

# 50th Anniversary “County Fair” Conference Taking Shape

Jeff Eslinger | County News Editor

In less than two months, October 26-28, hundreds of county officials will gather at the Bismarck Event Center for the NDACo Annual Conference. Registration is open at [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org) (click in the green bar that runs through every page on the website). The agenda and workshop titles are still being developed and will be updated on the conference website regularly at that same link.

The county fair theme seems appropriate, as we are celebrating 50 years. What says celebration better than a county fair? Rumors are swirling about old-timey costumes, bearded ladies, a dunk tank (!) and definitely the food we all look forward to at a fair.

Here’s a sneak preview of SOME of the workshops we’re working on:

- Policy Strategies to Support Energy Growth
- Survival Stories of Budgeting in the New “Cap” Environment
- Retirement Benefit Options for Counties
- Emergency Response Lessons Learned
- Infrastructure Funding – The What, When and How
- A.I. in County Government: Dos, Don’ts and How-Tos
- GIS Topics



Adrienne Haslet

- Effective Talent Acquisition in a Competitive Market
- ...and more! Be sure to check [www.ndaco.org/conference](http://www.ndaco.org/conference) for updates on titles, times and dates!

Our featured keynote speaker, Adrienne Haslet, has a comeback story like none you’ve ever heard. A professional dancer at ground zero in the Boston Marathon bombings, Adrienne bares her soul and lifts your spirits with her message: “I refuse to be called a victim. A victim is defined by what happened in their life. I am a survivor, defined by how I live my life.”

## ATTENTION FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES - you get a discount!

Also, we will offer a webinar before the conference to give you the low-down on what to expect. Experienced attendees will be welcome to take it

in, too. Watch for details in your email inbox.

**Reminder: ALL activities will be held at the Bismarck Event Center, including the Welcoming Social on Sunday evening.** We made this change last year and it worked for all involved. Registrants will be receiving more details and reminders via email.

A link to Bismarck/Mandan hotels and their amenities can be found on the main conference page, [www.ndaco.org/annual-conference](http://www.ndaco.org/annual-conference). Be sure to ask for the state rate.

So don’t wait! Please register for the Annual Conference online by October 10.

## Secretary of State Launches Civic Engagement Initiative

Americans hold the responsibility and privilege to shape our communities, state, and country. The North Dakota Office of the Secretary of State’s new civic engagement initiative seeks to empower citizens by encouraging them to get involved and participate in decisions that impact them, their families, and neighbors.

Civic engagement is important at all levels of government. At the county level, civic participation directly shapes the services, infrastructure, and quality of life that affect residents’ daily lives. Informed citizens who understand government functions advocate for their community’s needs and priorities, which leads to better decision-making and policies.

“North Dakotans who are civically engaged shape our state,” said Secretary of State Michael Howe. “We launched this initiative to help North Dakotans understand they can have a voice in our government and encourage them to participate in elections and share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns with policymakers that represent them.”

Whether it’s casting a ballot, participating in a public forum, or simply staying informed about issues and policies, every action can make an impact. Elections will be a core focus of the new civic engagement initiative since it is a simple, yet powerful, way for people to choose who represents them and weigh in on decisions that appear as ballot measures. The initiative will provide information and resources about how elections are run, the importance of

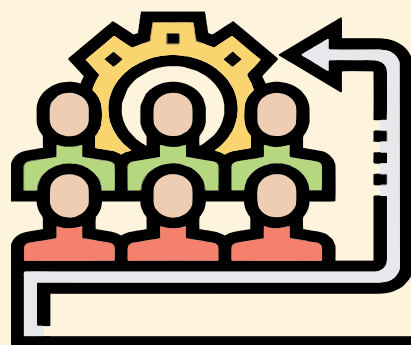


Michael Howe

making a plan to vote, and opportunities to volunteer in the election process.

To kick off the civic engagement initiative, North Dakotans are invited to become part of our state’s election history by helping to design a new voting sticker. The More than Just a Sticker contest invites residents of all ages to design a new “I Voted” sticker that will be worn proudly by voters across the state as they celebrate their right to vote. Entries can be submitted September 15 – November 15, 2025. A panel will select the top designs and the public will be able to vote for the winning sticker, which will be announced in March 2026. The sticker will make its debut at polling locations during the June 9, 2026, Primary Election.

Civic engagement empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and ensures that our government is responsive and accountable. For more information about the North Dakota Office of the Secretary of State’s new initiative, including the More than Just a Sticker contest, go to [sos.nd.gov/civicingagement](http://sos.nd.gov/civicingagement).



## Organizations That Were Founded in 1975

North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo)  
 National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL)  
 The Group of 7 (G7)  
 International Trumpet Guild (ITG)  
 KISS Army (yes, the rock band)  
 Professional Squash Association (PSA)  
 National Cancer Institute (NCI)





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Board Member PROFILE



**TIFFANY HARR**  
**ND County Clerks  
of District Court Association  
Eddy County Clerk/Recorder/  
Public Information Officer (PIO)**

**What is your favorite thing about being Recorder/Clerk/PIO?** Being raised in a small town, I like that we’re a close-knit community/family within the Eddy County group of employees. Our commissioners know us personally and support us.

**Other things you are involved in:** I used to enjoy volunteering as an EMT until recently.

**Favorite movie or movie genre:** I like documentaries and stories about real people’s lives.

**Favorite music:** I like all types of music but tend to listen most to classic rock. I love live music and going to concerts of any kind.

**Favorite books:** Almost anything except science fiction. I especially love reading about World War II and Native American culture.

**Something people probably don’t know about you:** I raised goats in my childhood, and they are still my favorite animal.

**Philosophy of life and/or work:** Treat people with respect and they’ll usually treat you respectfully.

**Favorite quote:** My grandma Evelyn Harr: “You may as well have fun going forward because you can’t go back.”

**Anything else you’d like to add?** I’ve been working in government almost 25 years – city, county and state – and I really enjoy being in public service.

<div><div>NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES</div></div> <div><b>NDACo Executive Committee</b><div>Trudy Ruland, President.....Mountrail Chad Kaiser, 1st Vice President..... Stutsman Nick Moser, 2nd Vice President ..... Cavalier Kim Jacobson 3rd Vice President ..... Agassiz Valley Jayme Tenneson, Past President ..... Griggs</div><div><b>Directors</b><div>Beau Anderson..... Williams Don Flaherty.....Dickey Jamee Folk..... Mercer Josh Frey.....McHenry Tony Grindberg ..... Cass Becky Hagel..... Foster Tiffany Harr ..... Eddy Erica Johnsrud .....McKenzie Dana Larsen..... Ward Aaron Mork..... Nelson Shirley Murray.....Sheridan Scott Ouradnik..... Slope Kelly Palm ..... Griggs</div></div><div><div><b>Ex Officio Members</b><div>Stanley Dick (Cavalier).....NACo Board Robert Wilson (Cass) .....NACo Board Joan Hollekim (Mountrail).....NDCCA President</div></div><div><b>NRG Technology Services Staff:</b> See page 6</div></div></div>	<div><div>NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES</div></div> <div><b>NDCCA Executive Committee</b><div>Joan Hollekim, President.....Mountrail Neal Messer, Vice President ..... Stark Glenda Collier, Treasurer .....Eddy</div><div><b>Directors</b><div>Jason Arth.....Sargent Tracey Dolezal.....Dunn Cory Hanson ..... Williams Jim Kapitan..... Cass Andy Zachmeier ..... Morton</div></div><div><div><b>Ex Officio Members</b><div>Stanley Dick (Cavalier)..... NACo Board Scott Ouradnik (Slope)..... Western Interstate Region Board</div></div><div><b>NDACo Staff</b><div>Aaron Birst.....Executive Director Alisha Adolf..... Professional Development Manager (ILG) Kaitlyn Bakken .....GIS Coordinator Cassie Braun..... Accounting Assistant Michael Casey... CEG Underwriting &amp; Loss Control Manager Sara Cote .....Indirect Cost Program Manager Genny Dienstmann..... Director of Operations Patrick Engelhart..... CEG Safety Specialist Jeff Eslinger ..... Communications Director Ryan Gellner ..... Vision Zero Outreach Program Manager Peter Halbach ..... Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Cathy Heidt.....Administrative Assistant/Technician Teanna Hintz..... Accounting Assistant Jason Horning..... Next Gen 9-1-1 Program Manager Lisa Jahner.....Research &amp; Programs Director Mary Korsmo..... SACCHO Executive Director Kathy Kottenbrock..... 9-1-1 Project Manager Jennifer Morman.....CEG Claims Manager Donnell Preskey.....Government/Public Relations Specialist Linda Svihovec.....Research Analyst Michelle Tabbert.....Administrative Officer Angie Wentland ..... Controller</div></div></div></div>
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## FROM the COUNTIES

### Howdy from the Ruland Ranch!

Haying has been a challenge with rain seemingly every other day. Cows should be happy with lush, green pastures but of course the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. August's dense fog, strong storms and humidity put us behind...harvest is closing and looks to be a tough one. We all wonder how we are going to get through it.

A group of us visited the northwest counties. Needless to say 3% caps were the main discussion at each county. Counties are working hard to create workable budgets within the guidelines of HB 1176. They are all wondering if they can maintain services into the future at the current level with such tight restrictions. Cost of living may be around 3% but cost of health insurance is always much higher. Discovered one big ouch: the Upper Missouri District Health Unit lost all their federal funding. To stay within the 3% cap, they will have to dip into their reserves. If nothing major happens, they have enough for about four years.

