

# Budgeting in a World of Caps

## Hundreds Take Advantage of Budget Training Opportunity

Jeff Eslinger | County News Editor

Over 750 local government officials have taken advantage of training designed to help political subdivisions comply with the three percent tax cap recently signed into law. The event was co-hosted by the ND Association of Counties (NDACo), ND League of Cities (NDLC), ND School Boards Association (NDSBA), ND Township Officers Association (NDTOA) and ND Recreation and Park Association (NDRPA).

These associations representing hundreds of political subdivisions teamed up to put on the joint training so that board members, auditors, business managers could all receive the information at the same time from the same sources.

On June 16, over 150 gathered in the Bismarck Career Academy for the event, while more than 400 followed online. Another 180 registered to receive a link to the event, which was recorded and can be viewed now at [www.ndaco.org/tax-caps-training](http://www.ndaco.org/tax-caps-training). PowerPoint presentations can also be downloaded from that page.

County officials can receive 3.5 free ILG training hours by emailing Alisha Adolf at [alisha.adolf@ndaco.org](mailto:alisha.adolf@ndaco.org) after watching the video.

Following a welcome from NDLC Executive Director Matt Gardner, the deep dive into budgeting was kicked off by State Supervisor of Assessments Shelli Myers. Myers covered a myriad of centrally assessed tax categories including



A full house of local government officials studying and taking notes on the challenge of budgeting in a world of caps.

power lines, railroads, wind farms and many more. In 2024, ad valorem (value-based) assessments totaled nearly \$7 billion, while collections of “in lieu of” taxes brought in over \$32 million. Centrally assessed taxes are collected by the state and redistributed to the counties impacted by those industries.

McKenzie County Tax Director and Recorder Katie Paulson took to the podium next, laying out the process of calculating new growth value. If any county has seen new growth, it's McKenzie County, in the heart of the Bakken oil boom.

Adam Tescher, School Finance Officer for the ND Department of Public Instruction,

presented next. Tescher highlighted how school district levies have been impacted by caps, including the fact that Homestead and Veterans' Credits have been removed from in

lieu of property tax; these properties' values will be included in the overall taxable value.

NDACo's Research Analyst Linda Svihovec wrapped up the primary presentations with very detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to perform the various calculations necessary to keep your budget within the three percent. She emphasized how important it is to know which levies are included and excluded from the caps. For example, special assessments and bonds that were approved by voters are NOT included.

The half-day session wrapped up with a Q & A featuring NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst, NDLC Deputy Director Stephanie Dassinger Engebretson and NDSBA Executive Director Amy De Kok. Questions were varied and, in some cases, could not yet be answered until more time and experience play out. Interested parties are encouraged to contact their association with any questions that were not answered during the training. An FAQ page may be set up if needed.

# Let's All Go to the County Fair!

## (a.k.a. Annual Conference)

Jeff Eslinger | County News Editor

Mark your calendars for October 26-28 for the ND Association of Counties Annual Conference in Bismarck. There will be great sessions, exhibitors and networking!

This year's “County Fair” theme celebrates one of the most positive ways citizens interact with their counties and build pride in their communities. So, please leave your prize pigs and goats home for now and think of other ways to show pride in your county!

Our featured keynote speaker is Adrienne Haslet. Some of our county officials saw her presentation about a year ago and absolutely raved about her, insisting we bring her to our conference.

In 2013, Adrienne was a professional dancer. She took a short break to watch runners in the Boston Marathon. Little did she know she was standing next to one of the terrorist bombers. She lost her leg, along with all her hopes and dreams for her career in dance. She had never been a runner, but the Boston Marathon is now an important part of her recovery journey—a journey that will surely



inspire you. You can follow her social media accounts at [@adriannehaslet](https://twitter.com/adriannehaslet).

The agenda and workshop titles are still being developed and will be updated on the conference website regularly. A link to the

conference information will always be prominent at [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org).

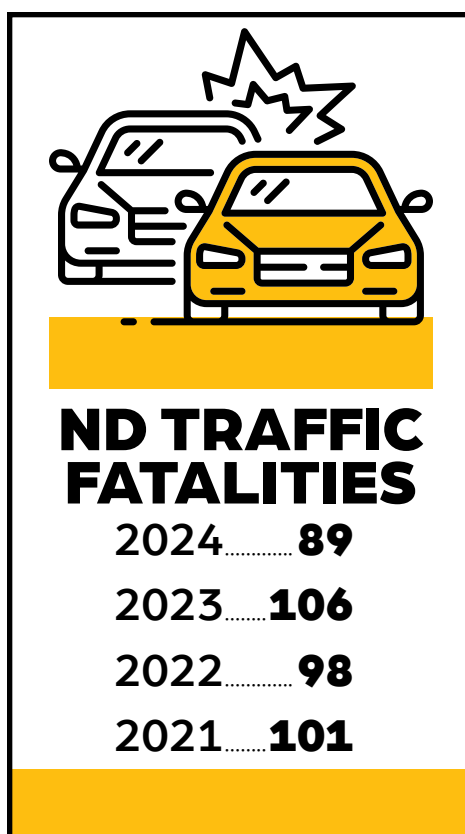
ALL activities will be held at the Bismarck Event Center, including the Welcoming Social on Sunday evening. Additionally, all Sunday member association meetings and other business meetings will be held at the Event Center. As the social occurs right after many of the exhibitors set up their booths, we are able to welcome more of them to join us for a relaxing start to the conference.

If you have not yet made hotel arrangements, visit [noboundariesnd.com](http://noboundariesnd.com) and click on “Where to Stay” for guidance on services offered at all area hotels. We do not reserve room blocks, but most hotels will honor the State Rate (but only if you ask for it).

So don't wait! Register for the Annual Conference now!

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## Board Member PROFILE



**DON FLAHERTY**  
**ND Association of Assessing Officers**  
**Dickey County Tax Director**

**What is your favorite thing about being an assessor?** I like helping people and even though the job can get a bad rap, making sure everyone is treated fairly in the process can be very rewarding.

**Family:** Wife, Tina (married 37 years), 3 sons and a daughter (who shares my birthday) and five wonderful grandchildren (so far).

**Other things you are involved in:** Mayor of Ellendale, volunteer Advanced EMT, Lions Club, Legion Baseball Board, home game football

announcer, and work with our local Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Board.

**Favorite movie or movie genre:** Old movies (TCM type), SciFi, swashbucklers, historic based films, John Wayne-Clint Eastwood films, and clean comedy.

**What music are you listening to right now?** Smooth Jazz and Yacht Rock, also like lively classical, marches (1812 Overture, Sousa, William Tell), 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s Pop Rock.

**What are you reading right now?** I'm getting ready to start the Hornblower series by C. S. Forester.

**Something people probably don't know about you:** As a kid I started collecting letter openers and continued to do that into my early adult life. Unfortunately, because of 9/11, it became harder to do with the decrease in souvenir letter openers. Also I am going to live to be 113!

**Philosophy of life and/or work:** Be thankful and have a positive outlook on your circumstances because it could always be worse and your good attitude could help someone who is not as fortunate as you.

**Favorite quote or motto:** Let us put our minds together to see what we can do for our children. - Chief Sitting Bull.



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**NRG Technology Services Staff:**  
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## FROM the COUNTIES

### Summer is Officially Here

Howdy from the Ruland Ranch... Crop is all in, the calves have been worked and all are out to pasture. During the third week of May, it rained a nice gentle six inches of moisture! We were so crazy dry that it all soaked in. Pastures are green and crops are off to a good start. Haying has begun. It looks to be an average hay crop.

Now, we have missed out on the recent storms. Though we could use the moisture, we don't need the hail, high winds, and tornados. My prayers to those who have! Condolences to those who lost love ones. And strength to the counties on front lines of those powerful storms! Thank you to all the county folks who are rescuing, assisting and repairing your communities. You represent the best of counties. And let the staff at NDACo and the Board know how things are going and what you might need. Your experiences can help other counties in the future who might find themselves in similar situations.

- The **NDACo Annual Conference and Expo** will be held October 26-28, 2025. Registration opens July 8. Visit the **NDACo website** at [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org) to register. Please plan on being there...Great information, great education, great networking and great fun!
- **Commissioners**, please keep an eye open for your region's **Caucus Meeting** in advance of the Annual Conference. The caucus meetings will be held locally within your region. Review current resolutions at [www.ndaco.org/resolutions](http://www.ndaco.org/resolutions). NDACo needs



Trudy Ruland | NDACo President  
Mountrail County Commissioner

your input on the issues affecting your county!

- Our first of the **County Tours** occurred in June. We visited the four counties in the northeast corner of North Dakota. I learn so much from our discussions and enjoy the history of the courthouses. At the end of July, we will be in the northwest corner. Kidder, Logan, McIntosh and Statesman will be our September tour. Eddy, Foster, McHenry, Sheridan, and Wells will be your October tour. Looking forward to seeing y'all!

Questions, concerns or you just want to visit, please don't hesitate to call me. Better yet, stop in at the Ranch. Coffee pot is always on.

## FROM the COMMISSIONERS

### Count Your Blessings

My heart goes out to all those that have suffered devastating losses from the recent storms that swept through our state. Please keep everyone in your thoughts and prayers during the recovery efforts. Also, thank you to all the emergency responders and all that are helping those that are struggling.

Once again, I will be appointing commissioners to the audit, nominating and resolutions standing committees. I know how extremely busy one's life can get, but I encourage you to get involved in the ND County Commissioners Association. I have visited with commissioners throughout the state, and I am certain that many of you have a lot to offer on standing committees and to the Association. I see firsthand that there are many great leaders throughout our state. Being on the NDCCA has been an awarding experience. I have enjoyed a lot of good food and conversations and have made lasting friendships, not to mention I have gained a wealth of knowledge. Please don't hesitate to throw your name in the hat.

My apologies for missing the tours to Pembina and Walsh Counties; my life too can get crazy busy. I was glad to be able to join the tours to Cavalier and Towner Counties. Thank you for your willingness to share your concerns and for your great hospitality. Even though I did not stop in Munich, I want the citizens to know that I was impressed by how inviting your town



Joan Hollekim | NDCCA President  
Mountrail County Commissioner

looks from the road. I don't believe there was a single lot that was not mowed. On the flip side, I will say it is unfortunate that so many of our paved highways and gravel roads across North Dakota are desperately in need of repair, even the state highways that I recently traveled in the northeast part of our state are in disrepair. With the continually rising costs of infrastructure repair, lack of funding for improvements will be an ongoing problem.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone involved in the House Bill 1176 Budgeting in a World of Caps Training held June 16th. If you did not get a chance to attend, I highly recommend you take the time to watch\* the training; it is totally worth your time. The presenters all did a tremendous job!

\* [www.ndaco.org/tax-caps-training](http://www.ndaco.org/tax-caps-training).

