund earnings. **\$100 million of the earnings will go into the newly created Legacy Earnings Highway Distribution Fund.** \$28.5 million of those funds will go to counties and cities with an estimated **\$18.2 million** of that going to counties. Townships will get \$10 million. It’s important to also note that HB 1379 also distributes \$225 million of the Legacy earnings into the general fund for legislative tax relief initiatives and \$103 million to the Legacy Sinking and Interest Fund.

BUCKET BILL DISCUSSIONS

Oil and gas revenues flow into a series of buckets; local (county, city and township) buckets for infrastructure funding are at the end of the line. While we were unsuccessful in removing or reducing the \$400 million Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund (SIIF) bucket ahead of the “Prairie Dog” buckets, the other funding provided

this Session for infrastructure provides more reliable sources of revenue. In the end, between SB 2367 and HB 1040, legislators approved a **\$175 million increase into state buckets ahead of the Prairie Dog buckets.**

- \$60 million additional into State General Fund
- \$50 million additional into Social Services Fund (formally known as Property Tax Relief Fund)
- \$65 million into newly created bucket for Public Employees Retirement Fund

EMERGENCY SNOW REMOVAL

Nearly every county has experienced a winter like none other; and because of that, the Legislature approved emergency grants to help cover extraordinary snow removal costs to local governments. “This record-setting winter has strained resources at every level of government,” said Governor Burgum at the SB 2183 bill signing. “These funds will relieve some of the burden on communities and local taxpayers.” SB 2183 provides \$20 million in emergency snow removal grants; in addition, SB 2015, which was approved on the last day, added an additional \$5 million for a total of **\$25 million** for qualifying counties, cities, townships, and tribal governments. The legislation will allow for **reimbursement up to 60% of costs exceeding 150% of the average of the four lowest of the last five years’ snow removal costs.** Funds are available immediately and will be dispersed by June 30th.

PROPERTY TAX RELATED

One of the greatest victories for the Legislature was providing a **\$515 million comprehensive tax relief package.** Some aspects of HB 1158 should impact every North Dakota resident by reducing income taxes, providing a property tax credit and expanding the Homestead Credit.

- **Income Tax Relief - \$358 million**
 - Compresses income tax brackets from 5 to 3
 - Zero bottom bracket
 - 3 out of 5 ND taxpayers will NOT pay state income tax
- **Property Tax Credit - \$103 million**
 - \$500 tax credit on property taxes paid on primary home
 - Credit will appear on tax statement
 - Residents required to apply to State Tax Department for credit
 - Starts in tax year 2024 for two years

- **Homestead Tax Credit - \$53.5 million**

- Expands eligibility requirements and maximum reduction
- Compresses 6 brackets to 2
- Increases income threshold:
 - Income less than \$40,000: 100% reduction of taxable valuation up to \$9,000
 - Income between \$40,000 - \$70,000: 50% reduction of taxable valuation up to \$4,500.

Counties appreciate that lawmakers crafted this tax relief policy in a manner that can be easily implemented by the counties.

Other noteworthy property tax related bills that passed include:

