MACo news
Vol. 36 No. 5 May 2007

Highlights

Page 2
Mark Your Calendars

Page 3
Population Estimates for Montana Counties

Page 4
Stress Reaction

Page 5
County News

Page 6
Commissioner Profile: Vic Miller

Page 7
County Spotlight: Valley & Ravalli

Pages 8-11
NACo Legislative Conference

Page 12
NACo News

Pages 13-14
Announcements & Reminders

Pages 15-16
Thank You MACo Supporters

Page 17
Conclusions

Advertisements

Page 13
Joint Powers Trust, Stahly Engineering, Get 'Er Done Wiest, National County Government Week, Robert Peccia & Associates, Great Plains Towers Inc.

Page 14
MACo Risk Management Training, Lane & Associates Inc., MACo Health Care Trust, MACo Property & Casualty Insurance and Workers Compensation Insurance, Roscoe Steel & Culvert, Morrison-Maierle, MACo JPIA

Path to Eden: New Land Owners, New Neighbors

Provided by NACo, The Rural Landscape Institute, & MACo

Land ownership in Montana has changed dramatically over the past 15 years. Expansive ranch lands and majestic mountains are being recognized by outsiders for their aesthetic and recreational values. With this new popularity come new owners bringing new cultures and new lifestyles. The small, close-knit communities that lie within these portraits of paradise are feeling the pressures of change. Since change is inevitable, what can we do to embrace the differences while, at the same time, maintaining the critical elements that make being a Montanan special? Learn how the Rural Landscape Institute with the support of many statewide organizations including MACo is reaching out to newcomers with an educational DVD called *Path to Eden*. *Path to Eden* offers insight as to the opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities to the landscape and community that accompany the purchase of property in Montana.

***Path to Eden* Presentation**
MACo President John Prinkki presents *Path to Eden* Project Coordinator Shelby Chauvet with a sponsorship check after their presentation of *Path to Eden* at the MACo Midwinter Conference.

The *Path to Eden* DVD is a multi-media tool intended to encourage new landowners to be good neighbors within their new community. Topics include Community, Ranch Manager Selection, Water Rights, Range Stewardship, Noxious Weeds, Wildlife Management, and Rural Values.

For More Information

Each county will be receiving a copy of *Path to Eden.* If you would like to purchase a copy or have any questions and/or feedback about the *Living Eden* process, you are strongly encouraged to contact:

Shelley Chauvet, Project Manager
4110 Lincoln Road
Helena, MT 59602
406.799.7948
shelley_chauvet@yahoo.com
or
The Rural Landscape Institute
7 East Beall Street
Bozeman, MT 59715
406.522.7654
info@cookcenter.org

WIR Conference heads for Alaska

The Western Interstate Region Conference (WIR), May 9-11 in Fairbanks (North Star Borough), Alaska, is currently open for registration.

Educational session topics include pandemic influenza, community wildfire protection plans, green building standards and practices, the Farm Bill, a presentation of *Path to Eden* and more!

Go to http://www.naco.org/ for registration.