## FROM the ASSOCIATION

### Some Things, We Can't Control

There are somethings in this world that are just meant to be together. Peanut butter and chocolate, burger and fries and green and blue colors. Driving around this great state, it just seems the green fields are meant to blend into the endless blue sky. It's hard to imagine a better combination. The dark green fields mean most of us have received well-timed rains.

That of course is the positive. However, sometimes needed rain brings unneeded storms. We saw that a couple of weeks in a row. Seeing a funnel cloud from my front porch quickly reminded me the true power of nature. As much as all of us think we are in control of life there definitely is somethings we cannot control.

Tragically, lives were lost in one of those tornados and countless structures and crops were ruined. Which brings me to the point of this article. There is the saying that no one can be an island. In the best of times maybe you can pull off everything yourself; (I still doubt it). But there is no doubt it is in these



Aaron Birst | NDACo Executive Director

worst of times we all need to rely on each other. Those affected need comfort, those business and homes need to be rebuilt and those roads need to be cleared.

That takes all of us! Although still tragic, I think we can all take a sense of comfort that county government (along with our fellow political subdivisions and our valuable state and federal partners)

always lead the way in these times of crisis. The dedication of those working to bring some sense of normalcy (many of which are also personally affected) to the impacted communities can never be understated. So a big thank you to all of you who got to work when the storm clouds faded away.



Bismarck tornado captured by Jenny Birst.



Aaron Birst, Managing Editor  
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## 2025 HR Collaborative Summer Virtual Series

The HR Collaborative's Six-Session Summer Virtual Series kicked off on Wednesday, June 11, featuring an employment law overview with NDIRF Staff Legal Counsel Dani Krause.

This year's series cover the following topics: self-care, performance management, workplace harassment, recruitment, and health coverage trends.

**Hurry and catch the remaining webinars!**

- **10-11:15 a.m. (CDT) on Wednesday, July 9**  
– *Performance Management* with Dakota Dynamics HR Consultant Tanya Wieler. CLE approved for 1.25 ND CLE credits (Event #20250709HRC)
- **10-11:15 a.m. (CDT) on Wednesday, July 23**  
– *Do Not Become the Victim of Your Anti-Discrimination Policies* with Brian D. Schmidt, Attorney at Law and Partner at Smith Porsborg Schweigert, Armstrong, Moldenhauer & Smith  
CLE approved for 1.25 ND CLE credits (Event #20250723HRC)

- **10-11:15 a.m. (CDT) on Wednesday, Aug. 13**  
– *Effective Talent Acquisition in a Competitive Market* with North Dakota Office of the Adjutant General Human Resource Business Partner Jason Sutheimer, SHRM-SCP  
CLE approved for 1.25 ND CLE credits (Event #20250813HRC)
- **10-11:15 a.m. (CDT) on Wednesday, Aug. 27**  
– *NDPHIT Health Coverage Trends* with Brown & Brown Senior Vice President Randy Johnson  
CLE approved for 1.25 ND CLE credits (Event #20250827HRC)

The cost to attend the 2025 series is **\$50**.

Links to each session's video recording will be emailed to all registered participants.

To register now, go here:

[www.ndirf.com/2025-hr-collaborative-summer-virtual-series-registration/](http://www.ndirf.com/2025-hr-collaborative-summer-virtual-series-registration/)



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### LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a virtual training hosted via Zoom that teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

You'll build the skills and confidence you need to reach out and provide initial support to those who are struggling. You'll also learn how to help connect them to appropriate support.

#### AFTER THE COURSE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:

- Recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Recognize common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- Understand how to interact with a person in crisis.  
Know how to connect a person with help.
- Use self-care tools and techniques.

Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (ALGEE):

Assess for risk of suicide or harm.

Listen nonjudgmentally.

Give reassurance and information.

Encourage appropriate professional help.

Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

### REGISTER TODAY!

Register at <https://qualityhealthnd.org/mhfa> or scan the QR code. **You must register 2 weeks in advance of your selected date.**

*\*Virtual training courses are held three times per month!*



**NOTE: Training requires 2 hours of pre-work + a post-test and evaluation.**



Quality Health Associates  
of North Dakota

#### Continuing Education Approval

This event has been approved for **8.75** continuing education credits as follows:

- Contact hours for nurses (North Dakota Board of Nursing)
- LCCR/LCCI hours for EMS personnel (ND EMS Unit)
- CEUs for Nursing Home Administrators (QHA is an approved provider by the North Dakota Board of Examiners for Nursing Home Administrators)
- Contact hours for Peace Officers (Peace Officers Standards and Training Board)
- CEUs for Licensed Social Workers (ND Board of Social Work Examiners)
- CEUs for Licensed Counselors (ND Board of Counselor Examiners)
- CEUs for Licensed Addiction Counselors (ND Board of Addiction Counseling Examiners)
- CEUs for North Dakota Certified Peer Support Specialists (ND Behavioral Health)

*\*This training has been approved for 8.5 continuing education credits by the North Dakota Board of Massage Therapy.*

*This course is valued at \$170. Thanks to a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), learners may attend at no charge.*

In-person training is also available through FirstLink. To view the schedule, visit: [Trainings | FirstLink \(myfirstlink.org\)](https://www.firstlink.org)

For more information, visit [qualityhealthnd.org](https://qualityhealthnd.org).

## NACo Membership:

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Learn more at [www.NACo.org/membership](http://www.NACo.org/membership)

**STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER AMERICA.**

# AI Powered Phishing

Amber Schriock | NRG Service Manager

As Artificial Intelligence continues to gain attention, so do the capabilities and applications of the technology. We may be familiar with AI in our daily lives (think Netflix “Suggested for you”), but it goes far beyond that. Google Maps can suggest alternative travel routes based on traffic patterns and construction, Amazon can suggest personal recommendations for shoppers and chatbots determine how best to answer questions. It was only a matter of time before bad actors found a way to use AI to their benefit as well.

First, let’s define a couple key components of AI.

- Machine Learning: A subset of AI focused on enabling machines to learn from data without explicit programming



- Natural Language Processing: A subset of AI that focuses on enabling machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language

- Speech Recognition: Enables computers to recognize and understand spoken language
- Thanks to the advances in these areas, phishing attacks are increasingly more sophisticated and difficult to spot. They can mimic legitimate emails with less spelling and grammar errors. Bad actors use social media and the web to scrape information about companies and individuals, enabling them to tailor their attacks to specific users with relevant details. Even voices can be imitated to trick users into providing information or making financial changes.
- Tips for guarding against sophisticated phishing attacks:
- Enable multi-factor authentication

- Require complicated passwords
  - Conduct regular Security Awareness Training
  - Implement AI-based email filters
- The next wave of security is the utilization of passkeys in place of passwords. A passkey is a digital credential that allows users to sign in to apps and websites without needing a password, using the same process they use to unlock their device (biometrics, PIN, or pattern). This involves creating a public key, stored on the server of the service you are using, and a private key, which is stored on your device. Your device uses the private key to create a unique signature that the server verifies using the public key.

# NACo Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership Academy

**A 12-Week Collaborative Readiness Program  
Led By Fortune 500 Cisos And Peers**

*To register, go to [www.naco.org/page/naco-enterprise-cybersecurity-leadership-academy](https://www.naco.org/page/naco-enterprise-cybersecurity-leadership-academy)*

The NACo Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership Academy is an online 12-week collaborative readiness program led by Fortune 500 CISOs and peers who deliver a proven framework and insights on leading and securing a network and an organization – protecting data assets and the enterprise brand. This program coaches' participants on thinking and acting as county cybersecurity leaders. (Click here to learn more about NACo's High Performance Leadership Development Academy; <https://edge.naco.org/naco-high-performance-leadership-academy>.)

With a relevant and timely curriculum developed by the Professional Development Academy and including General Colin Powell, CISO Coalition National Leadership Board Members, faculty from prominent universities and thought leaders, the Enterprise Cybersecurity Academy is built on three core tenets: accessibility, relevance and efficiency and focuses on addressing five critical capabilities gaps:

KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES GAP	COMPETENCY	CISO EXPECTATIONS
LEADING AND MAKING DECISIONS	LEADING	Execute as a (business) leader to facilitate, influence, persuade and negotiate with individuals, teams and groups toward decisions
PLANNING AND MANAGING CHANGE	ADAPTING	Leverage the power of systems thinking to mitigate risk and empower people during organizational and market fluctuation
BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS	COLLABORATING	Establish alignment of individual purpose with team meaning and company mission to energize efforts and maximize results
PRESENTING INFORMATION CLEARLY	COMMUNICATING	Manage messaging based on stakeholder need, sensemaking and simplicity to create clarity in meaning, confidence and community
EXECUTING TO ACHIEVE BUSINESS VALUE	DELIVERING VALUE	Focus on projects and processes (and the people associated with them) while linking execution to strategy to deliver business value

### Who Should Participate?

Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership is designed for cybersecurity managers and their teams. Each participant remains accountable for their training and progress through the direct involvement of their supervisor at the county. Supervisors are encouraged to meet with participants and review the program content as related to individual development plans. Supervisors also receive regular dashboard reports that outline the learning progress of the program participant.

### What is the time commitment?

Enterprise Cybersecurity Leadership is designed to maximize ROI on participants’ time and consists of 12 one-week modules with a time commitment of 30-60 minutes per day. Module units can be completed on the participants’ schedule and accessed online anywhere.

### What is the cost?

NACo Member County cost per enrollee begins at \$1,995.

## NRG TECHNOLOGY STAFF



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## Public Health Matters

### Upper Missouri District Health Unit Responds to First Measles Case

UMDHU Team

When measles began to take hold in Texas, the Upper Missouri District Health Unit (UMDHU) relied on partnerships that have proven effective time and again. Local Public Health is uniquely positioned to bring together stakeholders in neutral, collaborative settings to best serve our communities. We know that UMDHU is not unique in our response and our other local public health partners across the state are also going through the same steps.

As part of our proactive outreach, we connected with a wide range of community partners to ensure they had access to accurate information and the opportunity to voice concerns. These included—but were not limited to—schools, clinics, hospitals, emergency managers, county and city auditors, churches, and daycares.

For the last couple of years, UMDHU had already been offering walk-in and afterhours vaccination clinics and mobile clinics designed to meet people where they are—for instance, providing on-site vaccinations in schools with parental consent.

Once an official measles outbreak was declared in Williams County, we moved quickly. Within 24 hours, we partnered

with North Dakota Health and Human Services and Southwestern District Health Unit to host two additional walk-in vaccination clinics, including after-hours availability to accommodate working families.

We were especially touched by the number of community members who reached out offering help. That kind of support reminds us why we do this work—and how strong our community truly is when we come together.

### Measles on the Rise

Brenda Stallman, RN | Traill District Health Unit

Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clear up in a few days. But measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years old. Common complications are ear infections and diarrhea. Serious complications include pneumonia and encephalitis.

Measles is highly contagious. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been. This can happen even up to 2 hours after that person has left. If one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people nearby will become

infected if they are not protected. Anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk.