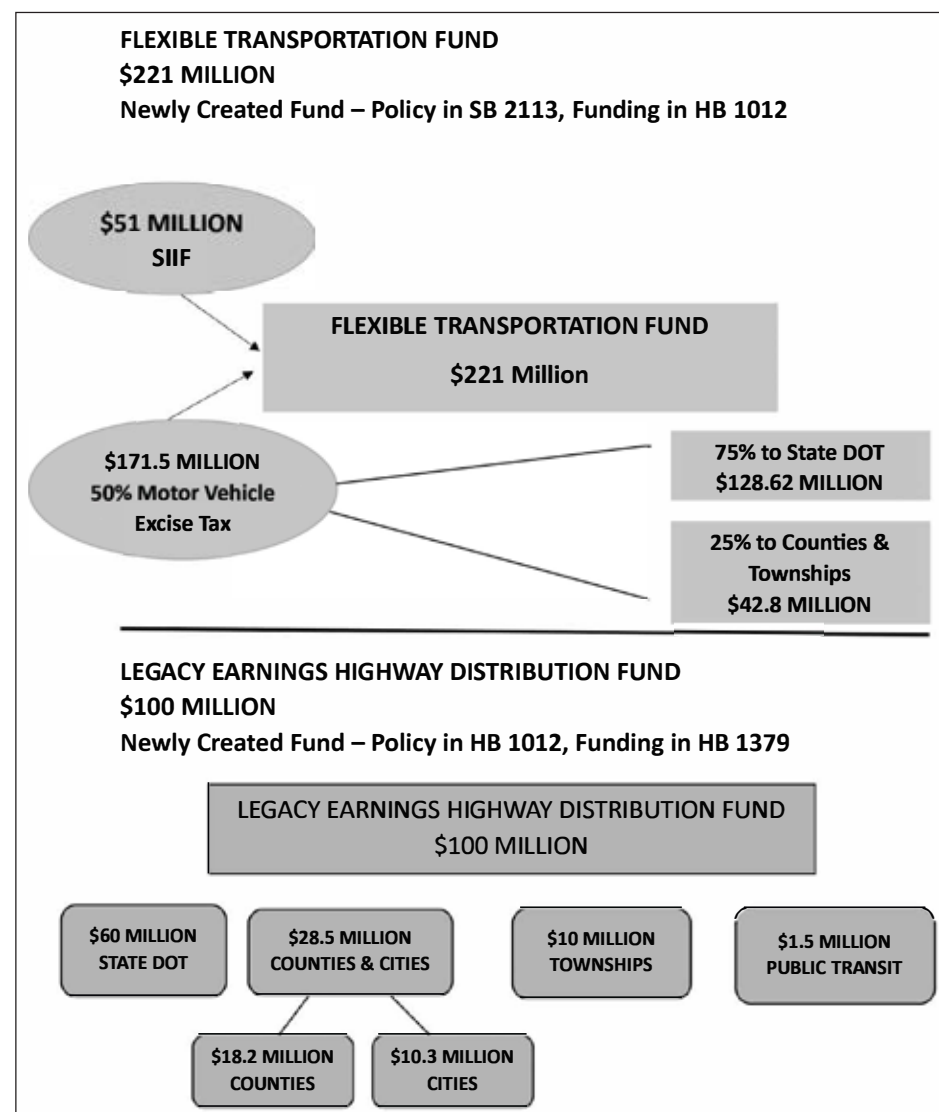
- SB 2162 repeals the 10-mill road levy requirement for oil and gas counties to receive **Gross Production Tax.**
- SB 2121 requires the estimated tax notice to include last year’s **special assessments.** This change will need to be made for this year’s notices.
- HB 1267 proposed reverting the handling of **foreclosure sale proceeds** to the prior law, which allowed counties to retain those dollars to help offset reclamation costs. With a pending

U.S. Supreme Court case on this issue to be decided this summer, an amended version of the bill was passed which allows counties to consider the aggregate amount of outstanding taxes and proceeds to determine the amount (if any) foreclosure proceeds will be distributed.

NDACo was successful in amending a bill that proposed a **major revamp to tax statements** which included a color pie chart to be printed depicting the level of taxes for each political subdivision. HB 1245 was amended to a study to include tax statement changes, chart of accounts, implementation of a statewide property tax information system. This bill also requires that boards **express levies in dollars vs mills** when speaking to the public and requires auditors to **report General Fund and Road and Bridge funds** by March 1 each year.

There were numerous bills related to **tax exemptions.** HB 1247 requires a study of the impact of exempting privately owned farm structures in city limits used to store ag products. A similar bill to allow the exemptions was defeated. HB 1365 exempts ambulance operation areas from the ambulance

2023 Legislative Session
Continued on page 18



2023 Legislative Session

From page 17

district's tax levy if they do not receive emergency services from the ambulance district. HB 1438 expands and clarifies the public charity exemption to include up to 50 acres of undeveloped land and land under construction for hospital or nursing homes to be exempt for 10 years.