We wonder how we are going to get through it... We need to work together with NDACo to document issues, share ideas, and develop solutions.

A couple of reminders...

- The **NDACo Annual Conference and Expo** October 26-28. Registration is now open at [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org). Please plan on being there for great education, networking and fun!
- **Commissioners**, please keep an eye open for your region's **Caucus**



Trudy Ruland | NDACo President  
Mountrail County Commissioner

**Meeting** in advance of the Annual Conference. Caucus meetings will be held within your region. Review the resolutions passed last year at [www.ndaco.org/resolutions](http://www.ndaco.org/resolutions). NDACo needs your input on issues affecting your county!

- **County Tours** will be visiting Eddy, Foster, McHenry, Sheridan, and Wells Counties September 24-25 and Kidder, Logan, McIntosh and Stutsman October 15-16. Looking forward to seeing everybody and finding out if y'all have survived budget season!

One more thought...if 90 days from fog means big moisture, we may be in for a fun November. Saddle up, road departments!

Please don't hesitate to call me anytime. Better yet, stop in at the Ranch. Coffee pot is always on.

## FROM the COMMISSIONERS

### Thank You!

Serving as president of the NDCCA for the past two years has been an honor I deeply value. I am sincerely thankful for the support provided by so many committed individuals. My appreciation extends to the NDACo Team, NDCCA members, standing committee members, and all who have devoted their time and energy to strengthening local government and enriching their communities. The leadership I have observed throughout my term has been consistently inspiring. I hope each of you will continue to offer your dedicated support in your respective roles. I must also express my thanks to my husband and family for their steadfast encouragement—they have supported me from beginning to end.

I am looking forward to my final two tours this year. These visits have been invaluable for learning about the unique challenges and opportunities facing counties across North Dakota. Every stop has deepened my appreciation for the diversity and hospitality that characterize our state. One of my last tours will be in Carrington—the town where I was born and where much of my extended family still lives. If time allows, I hope to reconnect with relatives and journey to Cooperstown to collect an antique chair I acquired during one of my earliest travels. Thank you, Jayme Tenneson, for storing my chair; I will always remember this gesture along with the many unforgettable memories made throughout my service.



Joan Hollekim | NDCCA President  
Mountrail County Commissioner

I look forward to seeing many of you at NDACo's 50th anniversary celebration this October. Please remember to register for the "County Fair," which will take place from October 26-28. I am confident that this year's conference will maintain the tradition of excellence established over the years. The NDACo Team puts a tremendous amount of effort into organizing this event, so let's show our appreciation by attending if we are able.

As I conclude, I urge you to stay true to your principles and not let political pressures sway your beliefs. There will always be difficult issues ahead; but by working together, we can ensure that our citizens continue to receive the highest quality public services. Thank you again for granting me the privilege of serving as your president.

## FROM the ASSOCIATION

### The Dog Days of Summer

The dog days of summer are here. Farmers' grain is turning, kids are back in school and county officials are figuring out their upcoming budgets.

This year's budget process is a game changer for political subdivisions, especially the counties that are responsible for running the property tax system. With the passage of HB 1176, counties have had to adjust on the fly to what most observers would describe as conflicting laws and unnecessary steps. Decades of settled process has been upended. A few examples:

- Townships are required by law to set their budgets in March, but HB 1176 also requires them to meet AGAIN this fall to set their budgets.
- Counties need to expend funds to notify applicants for the property tax credit WITHIN 15 DAYS, whether they get it or not, despite the fact the application is submitted online with the tax department.



Aaron Birst | NDACo Executive Director

- Having counties notify those who are disqualified might make sense, but why send a notification to successful applicants? The tax statements shows the credit anyway.
- Townships are told on the one hand to limit their budgets to a 3% cap, but on the other hand, to raise their levy to 18 mills to be eligible for certain road

funds in SB 2012. This will likely result in townships losing out on those state funds.

All this while living in a world of capped spending.

Even the push for public safety (which everyone supports) comes with a price tag reflected in law enforcement and jail costs, borne largely by property taxpayers.

The reduction in certain federal funds is also now a reality and will likely squeeze state and local budgets.

All of this may seem negative but having spent the last few weeks meeting with county officials on our county tours, I have seen the unbelievable spirit of those in local government ready to take on these challenges.

Change is always hard (and often inefficient) but with change can come opportunities, whether that is the sharing of services, embracing new technologies or some innovative invention. So even in these dog days, counties will continue to find a way to serve the citizens of this great state.



Aaron Birst, Managing Editor  
Jeff Eslinger, Editor  
Clearwater Communications,  
Layout/Design

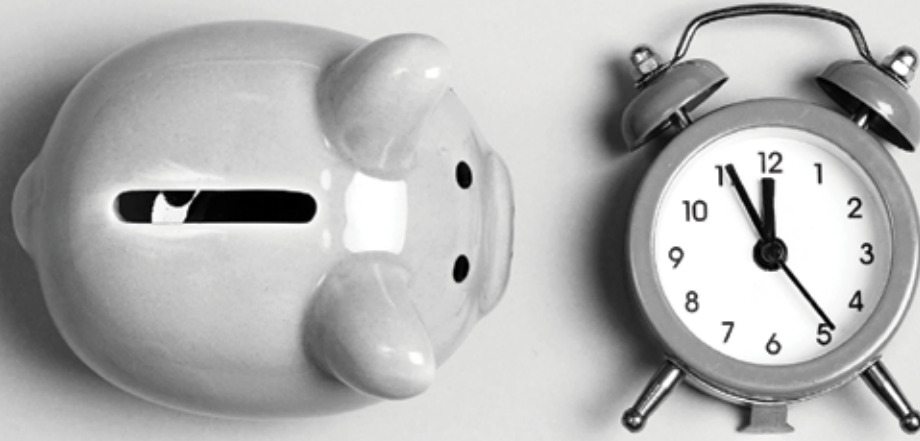
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**North Dakota County News** is the official publication of the ND Association of Counties (NDACo). Circulation is approximately 2,000, with bimonthly publication. Deadline for submissions and advertising is the 15th of each even-numbered month. Copyright 2025 by NDACo. Portions of **County News** may be reproduced without permission of editor. Opinions expressed in advertising and editorial content do not necessarily reflect NDACo views.

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## HR COLLABORATIVE



### SIX-SESSION SUMMER VIRTUAL SERIES REVIEW

**N**ow that the HR Collaborative's Six-Session Summer Virtual Series has wrapped, make sure to **claim your CLE credits by reaching out to our team at [HRCollaborative@ndirf.com](mailto:HRCollaborative@ndirf.com)**. Whether or not you attended the series, you can **access series training materials by using your phone to scan the QR code on this page.\***

#### VIRTUAL SERIES TOPICS

- 1. Employment Law Overview**  
Dani Krause (NDIRF Staff Legal Counsel)
- 2. Cultivating Joyfulness for Self-Care: Be Whole. Be Strong. Be You.**  
Dawn Kaiser (Speaker, Coach, Joy Refueler)
- 3. Performance Management**  
Tany Wielder (Human Resources Consultant)
- 4. Do Not Become the Vicetime of Your Andti-Discrimination Policies**  
Brian D. Schmidt (Attorney at Law & Partner)
- 5. Effective Talent Acquisition in a Competitive Market**  
Jason Sutheimer (Human Resource Business Partner, SHRM-SCP)
- 6. NDPHIT Health Coverage Trends**  
Randy Johnson (Senior Vice President)



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*\*If you were not previously registered for the live sessions, there is a **\$50 fee** to access training materials. Use the QR code to register.*

#### **HR Consultant**

The HR Collaborative's consultant role exists to support you and your employees, helping guide you in the right direction when HR questions arise. Please note that this role does not provide legal advice. You can submit a question to the HR Consultant at [HRCollaborative@ndirf.com](mailto:HRCollaborative@ndirf.com).



# How Can I Tell If Someone Else is in My Computer

Amber Schriock | NRG Service Manager

Is your mouse icon moving without you moving the mouse? Are programs opening or closing without being touched? Are programs being installed without being prompted and approved?

If you suspect there is a hacker actively accessing your computer, disconnect the internet. This will stop any data transfer that may be occurring. Perform a full scan of your system to identify any known malicious software and remove it.

Change passwords to your online accounts (bank, email, social media, etc.) as well as your computer itself. Use strong passwords to secure your accounts, possibly passphrases and a mixture of characters, numbers and symbols. Another layer of protection is multi-factor authentication. Latest trends lean towards passwordless access using a passkey.

Many online accounts will also send alerts for changes made, like new device logins or email address



and phone number changes. Monitor your banking accounts for fraudulent charges and report them immediately. If you have any suspicious activity on your computer, please call NRG immediately.



## NACO ENTERPRISE CYBERSECURITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY ENROLL FOR CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH FOR \$1,000 PER PERSON!

A 10-week online collaborative readiness program kicking off this January led by Fortune 500 CISOs and peers who deliver their proven frameworks and insights on how to lead and secure a network and an organization – protecting data assets and the enterprise brand. This program coaches participants on what it means to think and act as a cybersecurity leader.

- Module 1: History & Foundations of Cybersecurity**  
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**Module 2: The Security Leadership Mindset**  
Program overview focused on what it means to think and act as a cybersecurity leader.