Measles symptoms appear 7 to 14 days after contact with the virus. Common measles symptoms include:

- High fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Rash

The best way to protect against measles is with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR is safe and effective. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles; one dose is about 93% effective.

Measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000. This meant the absence of the continuous spread of disease was greater than 12 months. This was thanks to a highly effective vaccination program in the United States. Measles outbreaks are again occurring due to lowering vaccination rates in the U.S., including North Dakota, and continued global measles activity. As of May 29, ND counties impacted with measles cases include Williams, Cass, Grand Forks and Burke.

Due to the ease of spread, it is expected that case numbers will grow, and other counties will be impacted.

Local public health departments have been actively emphasizing the dangers of measles and the need to eliminate the risk of contracting the disease through MMR vaccinations. Schools and daycares have been asked to identify those not protected from the recommended vaccinations and to alert parents and caregivers of the associated risks. Guidelines on exclusion from school, childcare, and social activities for anyone not vaccinated and exposed to measles have been distributed. Additional opportunities to obtain the MMR vaccine have been offered in areas where cases have occurred. Messaging relating to the nature of measles and the potential complications has been shared widely through local news outlets and social media.

With questions regarding measles and vaccination recommendations, contact your local health department or visit [www.hhs.nd.gov/immunizations/measles](http://www.hhs.nd.gov/immunizations/measles).

To obtain a personal vaccination record and view what vaccinations are due, sign up for the Docket app at [wy.app.dockethealth.com/](http://wy.app.dockethealth.com/).



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# One Foot In Front of the Other

Kaitlin Atkinson | Vision Zero Regional Coordinator – NE Region, Grand Forks County

Each year, professionals who touch traffic safety are invited to attend and participate in the Vision Zero Partner Conference hosted by the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT). The conference is made possible thanks to funding by the NDDOT and other sponsor agencies and partners. During this two-day conference, we bring together hundreds of 4E partners in education, enforcement, engineering, emergency medical services and other partners to provide information, best practices, and networking opportunities to build partner capacity to advance Vision Zero in North Dakota. The goal is for these partners to leave feeling confident in their skills, get education on hot topics, hear from impactful keynote speakers, receive updates on Vision Zero programs, and finally, recognize individuals from across the state during the awards ceremony who have shown outstanding service and dedication to accomplish the overall goal of reducing motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries on North Dakota roads.

This year, there were several exceptional sessions that highlighted the next generation of North Dakota drivers. After lunch on day one, we heard from four student leaders, each from different Vision Zero Schools across the state, including West Fargo Sheyenne, Oakes Public School, LaMoure Public School, and Flasher Public School. These students spoke about making the choice to be a student leader, highlighting how it has given them opportunities like attending the National Lifesavers Conference as an attendee and as panelists. We heard from them about the successes they have had, reaching not only their peers but also their community members through marketing and message sharing. They shared more about becoming a Vision Zero School, from photo and video shoots to planning events that are successful and engaging. One student shared his experience in planning to reach his school's students even though it will be more challenging being the largest school in the state. To close this session, we learned what keeps them going in pushing forward to reach zero. The answers varied in detail, but all of them focused on the passion to create safer roads to prevent the heartbreaking impacts of fatal crashes on friends, family, and first responders.

That session was more than impactful, but attendees had no idea what was to come. Following a short



Teen panelists share their dramatic story.

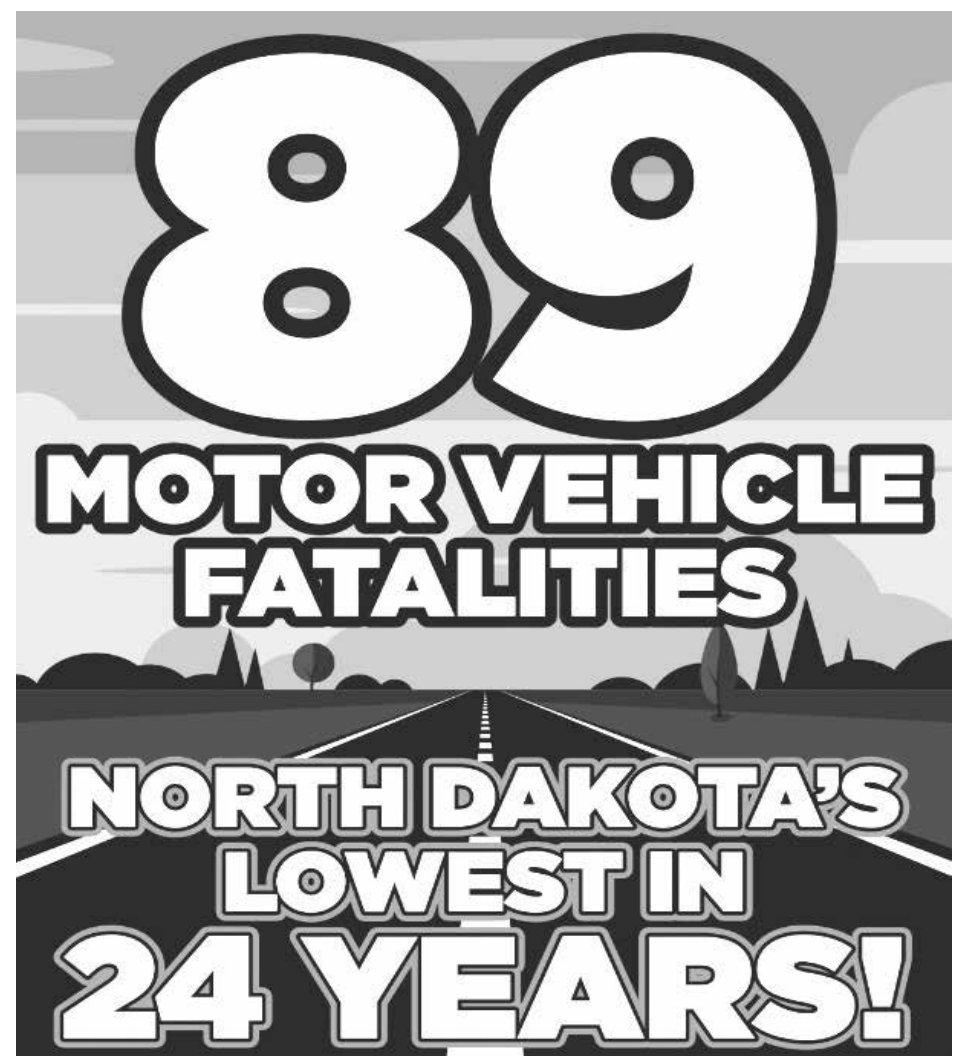
break, we heard the gut-wrenching story of Megan Weiland, and Claire and Addison Marker. On Thursday, June 13, 2024, these three girls went out for ice cream. Little did they know they were about to be in for the fight of a lifetime. Just before 11 pm that evening, an impaired driver crossed the centerline while driving through Horace, coming head-to-head with the car that these three teens were driving, leaving two of the girls with broken vertebrae, one with a broken leg, and one with a lacerated spleen resulting in a life flight to the nearest level one trauma center.

We heard the heroic story of the three teen boys who found law enforcement and reported the drunk driver, giving that deputy a chance to respond nearly instantly after he heard the crash. The same boys also went to the crash scene and literally gave the shirts off their backs to help until more assistance arrived. All these teens used the opportunity to speak at the conference to share gratitude for the first responders as well as the impact that night had on them.

When looking back at the 2025 Vision Zero Partner Conference, we see the strength of the teens of North Dakota, and how they will have an incredible impact on roadway safety as we continue to work towards reaching the goal of zero. They showed us how by

putting one foot in front of the other, we can make progress, move forward and continue to create a safer driving culture right here in North Dakota!

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# Big Benefits Within the CEG Learning Management System (LMS) Program

Michael Casey | CEG Underwriting & Loss Control Manager

CEG offers an online Learning Management System (LMS) program to promote safety for all county employees in the state of North Dakota. Any county that is currently enrolled in the CEG LMS program and has reached the requirements for each of the four quarters of the year, gets the opportunity to receive a 5% discount on the county's annual workers compensation premium.

Employee participation levels will be based on the average number of employees reported for the previous policy period. Since all county employees in the state are under the CEG umbrella, we can be selective within each county that participates in the CEG LMS program.

\*\*Enrollment in the CEG LMS program takes place every January. If your county is not currently enrolled in the CEG LMS program, please contact Michael Casey at NDACo CEG and he can get you all the information needed to start the program in the upcoming year.

- The program is easy to start and works on a quarterly basis.
- Michael Casey manages and maintains all aspects of the program and helps risk managers with any needs at the county level throughout the four quarters.
- There are 600 plus online safety courses available to all users.
- CEG LMS registration system allows each user their own entry into the program so they can do the classes on their own time and choose classes accordingly.
- Completion certificates can be printed after courses are taken, if desired.
- Enrolled counties not only gain by making safety a big priority, but they also gain financially by saving 5% of their annual workers compensation premiums.

**Program Requirements**

- Each county will select who is going to be a part of the CEG



Michael Casey

LMS program, which can be worked out with Michael Casey, NDACo CEG.

- All participants are required to take one CEG LMS class per quarter and relay the information to their risk managers upon completion of quarterly classes.

- Risk managers work directly with their CEG LMS participants and Michael Casey, NDACo CEG, to accomplish program goals within each eligible county.

Safety in our workplaces is one of the most important topics for all county employees. Having an online safety program that allows employees to choose the topics they want to focus on each quarter, keeps safety at the forefront of everyone's minds. Given the diverse weather situations we face in North Dakota, having a program that centers on our state's environment and history of safety topics is a tremendous advantage that we have at our fingertips.

NDACo CEG encourages all counties to look into this program and receive the benefits of it. We are proud to offer this program to our county members and look forward to working with all that want to enroll in this fantastic program. Contact me with any questions: [michael.casey@ndaco.org](mailto:michael.casey@ndaco.org) or call 701-202-6039 (cell).