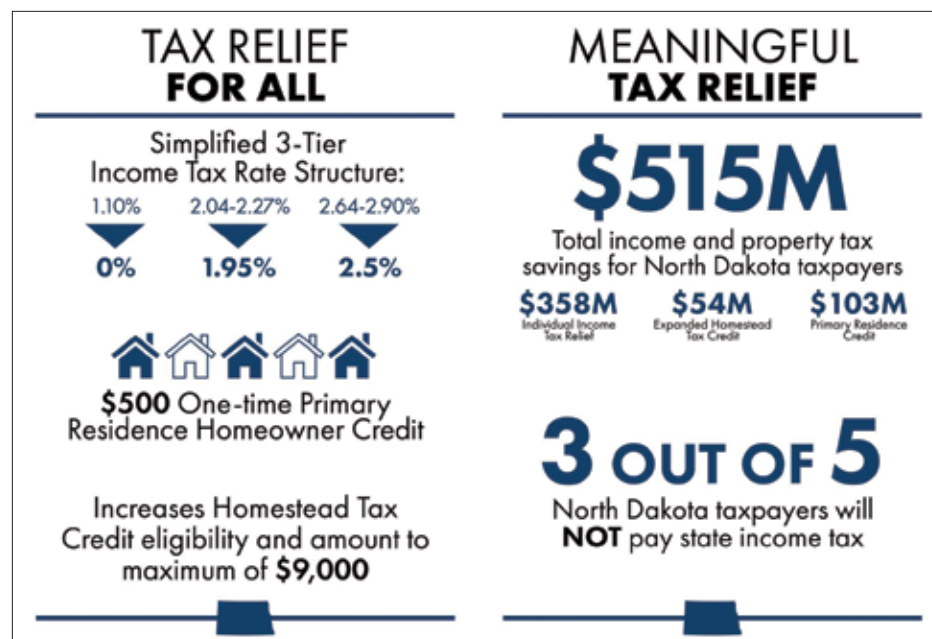
Several bills were defeated in the 68th Legislative Session that would have capped values, budgets or mill levies. Caps negatively impact the discretion and control at the local level to fund the services our taxpayers have asked for. There was also success in defeating legislation for unfunded exemptions by educating legislators on how unfunded exemptions shift the tax liability to those who don't receive the exemption. A resolution to abolish property taxes without a clear plan on how the funding would be replaced was passed out by the House Finance and Tax Committee but soundly defeated on the floor.

ELECTIONS

The success on election issues can also be tied to the defeat of concerning bills that would have dramatically changed our election process, including prohibiting use of ballot drop boxes, prohibiting electronic poll books on election day, eliminating mail ballots, requiring manual counting of ballots and printing full constitutional measures on the ballot. Auditors provided an election demonstration to show lawmakers the equipment and explain the election process, which was incredibly helpful in educating legislators. The Legislature did approve SB 2292 which was brought forward by auditors to include a penalty for those who disrupt polling locations and provides protections for election workers. HB 1431 was also approved, which establishes a process for individuals who have non-citizen IDs to prove their citizenship and vote using a set-a-side ballot.

GUARDIANSHIP FUNDING

Within one of the largest bills contained a significant accomplishment which will have lasting impact on the most vulnerable of North Dakota citizens. SB 2015 (also known as the OMB Budget bill) contained an increase in spending for those organizations that provide **guardianship services** to those without the means to provide for themselves. Lawmakers raised the appropriation from \$2.4 million to **\$7.1 million**. These dollars will continue to flow from OMB to NDACo to the ultimate service provider who have been appointed by the district court. Although this is an increase in direct spending, there certainly is a tax saving to ensure those who end up in



medical facilities are moved to the least restrictive and less expensive facilities. But even more importantly, having a strong guardianship program ensures those who are unable to care for themselves continue to have someone looking out for their best interest.

HUMAN SERVICE ZONES

North Dakota Human Service Zones experienced another busy session tracking, educating and testifying. Many bills related to human service programming and zone operations touch many aspects of life for citizens from birth to grave. There were several legislative wins this session. Zones were able to successfully advocate for a new level of foster care licensing. This allows for a nimbler way of initially becoming a foster parent. This should help increase the number of available foster homes across the state. Financing for Human Service Zone budgets is included in SB 2012 – DHHS Budget. **Zone budgets** were fully appropriated for the next biennium at \$200M and an additional \$3.75M to address zone salary equity. Late in the Session, there was a failed amendment that would have unilaterally transitioned all human service zone team members to state employment. This major proposed change was convincingly defeated. The ND Human Service Zone Director Association did not support this amendment, citing concerns for loss of local service and responsiveness, lack of transparency, the continued expectation for counties to pay for human service zone indirect costs even under a state administration delivery model, and lack of full analysis of benefit/risk. Lawmakers also approved a requirement for at least one legislator to serve on each human service zone board. This move will hopefully provide for greater understanding by the legislative body of human service zones,