**Module 3: The Art of Security Intelligence**  
Learn how data security professionals can best obtain, use, and distribute threat intelligence.

**Module 4: Security Change Management**  
Learn to be a change agent and use change practices to address and overcome security challenges.

**Module 5: Positive Leadership in Security**  
Develop positive leadership practices to achieve positively deviant organizational outcomes.
- Module 6: Communication & Stakeholder Engagement**  
Apply negotiation, communication, and collaboration techniques to enhance strategic outcomes, build relationships, and strengthen the cybersecurity posture leading to improved overall business results.

**Module 7: Cybersecurity vs. Business Innovation**  
Establish a mindset that embraces innovation and looks for ways to consistently simplify complexity.

**Module 8: Your Changing Role in Security**  
Apply techniques for learning and adapting as a cybersecurity leader while establishing a clear leadership philosophy.

**Module 9: Simulated Cyberattack**  
Foster development and alignment within cybersecurity individuals and work teams through drills, training, and war games.

**Module 10: The Power of Your Leadership**  
Communicate how your value as a cybersecurity leader directly impacts the long-term success of the enterprise and beyond.

Visit: [NACo.org/cyberskills](https://NACo.org/cyberskills)



NRG participates in the County Tours as a means of listening to county needs and assuring they can serve counties better. At left, Account Manager Dwight Driscoll, far right joined NDACo Executive Director Aaron Birst, NDACo President Trudy Ruland and NDCCA President Joan Hollekim at Divide County. At right, he and the other tour participants joined Mountrail County Officials in Stanley.

### NRG TECHNOLOGY STAFF



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Garrett Bruner.....	Service Coordinator	Jeff McDowell .....	Systems Engineer
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## National Association of Counties Leadership Development: *Learn from the Best!*

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Join over 10,000 county leaders already benefiting from the effectiveness of the NACo Leadership Academy, the **12-week, online leadership program** founded by General Colin Powell.

We would like to acknowledge and congratulate the April North Dakota graduates:

- *Allyssa Hoff, Legal Assistant, Cass County*
- *Catlin Solum, Communications Director, Cass County*
- *Diane Davies-Luger, Assistant State's Attorney, Cass County*
- *Tyrell Thiessen, Road Supervisor, Mountrail County*

#### Enroll now for September 2025!

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<https://edge.naco.org/naco-high-performance-leadership-academy/>

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



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# County Workers' Heroic Efforts Save Lives in Crash Incident

Lisa Saxberg | Reporter

Thanks to the heroic efforts of three men, a two-vehicle injury crash had a happy ending. An award ceremony to honor those involved was held on Tuesday, Aug. 5, at 10 a.m. on the third floor of the Steele County Courthouse.

"Today we gather not only to honor courage," said Steele County Sheriff Wayne Beckman, "but to recognize a moment where human instinct, compassion, and bravery came together in a most extraordinary way."

According to the Highway Patrol report, the accident took place on July 17, at 11:26 a.m., on Steele County Road 8, south of ND Highway 200, 10 miles east of Finley. A 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee driven by Madeline Sharpe, 31 years old, from Devils Lake, struck the rear of a Peterbilt pulling a gravel trailer driven by Martin Iverson, 53 years old, from Hillsboro. The Peterbilt was northbound on Steele County Road 8 when it slowed to stop for the stop sign at the intersection of Steele County Road 8 and ND Highway 200. The Jeep struck the rear of the gravel trailer after cresting the hill.

The crash was severe, and Sharpe was unable to get out of the vehicle. Trapped inside with her were her 2-year-old son and two dogs.

"Then things got worse," said Beckman. "The car started on fire. In our darkest moments, light has a way of finding us. Two county workers, Tim Nerby and Ethan Rosnow, happened to be right behind the accident. It couldn't have worked out any better."

Nerby and the semi driver, Iverson, rushed to the scene, while Rosnow was looking for a fire extinguisher to try and

help put out the fire. Beckman said that with no sirens or any backup, these two men went to the car, carried Sharpe out, and then went back and got her 2-year-old son out of the car seat, and of course, the two dogs.

"They gave Ethan the two dogs to watch over," said Beckman. "And I've been told by Tim and a couple of other guys that that was no easy task. These two did something that is rare and remarkable. At the time, they did not think about the danger. They did not do it for award or glory. They did it because it was the right thing to do. Because of them, there is a mother alive and a child alive, because of you guys. We humbly, humbly offer Tim and Marty a Lifesaving Award and Ethan a special Steele County Award."

The awards were presented by Brandon Oxtan, Steele County Commission Chairman, and Sheriff Wayne Beckman. Several family members of the award recipients were able to attend. Attending on behalf of Madeline Sharp was her stepfather, Keith Rindy, married to Sharp's mother, Mona Rindy, of Portland, N.D. Neither party involved in the accident was able to attend the ceremony. Rindy reported that Sharpe is recovering well. Another award will be presented to Iverson. The men also received a \$100 gift card.

Beckman said that since the accident, Rosnow has made sure there are now fire extinguishers in all of the county trucks that did not have one. Nerby and Iverson have also been nominated to receive the Lifesaving Award from the State of North Dakota.

*Steele County Press, used by permission.*



On Tuesday, Aug. 5, Tim Nerby was honored for his actions when coming upon a vehicle accident that led to the saving of multiple lives. (Photo/Larson)



Ethan Rosnow received a Steele County Appreciation award for his actions after coming upon the vehicle crash on July 17. (Photo/Larson)



## NETWORK

Opportunities to network are everywhere you look.

Visit [NACo.org/events](http://NACo.org/events) to find ways to expand your network and solve challenges.

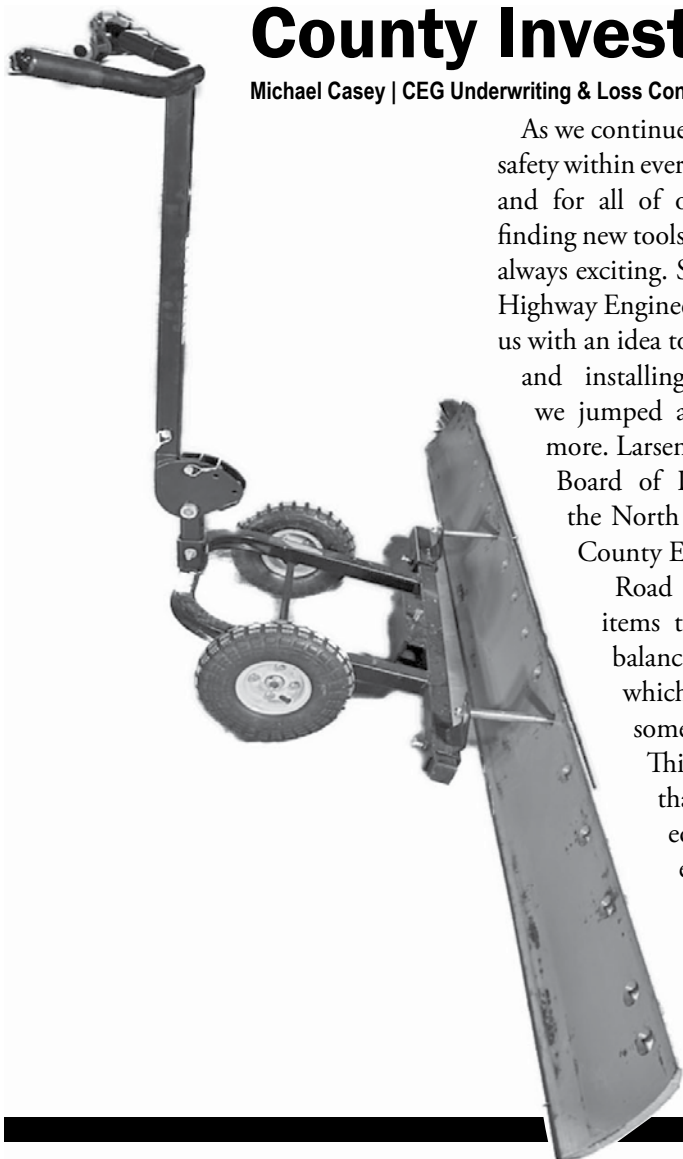
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**My County. My NACo.**







# County Invests in Cutting Edge Safety

Michael Casey | CEG Underwriting & Loss Control Manager

As we continue to work on promoting safety within every North Dakota county and for all of our county employees, finding new tools to aid in this mission is always exciting. So, when Ward County Highway Engineer Dana Larsen came to us with an idea to help with uninstalling and installing road grader edges, we jumped at the chance to learn more. Larsen serves on the NDACo Board of Directors, representing the North Dakota Association of County Engineers.

Road grader edges are heavy items that need to be lifted, balanced, and placed correctly, which normally would take some time to accomplish. This, along with the fact that there are multiple edges to be replaced on each road grader, are all factors that can and often do lead to



Dana Larsen

back injuries. Back injuries account for 1 in 5 workplace injuries. So, finding an option to make the workload more efficient and reducing the time it takes

to perform a motor grader or snowplow blade exchange could potentially reduce employee injuries for this task by 85%. What was found and eventually purchased in Ward County was a product called the Leachrod tool. The tool is like a dolly but is calibrated to match the needs of large road graders and large snowplow blade edges. This tool allows installations to be performed by a single individual in a much shorter amount of time. This Leachrod tool has proved to be a wonderful investment, proving its worth in a short period of time, and should last for years. When we look at this product, the initial cost, maintenance and repair, longevity, and the reduced effect on human health, everyone is very satisfied with the purchase of it. If you would like more information on this product, contact Michael Casey with CEG at michael.casey@ndaco.org or 701-202-6039 (cell).