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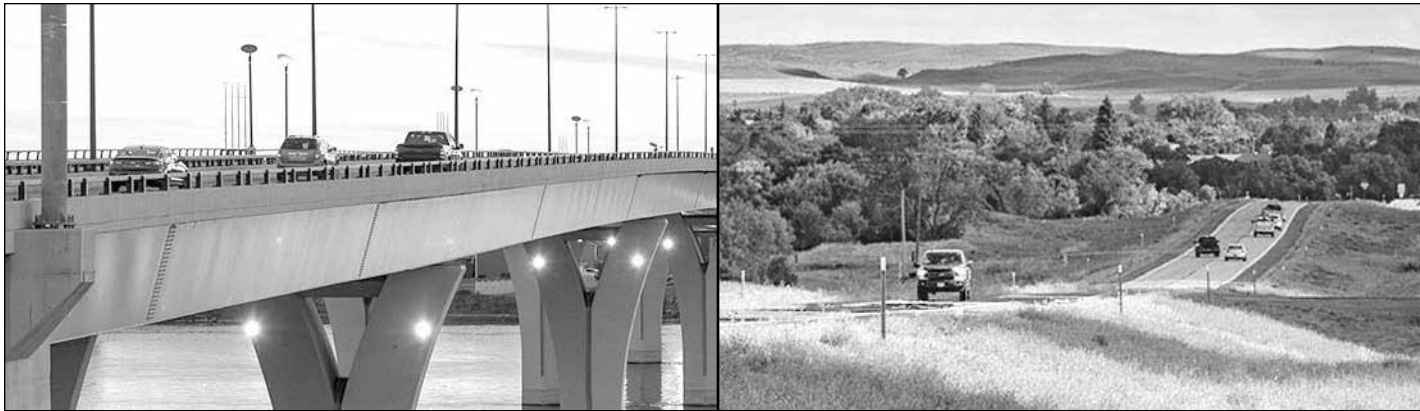
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## NDDOT Invites North Dakotans to Attend Public Input Meetings, Share Feedback on Update to Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

The North Dakota Department of Transportation is updating the state's long-range transportation plan, a process that will feature opportunities for residents and stakeholders to participate, including online feedback opportunities and in-person events in communities across the state this summer and fall.

This feedback will inform Transportation Connection Update: 2025-2050, which will help guide the state's transportation policies and investments for the next 25 years.

The NDDOT is seeking stakeholder and public feedback to help inform the state's shared future vision, values, goals, and strategies for the statewide transportation system.

"Every North Dakotan, in every part of the state, deserves a transportation system that works for them," said Ron Henke, NDDOT director. "Updating Transportation Connection gives us the chance to incorporate public input as we shape a transportation future that's safe, reliable and well-connected for everyone."

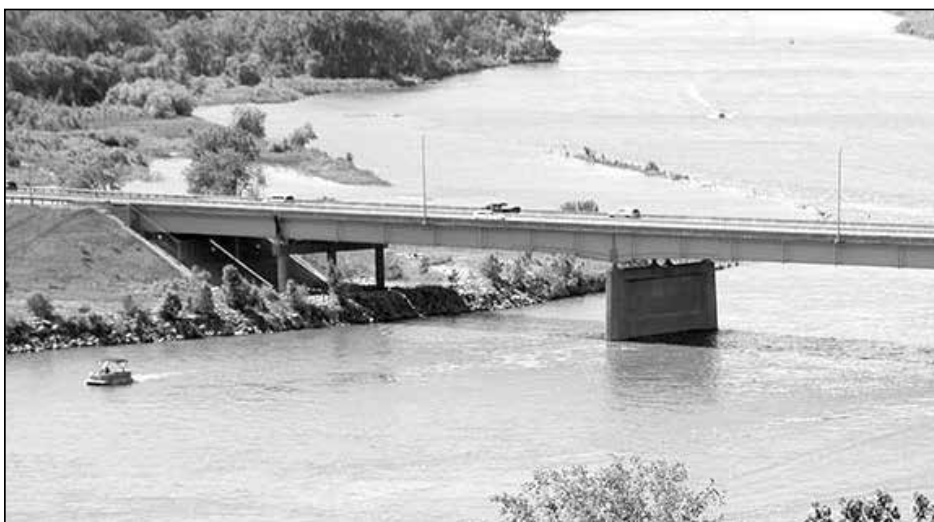
Residents are invited to attend public input meetings and participate in online engagement opportunities at the newly updated project webpage at [www.dot.nd.gov/transportation-connection](http://www.dot.nd.gov/transportation-connection) to discuss and give feedback on improving the transportation system in the state.

Transportation Connection: 2025-2050 will include:

- A data-driven analysis of current conditions to analyze North Dakota's transportation needs
- A future-focused scenario planning process
- Meaningful public and stakeholder engagement to advance NDDOT's mission and goals over the next two and a half decades.
- Develop an Implementation Plan to guide NDDOT actions.

Residents and other interested stakeholders are encouraged to visit the project webpage to take a transportation priorities survey and sign up for project email updates. The tentative date for

the completion of the draft plan is Spring 2026. When the plan draft is complete, there will be a statewide public comment period. Comments and feedback are also welcome any time during the plan's development via the project website, in person at engagement events, or via email to the project team at [dotplanning@nd.gov](mailto:dotplanning@nd.gov).



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## Clerk of Court Association Concludes Annual Conference in Bismarck

The Clerk of Court Association held its annual conference on Thursday, May 14-15 in the Judicial Wing of the State Capitol.

The event brought together more than 50 attendees, including both District and Municipal Court clerks from across the state. The conference featured a comprehensive agenda, including:

- **Formal and Informal Judicial Complaints:** A review of processes and standards for handling judicial conduct concerns.

- **Legislative Updates:** Insight into recent legislative changes affecting court operations and administrative procedures.
- **Workforce Management:** Strategies for motivating, retaining, and managing court personnel in an increasingly competitive workforce landscape.
- **Interpreters in Courts:** Best practices and policies for ensuring language access and court fairness.

- **Evidence Handling for Clerks:** Practical training on secure and effective management of evidence within the courts.

The event highlighted the indispensable role Clerks of Court and their Deputies play in maintaining the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of North Dakota's judicial system.

The Clerks also held a business meeting, in which they elected new officers:

- President: Amber Manninen, Deputy Clerk of Court Supervisor

for the Northeast Central Judicial District

- Secretary/Treasurer Danielle Peterson, Renville County Clerk of Court
- Member at Large: Kendall Brehm, Towner County
- NDACo Board Representative: Tiffany Harr, Eddy County
- NDACo Delegate: Cindy Yagow, Sargent County
- Past President: Tracy Davis, Rolette County

## Amber Manninen Honored with the Excellence Award

At the 2025 Clerk's Association Banquet, Amber Manninen, Deputy Clerk of Court Supervisor for Grand Forks County, was honored with the Excellence Award. This recognition highlights Amber's unwavering commitment to high standards, superior performance, and integrity to her service to the State of North Dakota Judiciary. Excellence can be described as consistent dedication, exceptional skills, and commitment to one's work. Amber exemplifies these qualities through her leadership and dedication, making a meaningful impact in her role.



NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst reviewing legislative changes with Clerks of Court.



## National Association of Counties Leadership Development: Learn From the Best

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### WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND CONGRATULATE THE NORTH DAKOTA GRADUATES:

- Lea Dunn, Director of Tax Equalization, Williams County
- Scott Franke, Deputy Jail Administrator, Stutsman County
- Casidy Heilman, Restitution Supervisor, Cass County
- Amber Higgins, Weed Officer, McKenzie County
- Cassi Peterson, Office Administrator, Williams County
- Michelle Romans, Director, Williams County

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*Miranda Kleven, PE, AE2S Special Projects Engineer*




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## Recorders Convention Held June 17-19

Melissa Hanson | Burleigh County Treasurer

The SE Quad of the North Dakota County Recorders Association (NDCRA) hosted their 96th annual convention at the Radisson Blu in Fargo, June 17-19. The theme of this year's conference was CAMP C.R.A-Z County Recording A-Z.

The convention started with North Dakota Secretary of State Michael Howe, along with three of his staff members, speaking on this year's Legislative Session as well as the new laws that affect the Recorders with elections. With this year's episode of "Stump the Chump," Aaron Birst brought us all his knowledge to answer our crazy questions that we had come up since 2024's convention. Tuesday ended with a pizza social along with the entertainment of Paint N' Sip. We have many talented Recorders with a paint brush!

Wednesday morning, the day started bright and early with a welcome from Cass County Commissioner Jim Kapitan. We were blown away by two different topics presented by Hon. Christopher L. Wright, who is the Platte County (MO) Recorder. He spoke on Frozen Deed as well as Human Trafficking and Coerced Marriages. Tom Leshovsky, Jacob Duchscherer and Todd Mead of the ND Society of Professional Land Surveyors presented to our group on the different types of Maps/Plats. Lori Nohner from the



Another wonderful convention and looking forward to the 2026 convention in Grand Forks, June 16-18, 2026.

North Dakota State Historical Society presented on the Homestead Act of 1862, which was interesting. Our friends at Fidlir Technologies spoke on our partnership with Property Fraud Alert as well as Notary Fraud Alert. Wednesday evening, we had our wonderful banquet with all the awards presented to our NDCRA Scholarships as well as new Recorders fulfilling their requirements. The entertainment of the evening was playing "Camping" games. Fun was had by all!

Thursday morning started with our annual breakfast and Tyler User Meeting. Russ Young presented all the new things that Tyler has to offer as well as the up-and-coming things that we can look forward to. The Recorders

started the business meeting after Tyler's presentation. The Recorders had a lot of great discussion during the business meeting, Carol Fey announced her retirement in September, and new officers were appointed to their new posts. The NDCRA Board includes the following members:

- President: Missy Hanson (Burleigh County)
- Vice President: Jackie Babbitt (Richland County)
- Secretary: Bev Bachmeier (Ramsey County)
- Treasurer: Danielle Petersen (Renville County)



## ND County Auditors & Treasurers Gather for Annual Conference

Donnell Preskey | NDATA Executive Director

More than 70 County Auditors and Treasurers from 45 counties attended the ND County Auditor's and Treasurer's Association Conference in June. The three-day conference was held in Watford City. High attendance can be contributed to recent legislative changes that will result in a high degree of expertise

in developing the 2026 Budgets, calculating property taxes and preparing for the '26 election.

The agenda was jam-packed with learning sessions at the Roughrider Center. The group also attended a bus tour through the North Unit of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, a site many had never been to. The Auditors and Treasurers voted at their 2024 conference to combine associations.

This was the first conference held as the newly formed ND County Auditor's and Treasurer's Association. New officers were elected; the executive committee consists of:

- President – Sandy Fossum (Richland)
- 1st Vice President – Jessica Alonge (Stutsman)
- 2nd Vice President – Jaden Schmidt (Oliver)
- Secretary / Treasurer – Marisa Haman (Ward)
- NDACo Board Rep (Auditors) – Shirley Murray (Sheridan)
- NDACo Board Rep (Treasurers) – Erica Johnsrud (McKenzie)





Gov. Kelly Armstrong surveys damage near Page, N.D., during a tour on June 25, 2025.  
(Photo provided by governor's office)

## Governor Pledges State Support for Storm Victims

Erin Hemme Froslic | North Dakota Monitor

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong praised the cleanup efforts of communities struck by last week's storms while promising the state would provide resources to help them rebuild.

He toured the communities of Enderlin, Page and Hunter on Wednesday, hearing about recovery efforts from community leaders, first responders and victims.

"There's a long road ahead," Armstrong said. "But a lot of work has already been done. I'm amazed at how quickly North Dakotans help their neighbors."

Armstrong declared a statewide disaster Saturday and activated the State Emergency Operations Plan after multiple tornadoes, strong winds and hail caused widespread damage across the state Friday.