local services, and the collaborative efforts to serve vulnerable North Dakotans.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health Division of the Department of Health and Human Services budget bill, HB 1004, included an **increase of State Aid Funding** to the 28 local public health units. This funding is extremely important since it is the *only* funding not tied to a specific grant or program. Examples of uses range from school health and home visits to environmental health and emergency preparedness and response – all which provide community-based services as needed. The SACCHO team of local public health administrators worked throughout the interim to garnish support for an increase of \$2,750,000 from the last two biennia, bringing the total state aid funding to \$8,000,000.

SB 2153 codifies basic **public health core functions** for all health units. This bill was brought forward by the local public health units to ensure that all North Dakota citizens receive the same basic services throughout the state. These minimum requirements are already being provided by each health unit but are now formalized into ND Century Code.

An **opioid settlement fund** was created, and an opioid settlement advisory committee formed in HB 1447. The bill directs monies recovered by the state as a result of opioid litigation to be deposited in the opioid settlement fund. Political subdivisions may deposit proceeds they have separately received to this fund for the purpose of aggregating resources, but they are still free to expend those resources themselves as long as they comply with the underlying settlement agreement. Money in the fund may be used in compliance with any court-ordered restrictions and as authorized by legislative appropriation not to exceed eight million dollars in a

biennium. Composition of the advisory committee along with duties related to recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services on spending decisions is also outlined.

Two competing bills related to **septic systems** were introduced this session with respect to the ongoing efforts of the onsite wastewater recycling technical committee established last session. Much work had been done over the interim; but ultimately both bills, SB 2253 and SB 2256, failed so nothing changed and the committee will continue its work. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is expected to assist with the progress during the upcoming interim.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Several bills addressed **law enforcement recruitment and retention**. The greatest accomplishment in this area is the passage of HB 1307 which provides "**Back the Blue**" grants to local law enforcement departments. \$3.5 million will be distributed to local sheriff's offices and police departments based on the number of licensed officers for use in hiring and/or retention bonuses. The dollars are also available to correctional officers. Lawmakers had a desire to dedicate a higher amount to smaller departments; therefore, \$750,000 of the \$3.5 million is dedicated to agencies with ten or fewer employees. On average, the Back the Blue grants provides \$1,500 / per officer. The use of these dollars will be at the discretion of the local agency administrator. Lawmakers also approved HB 1279 which expands workers' compensation coverage for firefighters and law enforcement officers and SB 2147 that will allow for law enforcement retirement income to be tax exempt.

A few state agency budgets include a number of items that will support local law enforcement. The Attorney General's budget includes funding for thirteen new positions, most of them in the State Crime Lab and \$400,000 for a law enforcement wellness program. An effort to move the State Crime Lab under the Attorney General failed. The DOCR budget includes funding to construct a **new women's prison** in Mandan and the Department of Health and Human Services budget includes \$2.65 million for a **new telehealth initiative** to support sheriffs and jails.

The Attorney General's bill, SB 2107, to enhance penalties for crimes involving guns and crimes against law enforcement failed after numerous amendments and being highly debated in the House. A couple other penalty bills were successful. HB 1378 enhances the penalty for **trespassing**

2023 Legislative Session

during a riot and SB 2248 makes delivering drugs that lead to death an “A felony.” Many gun bills were introduced in the end. Lawmakers turned one of them, HB 1341, into a comprehensive study of firearm carry locations.

A huge success was achieved in the area of traffic safety with the passage of SB 2362, strengthening the state’s seat belt law. Starting August 1, every individual in a vehicle will be required to fasten their seat belt.

A major change in how roads can be closed was also approved. **If a road is publicly announced, it is determined to be closed.** SB 2189 did not address a change in the fee for entering closed roads.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Obviously, as you can see from this article, there are many bills and issues that

touch county government; and this is just skimming the surface. NDACo has much more to do to dive into the policy and work with our partners on implementation. Most of the bills take effect August 1st. If they have an emergency clause, once signed, they take effect immediately. Bills that include studies or that were turned into studies will be reviewed by a group of lawmakers making up Legislative Management. They will select the studies for committees to focus on in between now and the 2025 Legislative Session.