The Leachrod tool helps county crews quickly and safely install and remove heavy road grader and snowplow blade edges.



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## Local Input is Critical to Local Road and Bridge Investment Needs Study

Input from townships and counties across North Dakota is critical to updating local road and bridge investment needs estimates for the next legislative session, according to researchers at the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) at NDSU.

“Unless our local partners provide information about local improvements and maintenance, we likely won’t know about it,” said Brad Wentz, UGPTI program director. Wentz and his team developed and maintain the Geographic Roadway Information System (GRIT), which provides local units of government an online means of maintaining an inventory of roadway assets with data on characteristics such as base materials, subgrade strength, shoulder type and width, pavement thickness, age, road width, roadway construction details, road condition, bridges, culverts, signs, and numerous other details. GRIT helps local road managers plan how to use their limited budgets to maintain and update their road systems most effectively while NDSU uses the data in its statewide investment needs studies.

Later this fall, UGPTI will distribute a survey to all 53 ND counties and the state’s 1,300 organized townships to gather data on gravel road maintenance. UGPTI researcher Alan Dybing said the information from those surveys helps track gravel costs as well as gravel road maintenance practices such as blading and graveling frequency, dust control, and base stabilization. The surveys also allow counties and townships to provide information on the condition of their gravel roads and to report unique challenges such as flooding or circumstances leading to high levels of traffic.

In the study, the unpaved road analysis assigns maintenance costs based on traffic level forecasts from the traffic model as well as local costs for gravel and maintenance.

UGPTI personnel will also visit a number of counties in the coming months. “It’s our opportunity to gather information on things that can’t be covered in a survey,” Dybing said.

In the previous two biennial studies, researchers added more detail on bridges and “minor structures,” which include culverts and bridges under 20 feet in length. Local input is critical for improving the accuracy of those details. “We used relatively old data to include those structures,” Wentz said. “We count on local staff to verify the location and existence of those structures and to document any changes, maintenance, and improvements.”



UGPTI’s bridge analysis factors in the condition of bridge decks, superstructures, and substructures. UGPTI’s bridge needs target considers the structural adequacy and safety, serviceability, and essentiality for public use; it also factors in scour and fracture critical ratings, use of timber materials, and load postings.

In the coming weeks, Dybing will meet with ag processors in the state and the North Dakota Division of Oil and Gas in order to examine how new developments in those fields may impact traffic patterns in the state. Those developments will be factored into UGPTI’s traffic model, which evaluates and predicts truck traffic across the state. Dybing said the model focuses on truck traffic because it causes the most wear on local roads and bridges. It uses agricultural- and oil-related data to forecast truck traffic over the next 20 years. Those predictions are compared and adjusted against traffic counts taken across the state by the UGPTI and the North Dakota Department of Transportation. Agricultural predictions are based on the nine most common commodities produced in the state, and information is drawn from elevator shipment data as well as from the National Agricultural Statistics Service satellite imagery and county average yields. For oil production, the model considers drilling, fracking, and production, relying on data from the Oil and Gas Division and the Pipeline Division of the ND Industrial Commission.

The analyses will also include data from traffic surveys across the state, updated condition reports on roadways, and survey results related to the cost of maintaining local roads from all 53 North Dakota counties and more than 900 of the state’s 1,300 townships.

Wentz notes that UGPTI students in a vehicle specially equipped with instrumentation called a “road profiler” has been traveling all of the state’s paved county roads, covering the north half of the state last summer and the south half this summer. The profiler compiles

information on road roughness while a 360-degree camera documents pavement condition and other data. The information is geo-located and uploaded to GRIT for easy access by local road managers, county commissioners, and UGPTI staff.

This is the seventh biennial local road investment needs study conducted by UGPTI since 2010. The study is conducted at the request of the North Dakota Legislature, which uses the final report to guide the distribution of funding to counties under the provisions of House Bill 1066, commonly known as Operation Prairie Dog.

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NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

# 2025 Annual Report

## STATE OF THE COUNTIES

The year is 1975. Gerald Ford is President, the Rubik's Cube is invented and the Minnesota Vikings lose the Super Bowl. Again. But 1975 also ushered in a new era where a group of civic-minded county officials hatched the idea of a statewide association to "foster effective and efficient government for the good of all counties."

Those discussions, followed by legislative action, breathed life into the North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo). Over the last 50 years, a lot has changed in North Dakota and at NDACo. Board members, Executive Directors and staff have all changed over the years, but one thing has never changed...the absolute dedication to ensuring county governments get the tools they need to do their jobs. The list of names responsible for the success of NDACo is too long to cover, but we can all take note of the saying "we all stand on the shoulders of giants."

In this report, we attempt to summarize all the relevant programs NDACo provides to county government, yet we are constantly testing and developing more services, like the grant assistance being provided through two partner engineering firms. We never want to lose focus on our mission to you; and regardless of where the next 50 years brings us, NDACo will be here for you! (And hopefully the Vikings can win at least one Super Bowl! 😊)



Aaron Birst  
Executive Director

## LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ... 1975

50 years ago, NDACo was created by the legislature to serve as the voice of all the counties in county-related policy issues. Over five decades, it has been our priority to do just that working with lawmakers, providing testimony and collecting input from you! NDACo conducts weekly member calls during session and provides weekly updates on our Legislative Blog, [ndcounties.blog](https://ndcounties.blog).

The 2025 Legislative Session was one of the most challenging and frustrating for counties with lawmakers focused on prioritizing property tax relief and reform. NDACo staff, with tremendous support from county officials across the state, were committed to steer legislation in favorable directions.

### Property Tax Relief

Lawmakers, with the passage of HB 1176, provided a primary residence credit of up to \$1600, more than triple the amount of relief approved in the prior Session. The legislation also comes with a 3% cap on growth in dollars levied by property taxes. Some flexibility was provided to political subdivisions to allow the carryover of unused cap percentages and the ability to get voter approval to exceed the cap at general elections. Townships can exceed with a vote at annual meetings. This legislation has led to an extremely challenging budget cycle for local governments requiring rigorous work to implement. NDACo has provided training and guidance, and is collecting feedback on necessary technical corrections.



### Transportation Funding

Distribution formulas changed but overall, our assessment is that the amount of transportation funding to counties should remain fairly level. To increase the certainty of "Prairie Dog" funding for counties, cities and townships, lawmakers moved the oil and gas revenue bucket up stream. The Legislature also increased the Flexible Transportation Fund. Fifty percent of Motor Vehicle Excise Tax will now go towards roads, with half going into the General Fund and the other half distributed into the Highway Tax Distribution Fund and the Flex Fund. The Highway Tax Distribution Fund was adjusted to 60% state, 35% counties/cities, 3.4% townships, 1.6% transits.

### Public Safety

Several one-time appropriations were made to address the overcrowding of the prison system including funding for a new women's prison, temporary housing at the Missouri River Correctional Center, planning for a minimum-security male correctional facility and funding for a new state hospital. The budget includes an increase in the rate DOCR pays for housing state inmates. Lawmakers voted to continue a retention grant for local law enforcement and corrections officers. The Back the Blue grant dollars are distributed based on the number of officers employed. The 9-1-1 communications service fee was reduced from 5% to 2.5%, allowing additional dollars to be directed to the 9-1-1 system.

### Health And Human Services

The ND Health and Human Services budget provided level funding for local public health units. The state's largest budget also includes investments to address behavioral health needs.

### So Much More...

It's an understatement that a majority of legislation impacts counties. This report can't even touch on all the bills that NDACo was involved in. Of the 1,089 bills introduced, NDACo tracked 600 bills and identified nearly 100 of them as a priority. The NDACo Legislative Blog at [ndcounties.blog](https://ndcounties.blog) includes information on those bills.

## INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ... 1995

The Institute of Local Government (ILG), the Professional Development program of NDACo, hosted a wealth of trainings this past year. With the Legislative Session wrapped up, ILG offered a variety of legislation-related topics to keep you up-to-date and informed. Over the last 12 months, ILG has reached more than **6,000** county officials and employees with more than **70** trainings! Webinars are offered live and on-demand, which make them the ideal professional development solution for members.

ILG works with public and private partners from across the state to ensure all courses are provided by highly qualified presenters. The online library of recorded webinars offers a variety of training topics and keeps expanding. Recording requests remain strong and steady. In the past 12 months, ILG has sent out nearly **1,000** recordings. In 2025, ILG will honor around **150** hour-level award recipients, which is a large increase from last year!

In addition to webinars, ILG continues to offer training with member conventions and on site by request. ILG trainings are listed on the NDACo website at [www.ndaco.org/ilg](https://www.ndaco.org/ilg).



## MEMBER SERVICES ... 1975

While you might say *everything* we do at NDACo is a member service, there are certain activities that are designed solely to keep us in close touch with county officials to be sure we are meeting their needs.

### County Tours

With a goal to visit every county every three years, select NDACo staff, along with the NDACo and NDCCA presidents and other board officers tour several counties per year. From September 2024 to August 2025, the tours visited 17 counties: Adams, Bowman, Burke, Cavalier, Dickey, Divide, Hettinger, LaMoure, Mountrail, Pembina, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Slope, Towner, Walsh and Williams Counties.