The storm also claimed four lives. The latest confirmed is a 76-year-old man in the Courtenay area who was found dead on Saturday, according to Stutsman County Emergency Manager Jessica Moser. The man used a breathing apparatus and his home was among those that lost power, Moser said. His name was not immediately released.

Three people died in the Enderlin tornado, Michael Dehn, 73, Katherine Pfaff-Dehn, 73, and Marcario Lucio, 89, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

After seeing the damage, Armstrong said it was miraculous there weren't more deaths and injuries.

One home he toured belonged to Tyler and Brooke Pfaff of rural Enderlin. Originally built into a hillside, all that remained were some rock walls and shattered windows. The couple huddled in an interior bathroom when the tornado struck.

"It's a total loss, but thank God we're alive," Tyler Pfaff said as he looked over what used to be his living room, now filled with debris and shredded insulation. "I'm not sure where we go from here."

Over the past few days, neighbors and other volunteers had cleaned up snapped trees on the property and recovered personal items.

"I'm overwhelmed," Pfaff said. "People were here right away."

Armstrong said neighborly kindness is a tremendous resource in times of disaster. "Nothing replaces our capacity to care for each other," he said.

Gov. Kelly Armstrong, right, shakes hands with Kevin Oeder, assistant fire chief for Enderlin and Sheldon, while touring tornado damage on June 25, 2025. At left is Jon Anderson, fire chief. (Photo provided by governor's office)

Enderlin Sheldon Fire Department Chief Jon Anderson said around 10 homes were destroyed or severely damaged in the storm's path.

Much of the damage caused by storms will be covered by private insurance, but it could take a while to assess the claims, Armstrong said. One way the state may help is by offering grants or loans so individuals and communities can begin to rebuild immediately instead of waiting, he said.

The Industrial Commission meets Thursday morning and resources for storm relief will be a dominant topic, Armstrong said. In addition, Armstrong said he will ask for federal assistance, though the timing for making that request is uncertain.

"Our job is to help these communities get back on their feet," he said.

## ND Sheriffs Push Back on Department of Homeland Security's Sanctuary Jurisdictions List; List Removed

Donnell Preskey | NDSDA Executive Director

The North Dakota Sheriff's & Deputies Association (NDSDA) responded quickly by publicly countering a publication issued by the Department of Homeland Security that listed 400 counties as sanctuary jurisdictions. This included seven North Dakota counties. The list was removed two days later, but Sheriff's fear the public perception damage of such an accusation.

The North Dakota Sheriff's & Deputies Association (NDSDA) issued a news release declaring that the seven counties listed (Billings, Golden Valley, Grant, Morton, Ramsey, Sioux and Slope) work with their federal partners and routinely interact with U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement as well as the U.S. Border Patrol on immigration and other criminal matters.



The National Sheriffs Association (NSA) and the National Association of Counties (NACo) have met with DHS and demanded DHS release an apology to local jurisdictions listed on the publication. As of this time, our federal partners have yet to hear of a county receiving a formal notification that they were included on the list.

In Page, one home was destroyed, according to Mayor Jim Heidorn. Other homes sustained damage to roofs, windows and trees.

Outside of the city limits, many farms also lost grain storage.

Stephen and Scott Thompson, twin brothers who farm near Page, were cleaning the farm site with their families when Armstrong arrived to survey the damage. They lost grain bins that hold 450,000 bushels of corn. In addition, they couldn't access bins holding about 100,000 bushels of grain because of the damage.

Stephen Thompson and his family were home when a series of storms hit overnight Friday. The third wave of wind hit them hardest, Thompson said.

"We ran into our (walk-out) basement and saw a 40-foot tree fall on our patio," he said. For 45 minutes, the house shook from the wind.

Scott Thompson said it would take at least five years to rebuild, but there was no question the family would. A 100-year-old barn sustained damage in the storms and was leaning.

"We've straightened that more than once," said Stephen Thompson. "And we'll straighten it again. We've already tried today."

Luke Erickson is part owner of EEE, which designs and builds grain storage in the region. He accompanied Armstrong on part of the tour around

### HOW TO HELP

The North Dakota Community Foundation has set up a storm relief fund. Financial donations will be provided to impacted communities and homeowners to assist with disaster recovery and unmet needs:

[https://ndcf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/createfund?funit\\_id=10140](https://ndcf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/createfund?funit_id=10140)

Page. Many of the farms affected were his customers, friends or family.

"It's tough to fathom the damage," he said. Grain bins could be replaced before harvest, but orders would need to be put in immediately, he said.

Jim Kaiser, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service of Grand Forks, said there were 13 confirmed tornadoes in North Dakota Friday and Saturday. Six of those are rated with the highest at an EF3; the others are still being investigated.

In addition to the tornadoes, the storms brought sustained winds and wind gusts of up to 100 mph, Kaiser said. "That's why you see so much damage," he said. "That's why we call it a 'generational storm.'"

*This story can be found on the North Dakota Monitor website: <https://northdakotamonitor.com/2025/06/25/governor-pledges-state-support-for-storm-victims-while-touring-eastern-north-dakota-damage/>*



NDACo Brings Indirect Cost Program In-House

For decades, NDACo has contracted with private vendors to process federal reimbursements to the counties for certain indirect costs associated with social services.

Beginning in June, NDACo ended its contract with an out-of-state firm and is bringing the program in-house.

Following an extensive search for someone with the appropriate skills and experience, an Indirect Cost Program Manager has been hired. Sara Cote (pronounced like Cody) comes to us with a varied background that covers insurance underwriting in both the private and public sectors, as well as compliance enforcement and small business ownership.

Sara has settled in nicely and looks forward to working with county auditors to develop a smooth-running



Sara Cote

process. We all look forward to serving counties directly, with a personal touch, in this important service.



The North Dakota County Commissioners Association (NDCCA) Board of Directors met May 28 and presented a plaque to Perry Turner in appreciation of his leadership, representing North Dakota on the National Association of Counties Board of Directors. (Pictured here with NDCCA President Joan Hollekim)



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## Purchasing Pulse State Contracts for Grounds Maintenance Equipment

Abby Dschaak, Office of Management and Budget, State Procurement Office

From ballfields and playgrounds to hiking trails and picnic areas, local Parks & Recreation departments are the stewards of North Dakota's outdoor spaces. Keeping these public places safe, clean and beautiful takes more than dedication - it takes the right equipment. That's where the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) State Procurement Office (SPO) can help. Through state contracts available to all North Dakota political subdivisions, local governments can access competitively sourced grounds maintenance equipment to keep their communities looking their best.

### State Contract #398 - Ground Maintenance Equipment – National Association of State Procurement Officers (NASPO) ValuePoint

This contract offers the following items from the manufacturers Deere & Company, Doosan Bobcat and The Toro Company:

- Commercial Mowers - Includes commercial self-propelled riding mowers, zero turn riding mowers, stand on mowers, walk behind mowers, wide area and robotic mowers.
- Tractors - Includes heavy-duty and compact tractors, Towed Power Take-off Driven medium and heavy duty.

- Utility Vehicles – Includes gas powered, battery operated and diesel powered 4x2 utility vehicles. Includes gas and diesel powered, and battery operated 4x4 utility vehicles.
- Golf Equipment – Includes greens and fairway golf specific grounds maintenance equipment, including gang, flail and reel mowers.
- Turf Equipment – Includes walk-behind & pull-type aerators, pluggers, spikers, seeders, spreaders, tillers and other related turf equipment.
- Handheld Equipment – Includes gas and battery powered trimmers, leaf blowers and other related ground maintenance handheld equipment.

- Stand-on commercial lawn mowers
- Zero turn rider mowers
- Walk behind mowers
- Wide area autonomous mowers
- Grass collection system
- Ride on mower accessories
- Dual drive wheel mower
- Mower mulch kits
- Training and demos on mowers

Please see the state contract's user summary for more information on how to use these contracts. Go to [www.omb.nd.gov/cooperativepurchasing](http://www.omb.nd.gov/cooperativepurchasing), select the state contracts list and locate contract you are interested in. If you have any questions related to these contracts, contact Seth Westby at [swestby@nd.gov](mailto:swestby@nd.gov).

Visit the OMB website at [www.omb.nd.gov/procurement](http://www.omb.nd.gov/procurement) for a list of all available state contracts. Questions about a state contract? Contact the State Procurement Officer listed on the OMB website.

### State Contract #349 - Grounds Maintenance Equipment and Related Attachments - Sourcewell

This contract offers the following items from the manufacturer Wright Manufacturing, Inc.:

## Purchasing Pulse NASPO Procurement U Courses

Sherry Neas and Abby Dschaak | Office of Management and Budget, State Procurement Office

Are you interested in professional development? The National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) offers an extensive list of free courses through Procurement U that are designed specifically for public procurement professionals at all experience levels.

Through Procurement U, you have access to many self-paced and instructor-led courses, including courses such as the following:

- Introduction to Public Procurement
- Introduction to Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Introduction to Cooperative Purchasing
- Introduction to Specification Development
- Introduction to Scopes of Work (SOWs)
- Introduction to Negotiations
- Managing Open Records Requests
- Understanding Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Public Improvement
- Navigating Market Research Techniques
- Supplier Management in Public Procurement
- Effective Evaluations

Go to [procurementu.myabsorb.com](http://procurementu.myabsorb.com) and create an account to start taking advantage of this great opportunity! If you are interested in any Procurement U courses requiring payment, please reach out to Abby Dschaak at [aadschaak@nd.gov](mailto:aadschaak@nd.gov) for available NASPO funding to cover the cost of the course.



### NDBuys Coming Summer 2025!

The State Procurement Office (SPO) is in the process of transitioning from its current online system to a new system called NDBuys.

NDBuys is an Ivalua solution that will offer the following functionality enhancements:

- Bidders List - Individuals and businesses interested in receiving notice of bidding opportunities can register at no cost.
- Solicitations – State agencies and higher education will issue bids, Requests for Proposals, Requests for Qualifications, and Public Improvement notices (in addition to complying with any laws requiring advertising in the newspaper).

Legislation (House Bill 1122) has been introduced to make this system also available to local government—we'll keep you posted!

- State Contracts- Information about cooperative purchasing contracts will move to NDBuys.

NDBuys will undergo a pilot phase in May, with a full rollout scheduled for the summer of 2025. Contact the State Procurement Office at [infospo@nd.gov](mailto:infospo@nd.gov) for more information about NDBuys.

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## NDSU Extension's Aging In Community Project Brings Care to Rural Communities

Two-thirds of North Dakota's 53 counties are designated as frontier, meaning fewer than six people reside per mile. The population has gradually migrated toward the state's larger towns, leaving many older adults in these sparsely populated regions without a reliable community network of support.

On top of that, social isolation can weigh heavily on communities and can compound natural aging issues. Residents face a decision between staying in an area without accessible services or leaving the area for a larger city, a move that can be especially difficult for older adults.

In 2022, North Dakota State University Extension started the Aging in Community Project to assist older adults in these communities. The AIC Project is a model of community support to enhance the lives of older adults and to prevent or delay moving from their rural town. Volunteers' support includes transportation, food and nutrition classes, fall prevention education, technology assistance and more.