“Finally, thank you to all the county members who traveled to Bismarck to testify on important issues and those of you who contacted your legislators. Lawmakers trust and listen to you. The success counties have during a legislative session hinges on your involvement,” commented Birst.



L-R Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier, Golden Valley County Sheriff Dey Muckle, Governor Doug Burgum, Grand Forks County Sheriff Andy Schneider, NDACo Government/Public Relations Specialist Donnell Preskey.

NDES Hosts Team Kickoff Meeting for Mitigation Plan Update

County Government Input Important To The Process

Provided by NDES

More than 100 representatives from local, state, tribal and federal agencies attended a February kick-off meeting to update the State of North Dakota’s Enhanced Mitigation Mission Area Operations Plan (Enhanced Mitigation MAOP), which serves as the foundation for the statewide hazard mitigation program. As members of the State Hazard Mitigation Team (SHMT), attendees were given an overview of the process for developing this year’s update.

The SHMT is comprised of more than 80 local, tribal, state, federal, non-governmental and private organizations with authorities, responsibilities and expertise required to ensure North Dakota’s resiliency to adversarial threats and natural and technological hazards.

Lori Beck of Towner County is on the Technical Advisory Team that provides oversight. Other county officials involved include Sandy Rohde (Dunn), Mary Senger (Burleigh and Emmons), Kimberly Robbins (LaMoure), Andrew Kirking (Stutsman), Angela Herda (Nelson), Mike Smith (Williams), Kari Goelz (Grand Forks), Daniel Schwartz (Logan) and Jim Prochniak (Cass).

Mitigation plans are updated every five years and are a requirement to receive federal disaster mitigation and recovery dollars. FEMA establishes federal mitigation planning requirements for local, tribal and state mitigation plans. North Dakota received Enhanced

Mitigation Plan status in 2019, which demonstrates a state’s proven commitment to hazard mitigation. Enhanced plan states receive 20 percent in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds after a disaster rather than 15 percent.

Some of the SHMT objectives include:

- Increase North Dakota’s disaster resiliency by developing and maintaining an effective statewide hazard mitigation program supported by all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and our communities.
- Promote equitable hazard mitigation actions and investments to reduce loss of life and damages to property and the environment, by lessening the impact of disasters.
- Ensure North Dakota’s continued eligibility for federal pre- and post-disaster mitigation and recovery dollars.
- Contribute expertise for development of the Enhanced Mitigation MAOP, which serves as the blueprint for action for North Dakota’s statewide mitigation program.

For more information or to add your county’s voice to the conversation, please contact Kathleen Donahue at NDES: 701-328-8113 or kdonahue@nd.gov.

New Manager at Minneapolis Passport Agency

Hello North Dakota Passport Agents

I am delighted to assume the position of Customer Service Manager of the Minneapolis Passport Agency. I am eager to meet you through email, calls, and eventually in-person visits. Together we will resolve problems and keep the world travelling. I bring seven years of passport adjudication and management experience to this position.



Benjamin Calderon-Voas
Minneapolis Passport Agency
Customer Service Manager

At a time when travel demand is rising significantly, the community-based Acceptance Facilities and the Department of State are rising to meet the needs of our applicants. The passport application represents so much more than a bureaucratic transaction – each of these passports

fulfill dream vacations, visits to dearly-missed family, growth of U.S. businesses, and proof of U.S. citizenship. I am deeply moved by the impact each of us have in this process. I thank you for your service to the U.S travelling public on behalf of the Department of State, and am honored to join you in providing first-class customer service.

As always, you may reach the Minneapolis Passport Agency Customer Service Office directly at PPTMNCS@state.gov or by calling 612-656-5179. These contacts are strictly private and are not allowed for public use. General inquiries can go to travel.state.gov or call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778.

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“Stay Ahead of the Curve: Join the State Auditor’s Office (Free) Virtual Audit Summit”

The world of auditing is constantly evolving, with new regulations and best practices emerging all the time. Keeping up with these changes can be a challenge — but the State Auditor’s Office is here to help.