### Events

Our winter/legislative gathering continued to evolve this year. After transitioning from the **County Officials Academy** to **County Day at the Capitol** for the 2023 Session, we joined forces with our local government partners (cities, parks, townships and school boards) to co-host the **Local Government Capitol Connection** in 2025. The new event was a smashing success.

Our **Annual Conference** serves as the primary training and networking event for all county officials. In October 2025, we'll be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NDACo with the theme of a County Fair!

### Communications

We keep in touch through the *County News* and *County Leader Letter*, and on social media and encourage counties to connect with us so we can also follow their accounts.

- Website – [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org)
- Facebook – [facebook.com/ndcounties](https://facebook.com/ndcounties)
- YouTube – [youtube.com/ndcounties](https://youtube.com/ndcounties)
- Legislative Blog – [ndcounties.blog](https://ndcounties.blog)

## JUVENILE JUSTICE SERVICES ... 1986

The ND Division of Juvenile Services, a division of the ND Department of Corrections, continues to contract with NDACo to employ Juvenile Justice Specialist Lisa Jahner. This position is federally mandated by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act). In that role, Lisa is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of North Dakota's strategic plan for addressing the needs of at-risk youth, working with federal/state/local officials on best practices and policies, and staffing the Governor's advisory group established pursuant to the JJDP Act to provide leadership and direction.

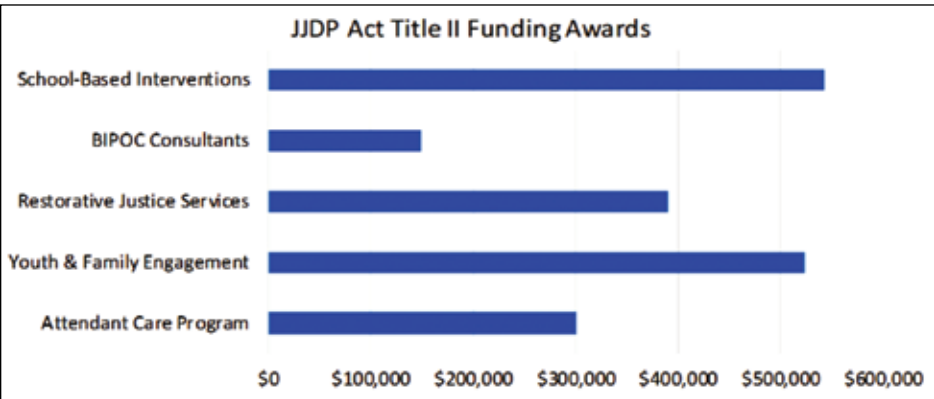
North Dakota's FY2024-26 strategic plan, found at [www.ndaco.org/SAG](http://www.ndaco.org/SAG), established two priority goals to direct the work of the advisory group as well as \$1.8 m in federal funding. The two priority goals are to:

1. Reduce youth incarceration through community-based alternatives; and
2. Improve outcomes for youth and families by supporting alternatives to system involvement.

The Attendant Care Program will continue to be supported under goal 1 as a collaborative effort with counties and cities, with additional resources to assist youth and families with connection to services and supports. The plan also includes support for behavioral interventions in schools, increasing the response to mental health issues, and reducing barriers to services for youth and families.

Almost \$2 m in federal funding has been awarded for local programs and services under the previous strategic plan, as detailed in the following chart. The overall goal of the funding is to prevent child welfare and/or juvenile justice system involvement.

With the award of several federal discretionary grants in addition to the JJDP Act Title II funding, NDACo is currently administering close to \$4.0 million in federal juvenile justice grant funds. Almost all of this funding goes out to local government or community-based service organizations.



## 9-1-1 SERVICES ... 1991

### Next Generation 9-1-1 JPA

NDACo has continued to work on the elimination of legacy 9-1-1 circuits from wireline and VoIP service providers. These circuits have been migrating to IP-based communications which provide a more reliable way to connect the caller with 9-1-1 centers. NDACo continues to collaborate with all service providers on the tasks that will be required of them to deliver their customer's calls to public safety answering points (PSAPs) in North Dakota. North Dakota PSAPs are also beginning the transition to the NENA i3 Protocol which will position them to take full advantage of Next Generation 9-1-1 technologies.

### Collection and Distribution of 9-1-1 Fees JPA

As stated in the Legislative section above, the 2025 Legislature reduced the administrative fees that wireline, wireless and VoIP service providers retain from the 9-1-1 surcharge. The return on this decrease approximates to over \$400,000 in additional revenue back to counties for 9-1-1 services. The program continues to operate at a highly efficient level. For the coming year, NDACo will be doing more research to ensure that counties are receiving all funds that they are due.

## COUNTY EMPLOYER GROUP ... 1996

For the purpose of "worker's comp," all county employees are covered together – over 7,000 employees in one group, rather than 53 separate employers. This saves money, time and administration.

CEG saves money and lives in three important ways:

1. **Safety Training:** To help prevent workplace injuries, the CEG trained about 7,000 employees on safety topics ranging from drug-free workplaces to slips, trips, and falls to bloodborne pathogens. Twenty-seven counties participated in specialized computer-based training and logged over 10,000 hours through online training, including completing nearly 4,000 computer-based safety training courses.
2. **Risk Management** Through the implementation of effective claims management and risk management programs and practices counties have realized discounts of up to 30% in worker's comp premiums. Fifty-six risk managers assist the CEG with compliance issues such as investigations, inspections, injury reporting, and injury prevention, among other duties.
3. **Transitional Return-to-Work Program:** CEG handled **300** claims in 2024, **22 fewer** than in 2023 (and 2023 was lower than 2022.) **Fewer claims = fewer injuries!**

We're proud that CEG's indemnity claim (lost time) is less than half of the average cost of other North Dakota employers, according to ND Workforce. CEG is one of our earliest and most successful programs, a fine example of how we work for the good of all counties.

## NRG TECHNOLOGY SERVICES ... 2000

NRG is a subsidiary of NDACo, developed to support the IT needs of all North Dakota counties. NRG's owners are all North Dakota counties.

NRG works directly with the state's IT department, NDIT, on issues that affect all counties. They meet every six weeks to discuss latest issues and collaborate on resolutions to ensure continuity of services across the state.

NRG's Account Manager has been attending the County Tours with NDACo staff to spread awareness of the purpose of NRG and listen to feedback from all the counties.

NRG's President sits on the Criminal Justice Information Sharing Board and the State's Cybersecurity Collaboration Committee. As resources become available, NRG purchases government bonds to help support local governments with financing their projects.

All Human Service Zones should now be using Microsoft 365, provided through DHHS and NDIT, for email. They also have access to Teams messaging and phones for increased collaboration.

NRG currently provides IT support for 18 courthouses, as well as a variety of individual county officials throughout the state. They also support a number of cities, police departments, non-profit organizations, associations and financial institutions.

**The tagline *Stress-Free IT means their customers let them worry about managing their ever-changing and complex IT infrastructures.***



TRAFFIC SAFETY  
RESOURCE PROSECUTOR ... 2006

The Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) position is a partnership with the ND Department of Transportation, in our common goal of making our state’s roadways safer. Peter Halbach serves as the TSRP. In the past year, Peter has traveled the state, training 632 law enforcement officers and 62 prosecutors, in addition to hearing officers and judges on topics such as:

- Impaired driving administrative hearings
- Lake Region State College’s Peace Officer Training Program
- Impaired Driving Conference
- Intoxilyzer Classes at the Attorney General’s Crime Lab
- Several classes at the Law Enforcement Training Academy.

In addition to chairing the Impaired Driving Task Force, Peter has been a resource to the Crime Lab, NDHP, other law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. Peter is also involved with a committee addressing distracted driving and is working with a national committee to develop a curriculum for Distracted Driving prosecutions. Beyond our borders, he has also presented at the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) in-service and presented on impaired driving related hearings at the National Association of Hearing Officials (NAHO) national conference in Savannah.

VISION ZERO  
OUTREACH PROGRAM ... 2011

NDACo continues its strong partnership with the ND Department of Transportation (NDDOT) through the Vision Zero Outreach Program.

This statewide initiative now includes six regional Outreach Coordinators who are actively working to build local partnerships, deliver education and resources, and coordinate community-based efforts to help achieve the Vision Zero goal of eliminating motor vehicle crash fatalities and significantly lowering serious injuries on North Dakota roads.

These Outreach Coordinators have established connections in every region of the state and play a critical role in promoting the core Vision Zero strategies of education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency response. One key success has been the addition of **13 Vision Zero Schools**. These schools commit to fostering a culture where traffic safety is a priority, and motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries are recognized as preventable and unacceptable. Participating schools empower both staff and students to model safe driving behaviors and take personal responsibility behind the wheel.

North Dakota’s Vision Zero approach is built on a foundation of shared responsibility between individuals, communities, and government agencies—and is guided by strategies proven to save lives, including:

- Widespread public education/outreach
- Infrastructure/road safety improvements
- High visibility enforcement of existing laws
- Technology advancements
- Working with the legislature to ensure state laws represent best practices in traffic safety.