AIC is based on a successful community-based support model called Community of Care, started in rural Cass County over 20 years ago. That model has proven to help older adults live with autonomy and dignity.

"When implementing Aging in Community, we discussed how Extension could address some of these issues using the same needs assessment process as Community of Care," says Jane Strommen, AIC Project director and former NDSU Extension gerontology specialist.

The project team was led through an informal, grassroots assessment for two communities: the Lisbon area and western Morton County. Those two areas have a high NDSU Extension presence, and the team wanted to pilot the program on opposite sides of North Dakota.

Since 2022, these two pilot communities have been evaluated for effectiveness, replicability and sustainability.

Three years into the project, AIC has reached over 8,000 direct contacts with older residents through a network of services and supports. Community social events have been well-attended, reaching around 1,200 people in 2023 and again in 2024.

Transportation is a crucial focus area for AIC. Since 2022, 805 rides — over 60,000 miles — have been given by volunteers. These rides are for healthcare visits, for groceries and to visit family members.

"I don't have a vehicle that's running and I live 10 miles from town," says Jolene Loudon, a Lisbon area AIC participant. "Before, I felt so out of touch with everything, and they've



just filled that void. AIC has changed my life."

Participants in AIC have progressively felt more confident, independent and connected with community resources. Additionally, the areas' steering committees have reported a revitalization in local social circles.

"Older adults now feel like, 'Oh, I can stay here. I can stay in my hometown and age there and have the services that I need,'" says Heidi Peltz with AIC partner Western Plains Public Health. "There are older adults in the community I didn't even know

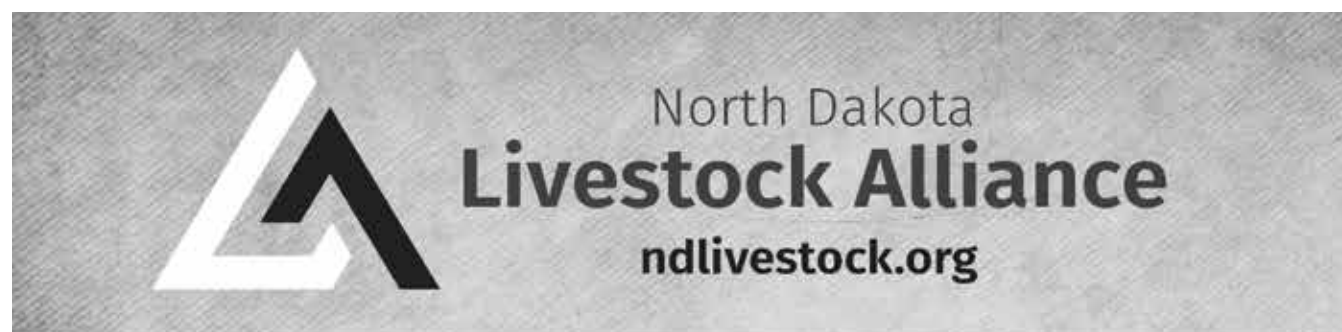
about that have come and reached out for services."

The pilot project has gotten national attention. AIC was featured in an NPR article and is slated to appear on CBS Sunday Morning.

The pilot project's success has project leaders hoping to expand its services in the future.

AIC is supported in part by a four-year, \$1,605,000 million grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Jane Strommen, Extension gerontology specialist, 701-231-5948, [jane.strommen@ndsu.edu](mailto:jane.strommen@ndsu.edu)



**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**

Residents around **Stark** County recently received mailers asking for their participation in the county's 9-1-1 Citizen Notification and Weather Alert program. The program, which is completely voluntary, is run by the Stark County Emergency Management Program and is designed to alert citizens regarding upcoming or ongoing emergency situations in their area. "Citizen notifications are important because they help emergency services communicate vital information to residents who may be affected by situations occurring in their neighborhood or community," said Stark County Emergency Services Director Alayne Decker. "We want the public to know about incidents such as nearby police activity, shelter-in-place orders, upcoming hazardous weather, or cases where nearby wildfires may necessitate evacuation—either immediately or in the near future." Decker cited last September's four-hour standoff across from the county courthouse as an example of an emergency during which her department utilized the alert system, sending out shelter-in-place alerts to residents in the area.

– Dickinson Press

The **Cass** County Jail is set to open a 192-bed addition this summer, an accomplishment that will give law enforcement some breathing room after years of space issues, Sheriff Jesse Jahner said. Crews are on track to finish the \$31 million expansion by the end of the month, Jahner said in a Wednesday, June 4, interview with The Forum and WDAY. He said he plans to train officers who will work in the pod for two weeks, meaning the jail could start housing inmates in the addition by mid-July. "We're very excited," Jahner said. "Obviously, it's a long time coming." The project will increase the jail's capacity by 55%, he said, bringing the facility to 540 beds. More space means officers who make arrests won't have to make tough decisions about who should be brought to the jail and who should be released with a promise to appear in court, Jahner said. The expansion should provide enough space until 2032, he said. "We're really looking forward to getting this new project completed so that we have the space to, when those officers do make those arrests, bring people in and ... keep our community safe," he said. The jail that opened in 2002 at 211 Ninth St. S. in Fargo originally could hold 252 inmates. The last update that added significant space was in 2008, bringing capacity to 348 inmates. According to U.S. Census data, Cass County's population has grown almost 60% to more than 200,000 people since the jail first opened. With that growth came an increase in the number of inmates. Jahner said he started discussing

space issues with the Cass County Commission in 2020.

– The Forum

A grant program aimed at supporting the next generation of producers in **Dunn** County is seeing explosive growth, with 98 young farmers awarded funding in 2025 — up from just nine when the initiative began as a pilot two years ago. Launched by the Dunn County Commission in late 2023, the Young Farmers Grant program offers \$5,000 awards to eligible producers between the ages of 18 and 40. The pilot phase saw nine grants distributed before the commission voted to expand and permanently adopt the program. In 2024, its first full year, all 70 applicants were funded. This year, that number jumped to 98, including 37 first-time applicants and 58 returning recipients. All were approved for funding. Carie Boster, economic development director for the Dunn County Job Development Authority, said the program's rapid expansion is tied to increased outreach and community interest. "As a pilot program we didn't do a lot of promotion — we just let it grow out organically," Boster said. "The second and third year we did a lot more promotion. We went to events, manned booths and relied on word of mouth. The program grew exponentially." While every eligible applicant has received funding to date, future rounds may become more competitive. The number of awards depends on available revenue, which is drawn from North Dakota's 5% oil and gas production tax. In 2024, Dunn County received \$51 million from that tax alone, according to state records. North Dakota's oil-producing counties receive direct allocations from the gross production tax, which allows rural governments like Dunn County to fund local infrastructure, education and economic development programs with little to no burden on local taxpayers. These funding streams have enabled rural leaders to invest in long-term sustainability. The Young Farmers Grant also addresses a growing national concern about the aging agricultural workforce. According to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture, the average age of American farmers is over 57, with fewer than 10% under the age of 35. Programs like Dunn County's are designed to combat that generational gap and ensure the long-term viability of farming communities. A 2024 economic impact report commissioned by the Dunn County JDA found that the program generated a 2-to-1 ratio of private to public spending. The 70 grants awarded that year — totaling \$350,000 — spurred more than \$711,000 in private sector investment.

– The Dickinson Press

The District Engineer at Garrison Diversion Conservancy District offices in Carrington offered the New Rockford Canal to the **Wells** County Commission May 10 in Fessenden. Kip Kovar told Commissioners Brian Miller, Stan Buxa, Bryan Lutt, Danny "Boone" Maxwell and Chairman Dennis Dockter that the county could take over the canal for a "significant" dollar amount. Given a lukewarm reception, Kovar explained he was in Fessenden and before the Wells County Commission to start the conversation. He expected he would bring the same 'deal' to the Eddy County Commission in New Rockford. The offer of the canal comes "lock, stock and barrel," with little if any strings attached. The Garrison Conservancy District and the Bureau of Reclamation would rather sell to a local political subdivision, Kovar said. Joining Kovar in the discussion with the Wells Commissioners were Dale Estes, who is handling the sale of the canal, and Bill Ongstad, Garrison's district director from Harvey. Estes is the "point man," said Kovar. "This is a process," explained Estes, who said the New Rockford shop would be included in the sale of the canal. Stan Buxa, District 3 commissioner from Harvey, cautioned Estes and Kovar from getting too deep into their sales pitch. The county needs an inventory of the acres involved with the sale of the New Rockford Canal. In fact, Buxa said, he would like to see a 'detailed' inventory. As an aside, Kovar told the Wells Commissioners that the cost to maintain the canal is \$300,000 annually, reason enough for wanting to offload the canal that runs for 41.5 miles through Wells and Eddy Counties.

– Harvey Herald-Press

The **Traill** County Board of Commissioners took a preliminary step toward asking voters in Traill County to consider adopting a home rule charter. County Commissioner Ken Nesvig of Buxton kicked off discussion by tossing his support behind a move to home rule, which would grant the county government additional freedoms. Those freedoms could allow Traill County to establish a countywide sales tax and allow the county to convert some of its elected positions into appointed ones. Nesvig led off the talks by assuring residents that county commissioners weren't attempting to push through home rule as a way to impose a countywide sales tax in the near future. "The first reaction you get from taxpayers when you talk about a home rule charter is that we're going to levy a sales tax on them. That's not even something that's being considered," he said. However, Nesvig pointed out upcoming changes in the state's property tax system — and the introduction of a

cap on the ability of county governments to raise mills — could hamper the county's ability to generate money for road and bridge projects. "A home rule charter would give us the ability to protect our roads and bridges and put some teeth into our regulations" on county highways and roads, he said. "We also could look at combining offices in the courthouse to be more efficient." County Commissioner Tom Eblen of Hillsboro said a move to home rule would allow the county to follow Steele County's lead and form a truck patrol to target overloaded vehicles on area roads. "The office would pay for itself ... because right now the Highway Patrol issues fines on our roads and that money goes to the state" instead of Traill County, he said. Voters in Traill County rejected a home rule charter at the polls on a 709-to-444 vote in June 2008 and county commissioners briefly debated putting the issue back on the ballot in 2015.

– Hillsboro Banner

**Walsh** County leaders are regrouping after voters rejected a proposed \$42 million jail project during a special election Tuesday, May 13. The two-question ballot asked residents to approve both a property tax and a sales tax to fund construction of a new jail. Although voters agreed to the sales tax increase, they voted down the property tax hike that would have provided 75% of the funding. Because both measures needed to pass, the future of the project is now unclear.