On Wednesday, July 19th from 8:45-4:00, the free virtual Audit Summit will bring together a diverse range of speakers to discuss the latest updates and best practices in auditing. From preparing your audits to navigating the complex world of a single audit, this event will cover a variety of topics to help you feel confident in the audit process.

Some of the topics that will be discussed include:



- Understanding the single audit. Speakers will discuss the process that requires teams to navigate a number of regulations and requirements.
- Budgets. They’re a massive undertaking! This session will help you

develop a budget that works for your whole team.

- Getting ready for an audit. Learn the steps you can take to help save time and money on your audit.
- Legislative updates. This time will be devoted to exploring how recent legislative changes will impact the audits and reviews local governments receive.
- Question and answer panel. Bring all your questions to ask our speakers in a live Q&A.

The speakers for this year’s Audit Summit come from various backgrounds and will bring a wealth of experience to the event. Attendees will get a well-rounded perspective on the latest trends and best practices in auditing.

Whether you’re an experienced auditor or just starting out, this event provides valuable insights and guidance that can help you improve your auditing skills and stay up to date with recent changes. The Summit is completely free to attend, creating an accessible way to enhance your auditing and accounting knowledge.

To learn more, see the full agenda, and register for the event, visit ndsao.link/Audit-Summit23.

Purchasing Pulse

Perception of Procurement

Sherry Neas | Office of Management and Budget (OMB), State Procurement Office

Your entity celebrates when you get budget approval to purchase a big-ticket item. Is there an element of dread knowing that you need to go through a procurement process? Why is public procurement often perceived as a burdensome process?

In your personal life, you do research when you need to buy something. You decide what features and functions you need, and you consider the balance between cost and quality. You find businesses that sell what you need and compare prices. You might even enjoy the shopping process!

Public procurement similarly gathers needed information to make good decisions related to the goods, services, equipment or public improvements needed by your government entity.

In your personal purchasing, you may prefer certain brands or businesses. You can drive the same make of vehicle or equipment, buy from the same local dealer, purchase from your friends and family.

There are fundamental differences between personal shopping and public procurement. An essential element of public procurement is a fair, transparent competitive process. Government entities are a large consumer of goods, services and equipment. Public procurement procedures require public notice to inform the public of bidding opportunities, invite businesses to compete, and a fair evaluation process to ensure the needs of the government are met and vendors are treated fairly.

Internal Customer Perspective: Your organization is relying on its

procurement professionals to help manage their budget, comply with the laws related to purchasing, and conduct an effective process to select the needed goods and services. Be sure all team members know about bidding requirements, involve procurement early and ensure the team members doing procurement have the training and resources needed to be confident and proficient.

Vendor Perspective: Have you ever considered how businesses perceive public procurement? How user-friendly are your documents? Do your specifications describe the desired level of quality while allowing for a competitive process? Are vendors confident that their bid or proposal will receive unbiased consideration? Are your communications with vendors timely and respectful? Does your organization pay its bills on time?

Public Perspective: We are spending taxpayer dollars. The public has a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent. As public officials and team members, we need to ensure the integrity of the procurement process. Open records laws make procurement records available to the public.

Rethink your perception of procurement. Knowing you helped make important purchasing decisions for your organization is very rewarding. Conducting procurement for your public entity is an important responsibility that impacts your organization, the business community, and your constituents.

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NDSU's Home Garden Variety Trials Engage Hundreds of Gardeners

Elizabeth Cronin | NDSU Extension

Each spring NDSU Extension Horticulturist Tom Kalb prepares for the distribution of seed packets to hundreds of North Dakotans who participate in his home garden variety trial program. The results of the research helps determine variety recommendations for gardeners across the state.

In 2022, gardeners at 287 sites rated a total of 130 vegetable varieties for germination, plant health, earliness, yield and food quality. Data was obtained from 43 of 53 counties in North Dakota. The results were published and are being shared with thousands of gardeners in 2023.

“The program is open to everybody, new and experienced gardeners, commercial growers, and even youth,” says Kalb. “We want to know the performance of these varieties under actual, real-life conditions. Finding the best varieties for our region helps gardeners increase their yield, reduce use of pesticides and grow vegetables that taste better.”