The goal of Vision Zero is clear: **zero fatalities, zero excuses.**

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION  
SYSTEM (GIS) PROGRAM ... 2022

Since the GIS Program was launched in 2022, the program has evolved but still has counties as it’s priority. The program is continuing to support NDIT’s State Parcel Program with the goal of helping counties across the state to meet and surpass the standards put forth by the state.

1. Beginning new initiatives and outreach to increase knowledge in the interest of making accurate, clean data available
2. Strengthening relationships with the State of North Dakota by co-chairing the 2026 ND Geospatial Summit.

The program supports counties with a qualified GIS professional who helps empower counties to maximize use of their GIS software and available data. As with other NDACo programs, the GIS Program is envisioned not to replace county employees or vendor relationships, but as a support for counties to help them kick start or improve how they use this exciting technology.

The scope of work being done with counties under contract includes:

- District and precinct maps for interoffice and public use
- Answering questions and providing assistance with projects
- Working closely with the State Parcel Program to complete outreach and maintenance tasks.

Goals for the future include:

- Continuing education, training and networking
- Forming NDACo GIS Standing Committee; create space for county GIS professionals to learn from one another and ultimately set a standard for data across the state.
- Expanding the GIS Program to increase productivity and reach
- Informing counties and other agencies about the applications and importance of GIS.

Board of Directors

The NDACo Board of Directors is made up of one commissioner for each region and one representative from each member association.

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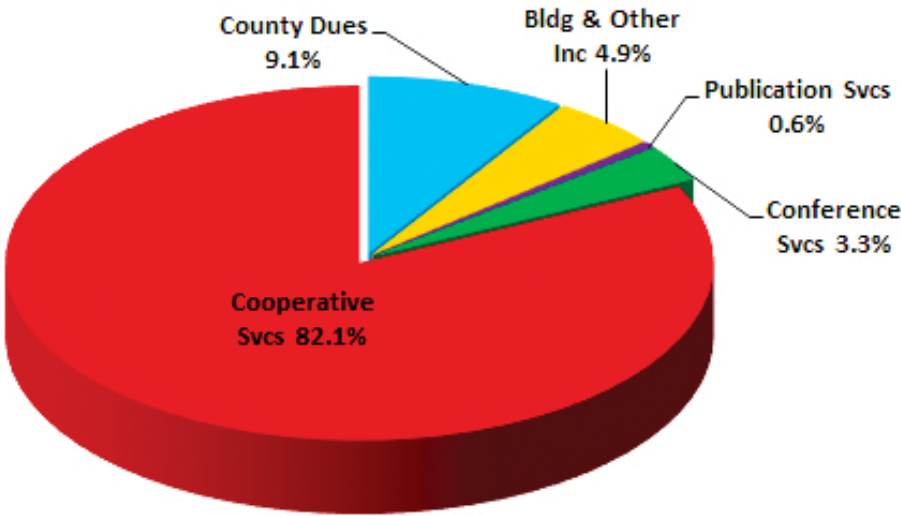
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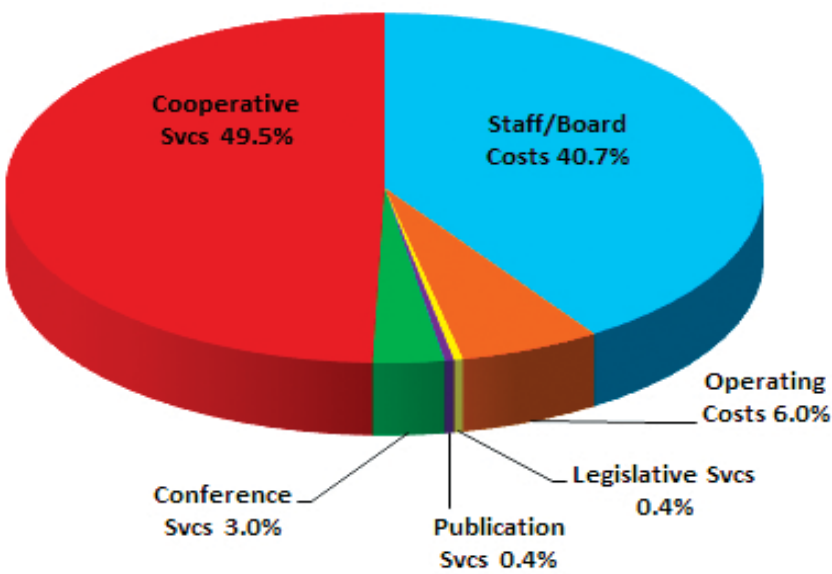
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NDACo 2025 Budgeted Revenues



NDACo 2025 Budgeted Expenses





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## Purchasing Pulse Products and Services for Public Safety and Housing

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

When communities need safe neighborhoods and stable housing, local governments are often on the front lines. Cooperative contracts from the State Procurement Office give local government entities a streamlined way to get the tools, services and support they need for public safety and housing efforts. These contracts are established through a competitive process and ready for use, so there is no need to start from scratch!

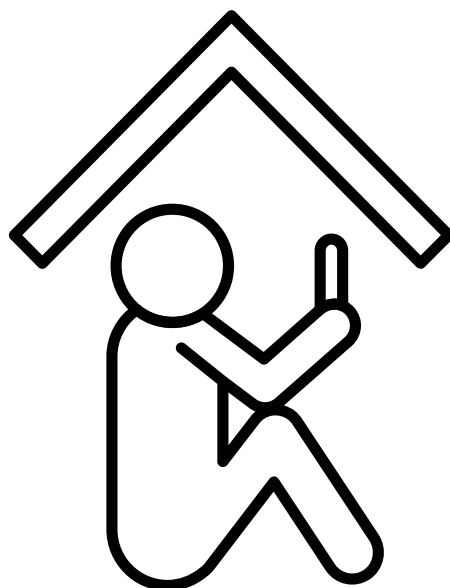
### State Contracts

Some of the available state contracts related to public safety and housing include:

- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) & Accessories
- Ammunition
- Body Armor & Ballistic Resistant Products
- Child Safety Seats
- Correctional Facilities Products and Supplies
- Facilities - Security & Fire Protection Systems & Services
- Fire Extinguishers
- Floor Mat and Facility Services - Rug Rental
- Hazardous Material Disposal
- Janitorial Supplies
- Janitorial Products and Disposable Food Service Products
- Less Lethal Munitions
- Medical Supplies
- Police Radar/Lidar Speed Enforcement & Accident Reconstruction
- Public Safety Training Equipment
- Sandbags
- Vehicles - Public Safety, LED Light Bars, Siren Warning Accessories

Entities eligible for cooperative purchasing from state contracts include:

- Cities, Counties, Townships
- Public School Districts, State Board of Higher Education institutions
- Governmental boards and commissions



- Tribal agencies
- Public transit authorities
- Public health units
- Non-profit organizations established on behalf of public entities (contact the State Procurement Office to verify if your entity is eligible)

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

### Rough Rider Industries

Rough Rider Industries (RRI) manufacturing operations inside the North Dakota State Penitentiary in Bismarck offers products that may be purchased directly by governmental agencies, including federal, state, tribal agencies and political subdivisions, for use in official business, co-ops, and health insurance companies. They offer wellness products such as masks, gowns, wellness barriers, plastic biohazard trash bags, safety signs and floor graphics.

Visit the RRI website, [www.roughriderindustries.com](http://www.roughriderindustries.com), to view more of their offerings. Reach out to RRI at [rri@nd.gov](mailto:rri@nd.gov) or 701-328-6161 if you have any questions.



## 2nd Emergency Communications Summit Discusses Challenges Ahead

Jason Horning | Next Generation 9-1-1 Program Manager

NDACo hosted the second Emergency Communications Summit in late July. The focus of this year's summit was to begin working on a plan to address some of the emergency communications challenges facing the public safety community. The topics of governance, finance, emergency response and others were explored during the event with stakeholders offering their perspectives on how best to address these challenges.

This interim, lawmakers will study the fees associated with 911 and 988 and the

statewide interoperable radio network (SIRN). The legislature's study comes on the heels of a similar study conducted the previous session that evaluated public safety governance.

NDACo anticipates that there will be a considerable push from the state to address financial and governance aspects of emergency communications in the coming years. NDACo will continue to work with all stakeholders to find an agreeable path forward.

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## NDSU Extension Soil Health Express Hits the Road

A new mobile educational trailer, the NDSU Extension Soil Health Express, is rolling across North Dakota to bring hands-on soil health demonstrations directly to farmers, ranchers, agricultural professionals and students.

Funded by North Dakota Soybean Council, North Dakota Corn Utilization Council, North Dakota Wheat Commission, North Central SARE, Northern Canola Growers Association, NDSU School of Natural Resource Sciences and NDSU Extension, the Soil Health Express will serve as a powerhouse outreach tool designed to engage and educate on best soil management practices.

“This trailer brings science to life,” said Carlos Pires, NDSU Extension soil health specialist. “It’s a state-of-the-art way to connect with producers and showcase the real-world benefits of sustainable soil practices.”

In addition to Pires, Naeem Kalwar, Extension soil health specialist at the Langdon Research Extension Center, is part of the soil health team that will coordinate the trailer’s use.

The Soil Health Express features a rainfall simulator that allows viewers to see firsthand how different soil management practices impact water infiltration, water holding capacity, surface runoff and erosion. In addition, a wind erosion



simulator showcases how practices can reduce soil loss during high wind events, a growing concern in the region.