UPDATE: JUNE 4

The commission got the green light from Kelley Cole, Walsh County state's attorney at their June 3 commission meeting to use the sales tax provision of the recent vote to build a new jail and/or sheriff's office. Cole said they have six months to decide whether or not they are going to use the sales tax proceeds going forward to get something built. This brought about a lot of discussion from the commission. Commissioner Paul Houdek started it off by saying he was disappointed that both questions didn't pass. "I personally struggle with adopting this ordinance (using sales tax funds) and moving forward with something other than a jail, when we told people all along that both measures had to pass," he said. "I think there's clear recognition that people understand that we need to do something and I think that's a result of the meetings and the website and all the work that went into it. I think where the public differs is on the price tag." Commissioner Denny Skorheim sees the vote a little differently. "I see that as the public saying if you can do it with a sales tax do it. That's our plan B, to do something with the sales tax."

– Walsh County Record

## Armstrong: Housing Funds to Move Forward After Attorney General Finds Line-Item Vetoed Bill is Valid

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Kelly Armstrong has stated that \$35 million in housing funds will be disbursed as approved by the state Legislature after a North Dakota Attorney General's opinion found that the governor's written objections in a line-item veto of Senate Bill 2014 clearly did not target the housing funds.

In an opinion released today, Attorney General Drew Wrigley stated that the governor's written statement of his objections to SB 2014 is what controls the extent of the line-item veto – not a mismarked version of the bill provided as a visual aid.

"The written veto message is the controlling document because it clearly states our objection to the bill as required by the North Dakota Constitution. There was no ambiguity in our veto message, which was printed in the official Legislative Journal and is what lawmakers should rely upon when interpreting a veto," Armstrong said. "We appreciate the Attorney General's determination, which clarifies



Gov. Kelly Armstrong

the matter, avoids the cost of a special session and nullifies the flawed interpretation that initially blew this up into something much bigger than it needed to be. We always said we would honor what the Attorney General found, and we appreciate his assistance."

## Lautt Appointed to North Central Judicial District Judgeship

Gov. Kelly Armstrong has appointed Minot attorney Steven Lautt to an open judgeship in the North Central Judicial District, which is comprised of Burke, Mountrail and Ward Counties, effective Aug. 4.

Lautt has practiced law as an attorney and shareholder with the Minot law firm of Pringle & Herigstad since 2012, litigating a wide variety of civil cases ranging from collections, forcible detainers and foreclosures to complex construction, oil and gas, commercial, personal injury and real property matters. He also currently serves as general counsel for several regional agriculture and telecommunications cooperatives and a statewide nonprofit organization.

A Minot native, Lautt earned his bachelor's degree from Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas, and his law degree in 2012 from the Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kansas. He is a former president of the Ward County Bar Association and current president of the North Dakota Association for Justice, and serves on the board of directors of the Minot-based Northern Plains Children's Advocacy Center.



Steven Lautt

Prior to law school, he worked as a committee staffer for U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

The North Central Judicial District judgeship vacancy was created by the June 1 retirement of Judge Douglas Mattson, who was first elected to serve as a district court judge in 2002. Three attorneys were named as finalists for the judgeship, which is chambered in Minot.

## North Dakota Attorney General's Opinions

These and all other Opinions issued by the ND Attorney General's Office can be seen at: <https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/opinions-search/>.

### WHETHER TIOGA AIRPORT AUTHORITY PROPERLY NOTICED A SPECIAL MEETING

**Issued To:** Tioga Airport Authority  
**Request:** Whether Tioga Airport Authority responded to an open records request within a reasonable time.

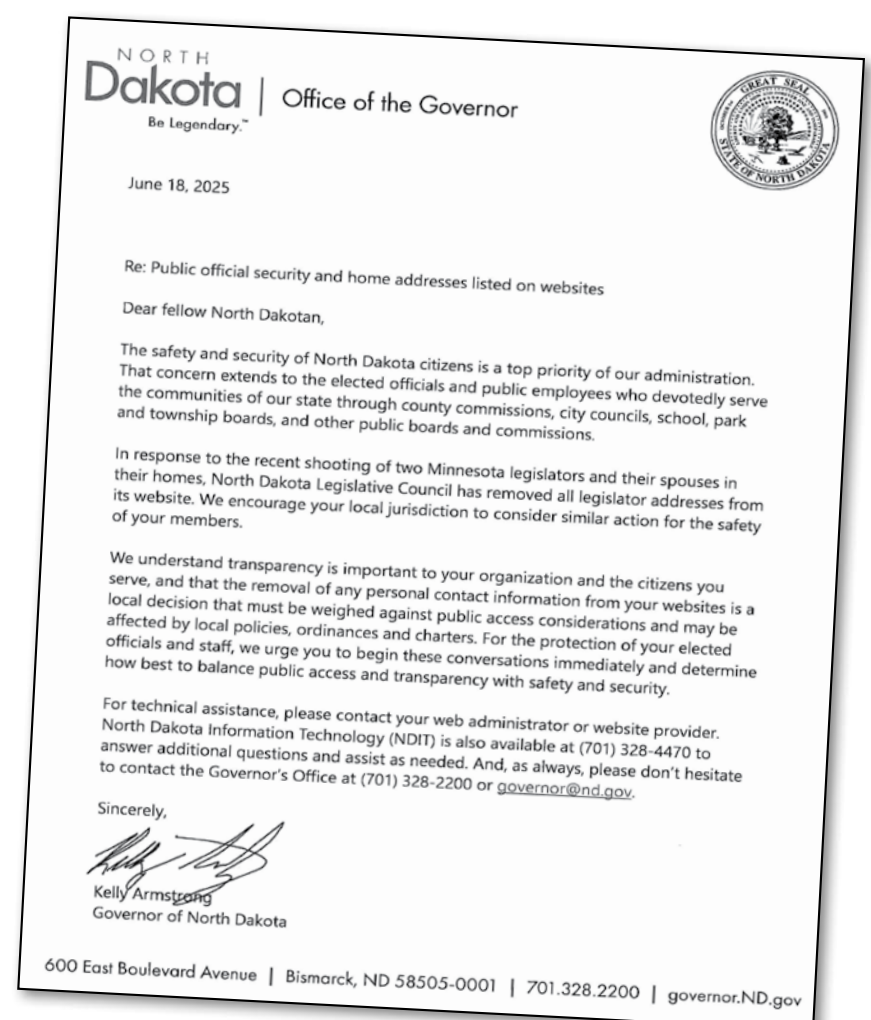
The Tioga Airport Authority (Authority) held a special meeting on August 19, 2024, at the Tioga Airport Terminal. The chairman of the Authority posted the agenda for the meeting at both the old and new terminals at the Tioga Airport on August 17, 2024. The chairman attempted to email notice of the special meeting to the city auditor on August 19, 2024, but the chairman misspelled the auditor's email address, so the city auditor was not notified of the special meeting. Notice of the special meeting was not posted to the Authority's website because the website was not accessible to the public at that time. The Authority also did not notify the official newspaper of the special meeting.

On August 29, 2024, Kathleen Neset made an open records request to the Authority. 6 Neset requested copies of

the public notices of the special meeting and any notification provided by the Authority at the Authority's monthly meetings. 8 In her request for this opinion, Neset stated that she had not received the requested records as of October 29, 2024. 9 In response to questions from this office regarding whether the records were provided to Neset, the Authority did not claim that it had provided Neset with the records but instead stated, "Records were sent 8-29-24 at 10 am to city auditor."

**Conclusion:** 1. Tioga Airport Authority improperly noticed a special meeting by failing to notify the city auditor and official newspaper of the special meeting 2. Tioga Airport Authority failed to respond to an open records request within a reasonable time.

**Steps Needed To Remedy Violation:** The Authority must provide minutes of the August 19, 2024, special meeting to Kathleen Neset and anyone else who requests them, free of charge. The Authority must also provide Kathleen Neset with copies of the records she requested, free of charge.



In response to this letter from ND Governor Kelly Armstrong, NDACo contacted our website provider, Tao Interactive of Bismarck, and instructed them to hide all home addresses. This includes the NDACo County Officials Directory pages and the NDCCA Commissioner listing. If any county officials find their person data on our website, social media, or elsewhere, please let us know so we can remove it. Our hearts go out to the shooting victims in Minnesota. We don't want to take even the slightest risk of putting anyone in our county family at risk.

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# Five Steps to Financial Wellness

To put the “pay yourself first” idea into practice, enroll in your retirement plan or consider contributing more today. The hardest part is getting started.

As with exercising regularly and eating nutritious foods, healthy financial habits are good for you. But getting into the routine of managing your finances takes time and effort. These five tips can help you make positive money habits part of your everyday life.

## 1. Consider your reasons

Think about why you want to create better money habits. What financial goals are you trying to achieve?

- Are you building an emergency fund, saving for retirement or both?
- Do you want to buy a new car or home?
- Are you striving for financial freedom by eliminating debt?

Knowing your goals can motivate you to set aside time and money to achieve them. Try writing them down and putting them somewhere you can see them.

## 2. Create a budget

Having a budget is one of the best ways to track your finances. It's easy to get started with our budgeting tips and worksheet. A budget will allow you to:

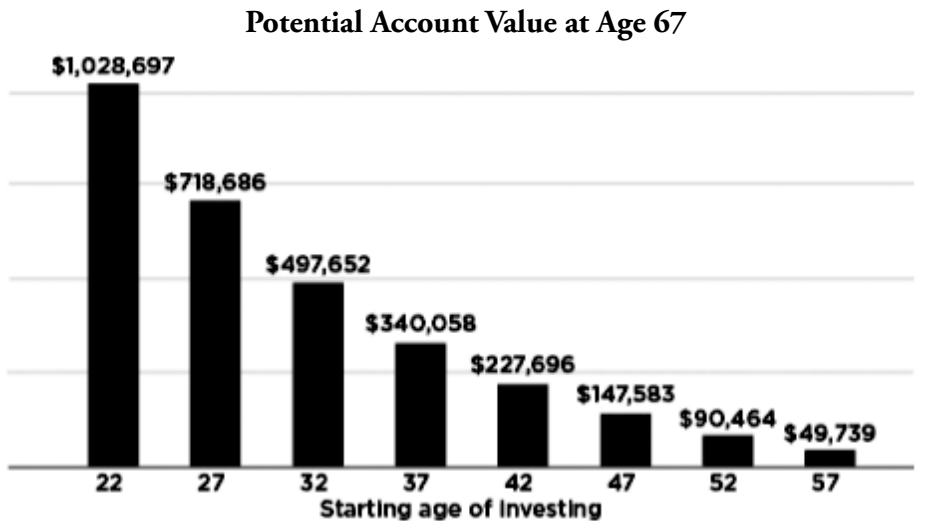
See where your money goes each month so you can prioritize how to spend and invest it

- Find optional expenses you can reduce to make more room for savings; for instance, you could make coffee instead of buying it and use the money you save toward an emergency fund
- Create categories to set money aside for major goals and purchases, like retirement, a child's college fund or vacations

## 3. Start investing early

The earlier you begin saving for a long-term goal like retirement, the better off you'll be. That's because the sooner you start regularly adding to your account, the longer your money has to grow, thanks to a concept called compounding.