Gardeners can join the garden variety trials team by signing up online. They must pledge to manage their trials responsibly, plant and evaluate both varieties, and submit results promptly at the end of the growing season.

“We have a great team of hundreds of gardeners who volunteer their time and effort to help conduct research for NDSU,” says Kalb. “I am impressed by how engaged and responsible people are. They enjoy being a part and contributing to research that benefits fellow gardeners.”

Participants also benefit. Last year, 192 responses (71% response rate) to an online survey showed:

- 98% were introduced to new varieties.
- 96% will change the way they grow their garden in the future.
- 92% reported more productive gardens.
- 82% reported healthier diets.

Parents in households with youth participants reported:

- 92% of youth improved their diets.
- 91% of youth increased their level of physical activity.
- 76% of youth sharpened their skills in science and math.

The 2023 catalog is available now through early summer. Search online for “NDSU Extension Home Garden Variety Trials.”




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Livestock Alliance
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:

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- ***Modern livestock management and environmental stewardship***
- ***State and local livestock zoning and permitting procedures***
- ***Why your County wants to be a Livestock Friendly Community***



Contact us or invite NDLA to your next County Commission meeting at ndlivestock.org or 701-712-1488 Follow us on Twitter @LivestockND

Burgum Appoints NDAcO’s Birst, Korsmo to Opioid Settlement Advisory

In January, Gov. Doug Burgum issued an executive order creating an Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee to receive and distribute funds received under settlement agreements and recommend how they should be used by local governments.

The state has entered into 11 settlement agreements with 13 opioid manufacturers and distributors in an effort to hold the companies responsible for their roles in furthering the opioid epidemic. As a result of the agreements, North Dakota may receive up to \$62 million over the next four to 18 years. The funds will be distributed by the state to assist in regional efforts to combat opioid abuse.

To receive the funds, the state was required to establish a mechanism for receiving and distributing the dollars and recommending how they should be used. The governor created the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee as recommended by the settlement agreement signed by ND Attorney General Drew Wrigley.

“The settlement dollars we secured for North Dakota now have the sacred task of helping address the many agonies of addiction,” Wrigley said. “I thank Gov. Burgum for establishing the mechanism for

putting these dollars to work and for his leadership on issues surrounding addiction.”

The committee consists of six voting members appointed by the governor and a non-voting chairperson designated by the governor, with equal representation from the state and local governments.

The following individuals were recommended and appointed as members by both the Governor’s Office and Attorney General’s Office:

Pam Sagness, director of the Behavioral Health Division in the ND Department of Health and Human Services;

Col. Brandon Solberg, Superintendent of the ND Highway Patrol;

Jonathan Holth, managing director, Office of Recovery Reinvented;

Aaron Birst, executive director, ND Association of Counties;

Mary Korsmo, executive director, ND State Association of City and County Health Officials;

Stephanie Dassinger Engebretson, deputy director and staff attorney, ND League of Cities.

Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller will chair the committee, which will hold at least four public meetings annually.



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2023 COUNTY CALENDAR

May

- 1-31 _____ Mental Health Awareness Month
- 2-3 _____ Williston Basin Petroleum Conference, Regina, SK
- 4-5 _____ Clerk of Court Conference, Dickinson Astoria Hotel & Event Center
- 8 _____ NDACo Legislative Wrap-Up Report, ILG Webinar
- 10 _____ NDIRF Annual Meeting, North Dakota Heritage Center
- 11-12 _____ ND Sheriffs & Deputies Association Meeting, Mandan, Baymont Inn
- 14 _____ Mother's Day
- 16-17 _____ Vision Zero Partner Conference, BSC National Energy Center of Excellence, Bismarck
- 17-19 _____ Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference, St. George, UT
- 24 _____ NDCCA Board Meeting, NDACo County Office Building
- 25 _____ NDACo Board Meeting, NDACo County Office Building
- 29 _____ Memorial Day

June

- 18 _____ Father's Day
- 20-22 _____ Records Convention, Stanley, Mainstay Suites
- 21-23 _____ State's Attorneys Summer Meeting, Fargo, Ramada
- 21 _____ First Day of Summer

July

- 4 _____ Independence Day
- 11-13 _____ Human Service Zone Directors Annual Meeting, NDACo County Office Building
- 21-24 _____ NACo Annual Conference, Austin, TX



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