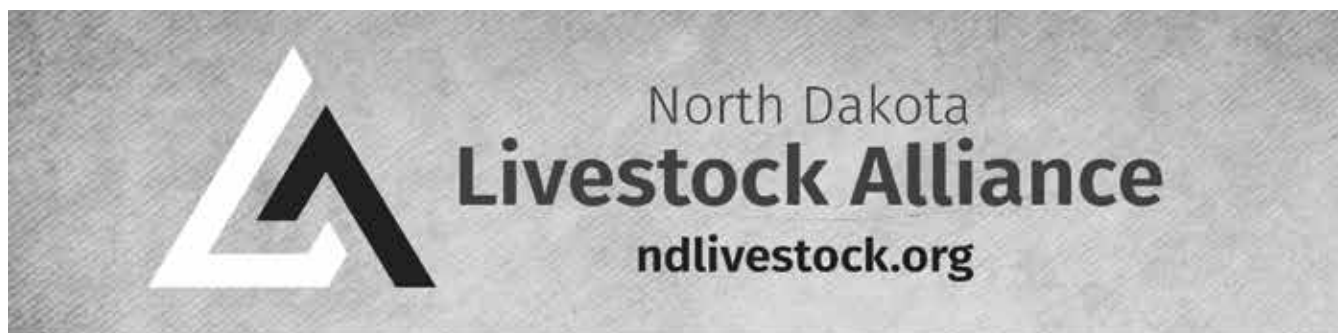
Another key highlight of the Soil Health Express is its cover crop root demonstrations, which help participants visualize how various cover crops affect soil structure and function. These demonstrations emphasize that cover

crops are service plants, critical for improving soil health when selected and managed with a clear purpose.

Equipped for both indoor and outdoor demonstrations, the trailer was built with flexibility in mind, ensuring it can be used year-round at field days, fairs, schools and community events.

“Our goal is to empower North Dakota’s agricultural community with practical, research-backed knowledge for healthier soils and more resilient farming systems,” shares Kalwar.

For more information or to request the Soil Health Express at your event, contact the NDSU Extension soil health team.



**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**



Many landowners in recent years have made friends with a very special beetle, which feeds on leafy spurge roots, destroying the noxious weeds from the inside out. A few weeks ago, **Dickey** County Weed Officer Terry Weis accompanied local rancher Grant Peterson and two state officials to a plot of land near Pheasant Lake, where they swung nets to catch some of these special beetles. Their goal was to determine if the previous year's dispersal had established a successful spurge beetle colony. The results were heartening. John Mortenson, the biocontrol director for the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, was very pleased. Equally happy was Samantha McGrath, the noxious weed director for the state. And equally pleased was Dennis Quast, on whose land the beetle colony is now well established. Dennis was really pleased, as the results were better than expected. "Every place we went there were beetles," said Terry. There had been some concern that the lack of snow cover last winter had negatively affected the colony, but that apparently was not the case. The beetles only go to the leafy spurge. They eat the root mainly, destroying the plant. The larvae burrow into the root which is their winter home. Terry said the use of the beetles across the region has made a remarkable impact against leafy spurge, one of the worst of the noxious weeds that farmers and ranchers struggle against. Terry said the ultimate goal is to get a significant population of beetles established in Dickey County so that in the future it will be possible to sweep and move beetles locally. While discussing spurge beetles and the work of a weed officer, Terry offered heartfelt praise to the Dickey County Commissioners for their support in his mission.

– *Dickey County Leader*

The **Grand Forks** County Sheriff's Office moved to its new location on Monday, June 30. Sheriff Andy Schneider said the office will be relocating from 122 S. Fifth St. to 3005 Heartland Dr., Grand Forks, a spot provided by the City of Grand Forks and the Grand Forks Police Department. "This location will provide unique accessibility to several arterial roads to the rural areas and provide an accessible office to serve the public," he said.

The Grand Forks County Commission approved a lease for the space in November. During the meeting, it was said the county will spend \$519,000 a year on rent and

\$12,000 a year on maintenance. Schneider said at the meeting that the Sheriff's Office spent multiple months meeting with the County Commission about location ideas.

In the press release, Schneider wrote, "Thank you to the Grand Forks County Commission for making this project a reality. And thank you to the contractor, Heartland Acres, for completing this project ahead of schedule and providing the county and the Sheriff's Office with a facility that will last for generations."

– *Grand Forks Herald*

**Walsh** County will move forward with plans for a new jail after voters approved a three-quarter percent sales tax in a special election in May. Although a 20-mill property tax increase failed, the County Commission voted 3-2 to use the sales tax revenue for a scaled-down version of the project. Sheriff Ron Jurgens said the new \$25 million facility will include 46 beds. The current jail, built more than 50 years ago, is limited to just 16 usable cells due to ongoing issues. Construction is expected to begin next year.

– *Walsh County Record*

The **Burke** County Commissioners approved the amended Burke County Ordinance. This updated ordinance contains Section 14: Burke County Battery Energy Storage System. The ordinance provides a framework for siting, construction, operation and decommissioning of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) within Burke County that will preserve the safety and well-being of residents and property, while facilitating orderly development. Sandy Raines, a member of the Planning & Zoning Board, asked the commissioners if they would lift the moratorium so NextEra Energy could move ahead with the process. State's Attorney Amber Fiesel informed the board they are not able to remove the moratorium until the resolution is effective, which in part includes publication of the notice for two weeks.

– *Burke County Tribune*

Stan Buxa was semi concerned the **Wells** County Commissioners had kicked the dead horse to death. Danny "Boone" Maxwell was exhausted from kicking the can down the road. Still, the two men along with fellow Wells commissioners Brian Miller, Bryan Lutt and Dennis Dockter spent more than an hour this week debating the 'devil in the details' before agreeing to go along with the Wells County

Planning and Zoning Commission ruling allowing the Flickertail Wind Project to proceed with its footprint of wind turbines in Bremen and Valhalla townships at a one mile setback from occupied farm homes. Buxa, District 2 commissioner on the county's leading governing body from Harvey, "respectfully" entertained the motion to accept the zoning commission's ordinance, with minor clarifications to the ordinance's legaleze and language specific to the setback distance with variances allowed; Maxwell, District 1 commissioner from rural Fessenden, seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous, 5-0.

– *Harvey Herald-Press*

Plans for a domestic violence shelter in **McKenzie** County are beginning to take shape, following a pledge from the county commission to help fund the project. Marie Collins, director of the McKenzie County Family Crisis Shelter and a resident of Watford City, has long advocated for a shelter in the area. "We do need something here in McKenzie," Collins said. "I've seen it. I live here." The need is supported by

local data. Between 2019 and 2024, the Watford City Police Department averaged 85.3 domestic violence cases annually, while the McKenzie County Sheriff's Office reported an average of 56 cases per year – a combined 141.3 cases. Collins, who began her career as a domestic violence advocate in Watford City in 2021, said she recognized the urgency from the beginning. A home within McKenzie County has been purchased to serve as the new shelter, which will house between 10 and 15 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The project received an early boost from the American Legion Carl E. Rogen Post 29 in Watford City, which donated funds for the closing costs and other loan-related expenses. Then, during a June 17 meeting, the McKenzie County Board of Commissioners voted to pay off the remaining loan balance and help cover renovation costs, which includes security features such as cameras and a privacy fence. In addition to its annual \$100,000 contribution to Family Crisis Shelter, the board pledged a total of \$664,000 toward the project.


– *Williston Daily Herald*

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## North Dakota Attorney General's Opinions

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

### CITY OF NEW TOWN

A new Attorney General's Open Records Opinion has been issued:

**Opinion #:** 2025-O-10

**Date issued:** July 9, 2025

**Issued to:** City of New Town

**Request:** Whether the City of New Town violated open meetings law by asking city employees attending a city council meeting in their personal capacity to leave the room when employee salaries were discussed.

The New Town City Council (City Council) held a regular meeting on January 18, 2023. The meeting took place after working hours at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Room. One of the items on the agenda was "Council Concerns: Salary Employees." When the City Council reached this agenda item, Mayor Standish asked four city employees to leave the meeting.

Unless otherwise provided by law, all meetings of a public entity must be open to the public. In the matter at issue, the four employees who were asked to leave the City Council meeting were not acting in any official capacity at the meeting, and the meeting was not held during work hours. Personnel policies regarding attendance were not applicable. Additionally, the agenda item at issue was not the subject of a closed session of the City Council.

**Conclusion:** The City of New Town violated open meetings law by asking city employees attending a city council meeting in their personal capacity to leave the room when employee salaries were discussed.

### PEMBINA COUNTY COMMISSION

A new Attorney General's Open Records Opinion has been issued:

**Opinion #:** 2025-O-11

**Date issued:** August 11, 2025

**Issued to:** Pembina County Commission

**Request:** 1. Whether the Pembina County Commission provided notice of the executive session held on February 21, 2023, in substantial compliance with N.D.C.C. § 44-04-20.

2. Whether the executive session held during the February 21, 2023, regular meeting was authorized by law.

The Commission's February 21, 2023, executive session was recorded in compliance with N.D.C.C. § 44-04-19.2(5) and reviewed by this office. It is clear after reviewing the recording that the discussion held during the executive session fails to meet the

requirements for either attorney consultation or negotiation strategy. First, the Commission was not seeking or receiving the State's Attorney advice regarding any reasonably predictable litigation nor seeking advice of possible actions or negotiations that would cause a negative fiscal impact to the Commission if discussed in open session. Second, the Commission did not discuss any negotiation strategies or provide negotiation instructions that, if held in public, would have an adverse fiscal effect. Instead, the Commission discussed the proposed study for a new regional correctional facility.