Here's what it would look like if an investor saved \$250 a month, earning an average annualized 7% rate of return on their investments. As you can see, waiting just 5 years could make a tremendous difference in the amount you have available when you retire.



## 4. Pay yourself first

Pay yourself first by contributing to retirement and other savings accounts before spending money on non-essentials. An easy way to do this is to make saving automatic. You're less likely to miss money that you don't see in your checking account first. You could:

- Make regular contributions to your retirement account that are taken out of your paychecks



- Sign up for direct deposit and request that a certain amount go directly into a savings account (check with your employer to see if this feature is available)
- Use mobile apps that save and invest your spare change when you make purchases

## 5. Focus on debt

By eliminating what you owe, you can take the money you're putting toward debt and use it for savings instead. When you make only minimum payments, it can take years to wipe out loan and credit card balances. To get rid of debt faster, pay more than the minimum amounts due. Also, consider using the amount you'd been paying on one debt toward another as each debt gets paid off.

Remember, small steps have a big impact.

Though it may seem slow at first, making financial wellness a priority will reap benefits over time. You may find that you're less stressed because you know where your money is going. You may even find that you can afford things you couldn't before as you keep an eye on your spending.

Start creating financial wellness habits now. Your future self will thank you.

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# NDACo Releases Budget Memo For CY2026 Budgets

Linda Svihovec | NDACo Research Analyst

To help counties in their budgeting efforts, we at NDACo have compiled county-specific analyses of projected State Aid, State Highway Funding, and a variety of other revenues along with some anticipated expenditures. We have sent this one-page, county-specific analysis to each county; however, it is most effective if it is used in conjunction with the narrative in the full memo, which can be found on our website at [www.ndaco.org/publications/county-budget-memo](http://www.ndaco.org/publications/county-budget-memo).

This Budget Memo includes brief notes about the assumptions and qualifications of various budget items. We have also identified other budget issues that we think may warrant consideration, and as you are undoubtedly aware, we have attempted to help you find ways to avoid expenditures that would violate the new caps on local government.

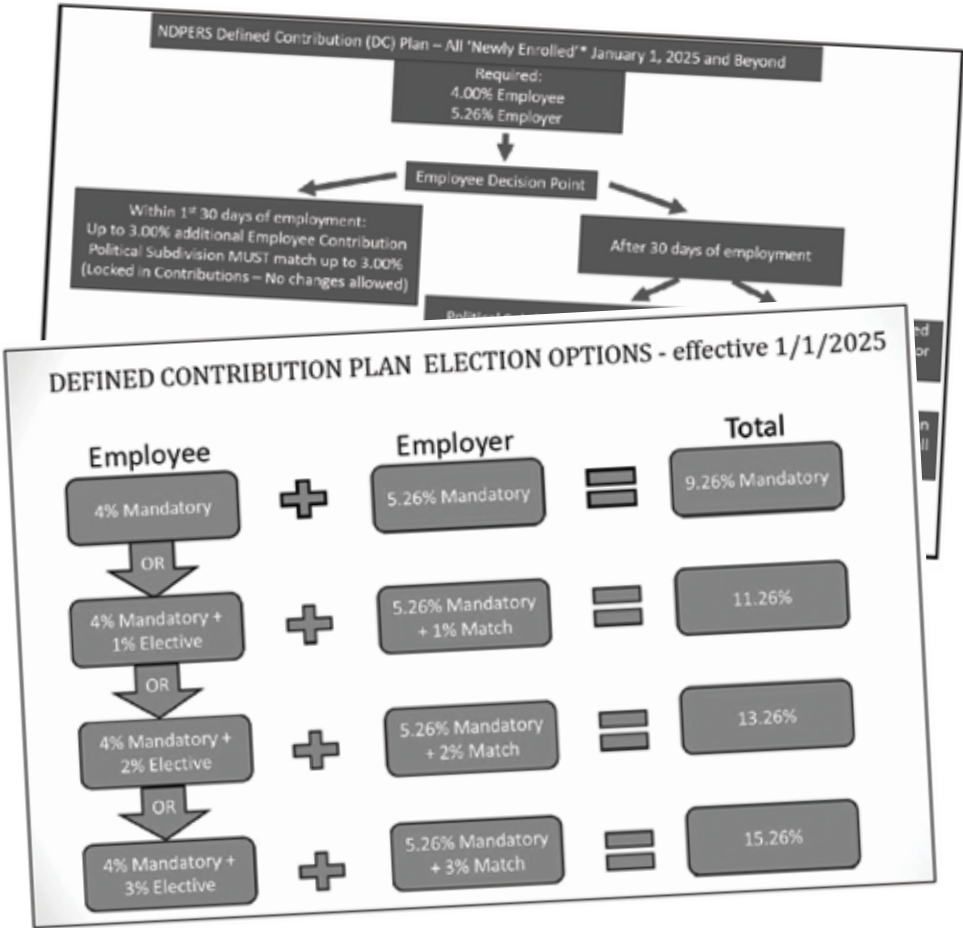
As always, please remember that these are estimates and relative changes in valuation, taxable sales, population, staffing levels, gas prices, motor vehicles, etc., may affect some



Linda Svihovec

of the actual revenues and costs in the next year. While we use the latest and best data available, everything must be tempered with your own judgement.

NDACo has provided this service since 1991. We hope you find it useful. As always, we welcome your input if we can make this annual communication more useful.



Budget Memo includes lots of helpful data and how to use it.

# Armstrong Appoints Pat Traynor to Serve as Interim Commissioner of ND Health and Human Services

Gov. Kelly Armstrong today announced the appointment of Dakota Medical Foundation (DMF) Executive Director J. Patrick "Pat" Traynor to serve as interim commissioner of the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), effective June 2.

Traynor will take a one-year civil service leave from DMF to serve full-time as interim commissioner of state government's largest agency, with an approved two-year budget of over \$5.7 billion, including federal funds, and a team of nearly 2,500 authorized FTEs. The HHS commissioner is a member of the governor's Cabinet.

"Pat Traynor is uniquely qualified to lead Health and Human Services in its mission to make North Dakota the healthiest state in the nation and promote physical, behavioral and economic health and well-being," Armstrong said. "His track record of making organizations more efficient



Patrick Traynor

and effective will serve North Dakota citizens well as we continue to see high demand for the wide range of services provided by HHS."

Traynor previously served as executive director and CEO of the North Dakota Workers Compensation Bureau, now Workforce Safety & Insurance, from 1994 to 2000. He and his team led major reforms to better serve employers and employees while

also eliminating a \$240 million unfunded liability and building a \$350 million surplus.

Traynor became president of DMF in 2000, guiding a foundation team that has invested over \$100 million in charities and initiatives to improve health and quality of life throughout the region. He also serves as an ex-officio member of DMF's committees and board, and as executive director of the Impact Foundation, which provides training to help charities improve their fundraising and service capacity.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to return to state government and continue serving the citizens of the state I love," Traynor said. "I look forward to working with the dedicated team at HHS to help empower all North Dakota residents and communities to reach their full potential."

A native of Fargo, Traynor earned his undergraduate degree in

economics from the University of North Dakota and his law degree from the UND School of Law in 1991. He began his career as an attorney with the Fargo law firm of Conmy, Feste, Bossart, Hubbard & Corwin.

Traynor has served on the boards of the North Dakota State Retirement and Investment Office, North Dakota Safety Council, Anne Carlsen Center and Gate City Bank, among others. His teams at the DMF and Impact foundations have launched and grown the highly successful Giving Hearts Day, which has helped hundreds of North Dakota and northwest Minnesota charities raise over \$225 million since 2008.

Armstrong thanked Dirk Wilke for his service as HHS interim commissioner since January. Wilke will continue in his position as executive director for the public health division of HHS.

## NACo National Participation Report

Stanley Dick | NACo Board Member

The 2025 NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. focused on several key issues that directly impact rural communities and agricultural livelihoods:

- **Support for Local Agriculture:** One of the major resolutions called for increased federal investment in local agriculture and regional food systems. This is crucial for farmers seeking better infrastructure, market access, and resilience in food supply chains.

- **Rural Development:** The conference emphasized strengthening rural economies, which could mean more resources for broadband expansion, rural healthcare, and transportation – areas essential to modern farming operations.

- **Disaster Relief Reform:** Farmers have faced mounting losses from natural disasters. A proposed restructuring of FEMA aims to improve how rural counties prepare for and recover from such events, potentially leading to quicker and more efficient aid.

- **Permitting Reform:** Simplifying the permitting process for infrastructure projects could benefit farmers by improving rural roads and bridges used for transporting goods.

- **Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture:** Though still emerging, discussions on AI included its potential for improving farm operations through smarter land management, crop analysis, and financial planning tools.

Overall, the conference highlighted farmers' needs within broader county policy conversations and pushed for stronger federal support to sustain rural communities and agricultural businesses.

Currently, the NACo Board of Directors are looking over sub-committee resolutions. Every five (5) years the governance committee does a look-over of NACo's bylaws. This should be completed before the national convention this summer.

Before the executive board meeting, I had a real good conversation with Matt Chase, Executive Director of NACo, and James Gore, President of NACo. They are finding it extremely difficult to represent NACo and NACo's position when the counties of this country are so diverse.

I am looking forward to the National NACo conference in Philadelphia, PA. We will be selecting a new 2nd Vice President, and the Honorable J.D. Clark of Wise County, Texas, will become our new President.



North Dakota's NACo Board Members Cavalier County Commissioner Stanley Dick, (L) and Cass County Administrator Robert Wilson, (R) pose with NACo Past President Mary Jo McGuire a Ramsey County, Minnesota Commissioner, during the Western Interstate Region meeting in Rapid City, SD May 21-23. McGuire is hoping to be able to join NDACo at our Annual Conference in October.

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# 2025 COUNTY CALENDAR

## July

4 \_\_\_\_\_ Independence Day

8-10 \_\_\_\_\_ Human Service Zone Directors Annual Meeting,  
Human Service Zone Office, Grand Forks

11-14 \_\_\_\_\_ NACo Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA

30-31 \_\_\_\_\_ County Tour to Burke, Divide, Mountrail and Williams Counties

## August

11-14 \_\_\_\_\_ ND Association of Assessing Officers Annual Meeting,  
Ramada Hotel, Bismarck

27 \_\_\_\_\_ NDCCA Board of Directors Meeting,  
NDACo County Office Building

28 \_\_\_\_\_ ILG/NDACo Boards of Directors Meetings,  
NDACo County Office Building

## September

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Labor Day

9-10 \_\_\_\_\_ ND Emergency Management Association Annual Conference,  
Bismarck State College

17-19 \_\_\_\_\_ ND League of Cities Annual Conference, Bismarck Event Center

22 \_\_\_\_\_ First Day of Fall

24-25 \_\_\_\_\_ County Tour to Kidder, Logan, McIntosh and Stutsman Counties



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Mike Manstrom  
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Craig Theis  
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**Travis Hinkley,**  
Municipality Sales Rep  
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