**Conclusions:** 1. The Pembina County Commission failed to provide notice in substantial compliance with N.D.C.C. § 44-04-20 because the notice did not indicate that the discussion of the "Samuels Group Proposal" would occur during an executive session.

2. The executive session held for "attorney consultation and negotiations" was not authorized by law because the discussion did not meet the requirements for either attorney consultation or negotiation strategy.

## Cass County Earns National Achievement Award Finance Office was Recognized for Wedding Coordinator Program

The Cass County Finance Office has been recognized with a 2025 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.

NACo recognized the work of the Finance Office in the County Administration and Management category. In 2024 the County Commission authorized a Wedding Coordinator position based on the increasing number of marriage license applications the Finance Office received. With the addition of this position the office has created a memorable and economical way for families to celebrate a wedding.

"It is exciting to see Cass County recognized for this innovative approach to increasing community utilization of a county service. Supporting additional opportunities for the public to have a positive interaction with Cass County



helps build a stronger community," says County Administrator Robert Wilson.

Each year, NACo's Achievement Awards recognize outstanding programming in 18 categories aligned with the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice and public safety, libraries, management, information technology, health, civic engagement and more.

## Attorney General Wrigley Announces Launch of Concealed Weapon License Validation Tool

Bismarck, N.D. – Attorney General Drew Wrigley announced August 19 the release of a new Concealed Weapon License (CWL) Validation Tool designed to assist Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) in verifying the status of a purchaser's concealed weapon license when using a NICS Transaction Number (NTN) as part of the firearm purchase process.

This tool provides a simple, secure, and efficient "red light/green light" validation system that ensures a CWL is active and valid at the time of purchase—without disclosing any additional identifying information.

"This validation tool enhances the speed and reliability of firearms transactions while protecting the privacy of concealed weapon license holders," said Attorney General Drew Wrigley "It is a straightforward way for dealers to comply with state and federal requirements using the most current and accurate licensing data, always ensuring the rights and privacy of the holder."

The CWL Validation Tool is designed with the following key features:

- Three required fields must be entered and must exactly match the data in the CWL system.
- The validation search will return one of two possible responses:
  - o Green Light: License is active and valid.
  - o Red Light: License is not active, or the information does not match.

No other personal or license-related details will be provided. It is intended solely for license status validation during lawful firearm(s) purchases.

FFLs can access the tool via the secure portal provided by the Attorney General's office, under the Concealed Weapon Licensing page.

For more information, please contact the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation Concealed Weapon Licensing unit at 701-328-5523.



Drew Wrigley



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**Visit [enbridge.com/call811](https://enbridge.com/call811) for more information.**







North Dakota was well represented at the National Association of Counties Annual Conference in July. L-R: Donnell Preskey, NDACo; Barb Frydenlund, Rolette; Joan Hollekim, NDCCA President; Karolin Jappe, McKenzie; Jeff Eslinger, NDACo; Stanley Dick, Cavalier; Bob Henderson, Cass; Robert Wilson, Cass; Tracy Peters, Cass; Aaron Birst, NDACo; Tony Grindberg, Cass. Not pictured: Jim Kapitan, Cass; Alice Grinsteinner, Mercer.

# 2025 County Tours



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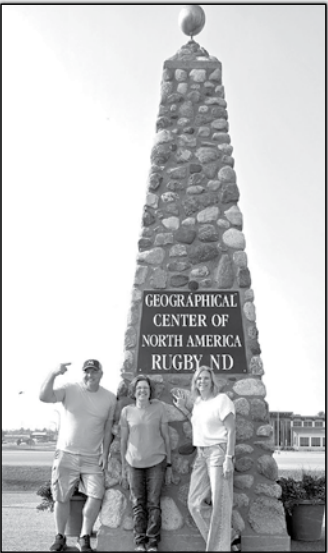
TOWNER



WALSH



BURKE



PIERCE



PEMBINA



## Exhumation on Unknown Male Results in Positive Identification

CASS COUNTY, N.D. – On October 27, 1970, the body of an unidentified adult male was found near railroad tracks outside Page in Cass County. Investigators believed the man had been deceased for about six weeks prior to the discovery.

The Cass County Sheriff's Office investigated the case as a possible homicide, as evidence suggested the man had been assaulted, robbed and either thrown or had fallen from a moving train. Despite extensive efforts, no suspects or persons of interest were ever identified.

The man's cause of death was listed as fractures of the ribs, cervical vertebrae, maxilla and mandible. The manner of death was ruled undetermined. With no identification, he was buried at St. James Cemetery in Page with a headstone marked "Unknown Male."

On July 1, 2025, the Cass County Coroner's Office, in collaboration with Southeast Missouri State University, exhumed the remains in a renewed effort to identify the individual. During the exhumation, an upper denture plate was recovered from the skeletal remains. The denture was labeled "Tate W. H" with the number "20506932" printed beneath.

Using genealogical and archival resources, including Ancestry.com and



the National Archives Access to Archival Databases, investigators traced the denture information to a World War II enlistment record for William Howard Tate.

Based on that record and subsequent analysis, the unknown male was positively identified as William Howard Tate.

Additional analysis of the remains is being conducted by Dr. Jennifer Bengtson, a professor overseeing the project at Southeast Missouri State University. The effort is funded by private donors who support the university's anthropology department.

The Coroner's Office is also working with Cass County Veteran Services to have a new headstone with the decedent's identification placed on the grave.



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### North Dakota Department of Emergency Services Changes Division Names

BISMARCK, N.D. — The North Dakota Department of Emergency Services (NDDDES) has announced updates to two division names following the passage of House Bill 1079, signed into law in 2025 and effective August 1.

The Homeland Security Division is now the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to better reflect its full scope of disaster planning, response, and recovery.

State Radio has been renamed the State Emergency Communications Center, clarifying its role in public safety dispatch and the full scope of technology used.

"These changes help align division names with the work our teams do every day to keep North Dakotans safe," said Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director Darin Hanson.

For more information, contact Alison Vetter, Strategic Communications Chief, North Dakota Department of Emergency Services at 701-391-8158 or [alvetter@nd.gov](mailto:alvetter@nd.gov).





Karter Hatzenbuhler



Martin Heberlie



Holdyn Jacobson



Aiden Miller



Addison Strong



Myla Witt

# NDACo Awards Scholarships to Students from Morton, Mountrail, Benson, Dickey, Rolette and Richland Counties

Bismarck, ND - The North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo) has awarded \$2,000 scholarships to six students from around the state. Qualified candidates are children or grandchildren of North Dakota county officials or employees who plan to attend a North Dakota college, university or technical school.

The following exceptional students will be honored at the 2025 NDACo Annual Conference in October.

**Karter Hatzenbuhler**, son of Kari Hatzenbuhler, Morton County Treasurer (UND-Freshman).

**Martin Heberlie**, son of Jana Hennessy, Mountrail County Engineer (BSC-Freshman). Martin is the recipient of the Amy Svihovec Memorial Scholarship. Created in 2010, this scholarship honors the memory of Amy Svihovec, daughter of Linda Svihovec, former Auditor and Treasurer of McKenzie County, and is awarded to

a scholarship recipient whose goals and achievements carry on Amy's legacy.

**Holdyn Jacobson**, grandson of Lucia Jacobson, Benson County Superintendent of Schools (U of Jamestown-Freshman)

**Aiden Miller**, son of Cresta Miller, Dickey County Deputy Clerk of District Court (NDSCS-Freshman).

**Addison Strong**, daughter of Jeanna Strong, Rolette County WIC Director (NDSU-Freshman).

**Myla Witt**, daughter of Donnie Witt, Richland County Highway Superintendent (NDSCS-Freshman).

The NDACo Scholarship Fund was established in 1998 with contributions by county donors and Nationwide Retirement Solutions and continues to receive contributions from individual county employees, officials and corporate supporters.

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# 2025 COUNTY CALENDAR

## September

11 \_\_\_\_\_ Agriculture and Water Management Committee, Roughrider Room, Capitol

18 \_\_\_\_\_ Water Topics Overview Committee, Roughrider Room, Capitol

16-18 \_\_\_\_\_ ND Petroleum Council Annual Meeting, Rough Rider Center, Watford City

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

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

23 \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Reform and Relief Advisory Committee, Roughrider Room, Capitol

24 \_\_\_\_\_ Budget Section, Senate Chamber, Capitol

24-25 \_\_\_\_\_ County Tour to Eddy, Foster, McHenry, Sheridan and Wells Counties

25 \_\_\_\_\_ Government Finance Committee, Roughrider Room, Capitol

## October

8-9 \_\_\_\_\_ Western Dakota Energy Association Annual Meeting, Rough Rider Center, Watford City

14-15 \_\_\_\_\_ County Tour to Kidder, Logan, McIntosh and Stutsman Counties

19-25 \_\_\_\_\_ National Retirement Security Week


26-28 \_\_\_\_\_ NDACo Annual Conference, Bismarck Event Center

## November

2 \_\_\_\_\_ Daylight Savings Time Ends

11 \_\_\_\_\_ Veterans Day

17-19 \_\_\_\_\_ Dakota Territory Sheriffs Conference, Delta Marriott, Fargo



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