Mark Your Calendars

May	
May 8 - 12	WIR, Fairbanks, AK
June	
June 5	District 4 & 5: 10 a.m. at the Choteau County Club, Choteau: Blaine Co., Choteau Co., Hill Co., Cascade Co., Glacier Co, Pondera Co., Teton Co., Toole Co., Liberty Co.
June 7	District 1, 2 & 3: 9 a.m. at the Broadus Community Center (107 S. Wilbur Street): Daniels Co. , Phillips Co., Roosevelt Co., Sheridan Co., Valley Co., Dawson Co., Garfield Co., McCone Co., Prairie Co., Richland Co., Wibaux, Carter Co., Custer Co., Fallon Co., Powder River Co., Rosebud Co., Treasure Co.
June 10 - 14	Montana Assoc. of Clerk of Courts Annual Conference, Cut Bank
June 11	District 10 & 11: 10 a.m., Superior: Flathead Co., Lake Co., Lincoln Co., Sanders Co., Mineral Co., Missoula Co., Ravalli Co.
June 13	District 6 & 7: 10 a.m. at the Geyser Senior Center, Stanford: Fergus Co., Musselshell Co., Petroleum Co., Wheatland Co., Golden Valley Co., Big Horn Co., Carbon Co., Stillwater Co., Sweet Grass Co., Judith Basin Co., Yellowstone Co.
June 14	District 8, 9 & 12: 10 a.m. at the Beaverhead Search & Rescue, Dillon: Broadwater Co., Jefferson Co., Lewis & Clark Co., Beaverhead Co., Anaconda-Deer Lodge Co., Gallatin Co., Meagher Co., Park Co., Granite Co., Butte-Silver Bow Co., Madison Co., Powell Co.
June 15	Insurance Trustees- Defense Council Joint Meeting
June 18 - 22	Montana Association of Oil, Gas & Coal Counties Annual Meeting, Lewistown (Tentative)
June 20 - 22	Montana Sheriffs & Peace Officers Assoc. Annual Conference, Helena
June 27	MACo Board of Directors Meeting
June 27 - 29	Montana County Attorneys Association Annual Conference, West Yellowstone
July	
July 12 - 18	NACo Annual Conference, Richmond, VA
August	
Aug. 7 - 10	Western Planners Association Conference, Dickinson, ND
Aug. 20 - 24	Montana Clerk & Recorders Association Annual Conference, Great Falls
September	
Sept. 17 - 19	Montana Treasurers Annual Conference, Missoula
Sept. 23 - 26	MACo Annual Conference, Great Falls
Sept. 30 - Oct. 4	Magistrates Fall Conference

MACo News Invites Letters to the Editor

If you have a compliment, complaint, or suggestion, please let us know!

Please include your name and county with your letter, and email your thoughts to:

macopb@maco.cog.mt.us
or
mail to MACo News, 2715 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT 59602-1213.

Phone: 406.444.4380

Attorney General's Opinion

Question(s) Posed:

1. Does Mont. Code Ann. § 20-15-209 require legislative approval of a proposed new community college district before or after the organizational election conducted under Mont. Code Ann. § 20-15-203?
2. Under Mont. Code Ann. § 20-15-209 does the Legislature consider a proposed new community college district only if the Board of Regents affirmatively recommends approval?

Attorney General's Opinion:

1. The Legislature has the final authority under Montana law to approve creation of a new community college district.
2. The approval of the Legislature for the creation of a new community college district required by Mont. Code Ann. § 20-15-209 occurs after the approval by the local voters but before the Board of Regents issues its organizational order.
3. Montana law does not require approval of the Board of Regents for creation of the district, but does require the Board to make a recommendation.

Get a Wonderfully Crafted *MACo Pin*

Made by *Montana Silversmiths*
Only $25

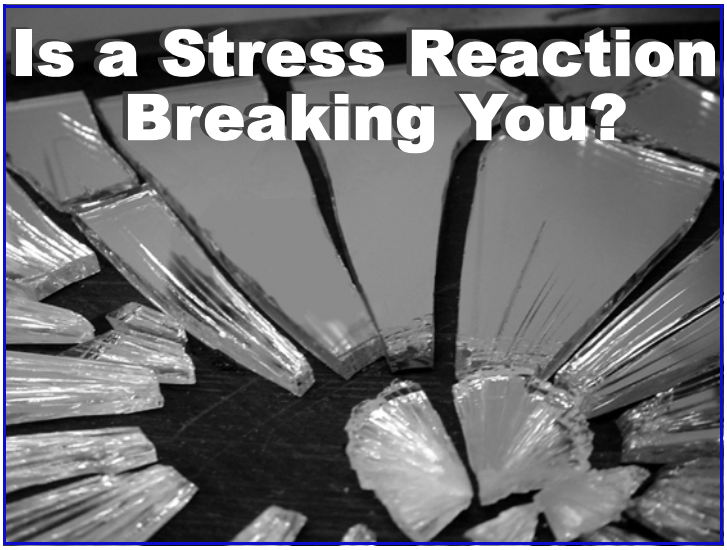
Population Estimates for Montana Counties:

April 1, 2005 to July 1, 2006

County	July 1, 2005	July 1, 2006	Difference
Beaverhead County	**8,778**	**8,743**	**-35**
Big Horn County	13,076	13,035	-41
Blaine County	**6,634**	**6,615**	**-19**
Broadwater County	4,506	4,572	66
Carbon County	**9,895**	**9,903**	**8**
Carter County	1,320	1,321	1
Cascade County	**79,490**	**79,385**	**-105**
Chouteau County	5,464	5,417	-47
Custer County	**11,256**	**11,151**	**-105**
Daniels County	1,825	1,774	-51
Dawson County	**8,629**	**8,624**	**-5**
Deer Lodge County	8,986	8,888	-98
Fallon County	**2,709**	**2,717**	**8**
Fergus County	11,503	11,496	-7
Flathead County	**83,079**	**85,314**	**2,235**
Gallatin County	78,262	80,921	2,659
Garfield County	**1,211**	**1,244**	**33**
Glacier County	13,522	13,578	56
Golden Valley County	**1,146**	**1,150**	**4**
Granite County	2,932	2,909	-23
Hill County	**16,276**	**16,403**	**127**
Jefferson County	11,136	11,256	120
Judith Basin County	**2,170**	**2,142**	**-28**
Lake County	28,275	28,606	331
Lewis and Clark County	**58,387**	**59,302**	**915**
Liberty County	1,967	1,863	-104
Lincoln County	**19,182**	**19,226**	**44**
McCone County	1,776	1,760	-16
Madison County	**7,252**	**7,404**	**152**
Meagher County	1,961	1,968	7
Mineral County	**4,033**	**4,057**	**24**
Missoula County	100,033	101,417	1,384
Musselshell County	**4,474**	**4,586**	**112**
Park County	15,965	16,084	119
Petroleum County	**462**	**474**	**12**
Phillips County	4,135	4,098	-37
Pondera County	**6,084**	**6,032**	**-52**
Powder River County	1,714	1,756	42
Powell County	**6,968**	**6,997**	**29**
Prairie County	1,090	1,074	-16
Ravalli County	**39,822**	**40,582**	**760**
Richland County	9,163	9,295	132
Roosevelt County	**10,601**	**10,496**	**-105**
Rosebud County	9,279	9,261	-18
Sanders County	**11,009**	**11,138**	**129**
Sheridan County	3,517	3,447	-70
Silver Bow County	**32,876**	**32,801**	**-75**
Stillwater County	8,468	8,646	178
Sweet Grass County	**3,698**	**3,760**	**62**
Teton County	6,174	6,115	-59
Toole County	**5,174**	**5,073**	**-101**
Treasure County	694	680	-14
Valley County	**7,144**	**6,995**	**-149**
Wheatland County	2,025	1,959	-66
Wibaux County	**944**	**909**	**-35**
Yellowstone County	136,586	138,213	1,627
Montana State	**934,737**	**944632**	**9895**

Common Signs & Signals of a Stress Reaction

Provided by Federal Occupation Health, Department of Health and Human Services, http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/



You have experienced a traumatic event. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common and quite normal for people to experience aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes, the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear. The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last days, weeks, months or occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support from your co-workers, family and friends, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be helpful. This does not imply mental illness or weakness but it simply indicates that this particular event was just too powerful to manage alone.

If you have physical symptoms which cause you concern, contact your physician.

Common Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction

Physical	Mental	Emotional	Behavioral
Fatigue	Tendency to Blame Others	Anxiety	Changes in Normal Activities
Insomnia	Confusion	Survivor Guilt/Self-Blame	Change in Speech
Muscle Tremors	Poor Attention	Grief	Withdrawal from Others
Twitches	Inability to Make Decisions	Denial	Emotional Outbursts
Difficulty Breathing	Heightened or Lowered Alertness	Severe Pain (Rare)	Change in Communication
Rapid Breathing	Poor Concentration	Fear of Loss/of Going Crazy	Suspiciousness
Elevated Blood Pressure	Forgetfulness	Uncertainty	Inability to Rest
Rapid Heartbeat	Trouble Identifying Known Objects or People	Loss of Emotional Control	Substance Abuse
Chest Pain	Increased or Decreased Awareness of Surroundings	Emotional Numbness	Intensified Startle Reflex
Headaches	Poor Problem-Solving	Depression	Antisocial Acts
Visual Difficulties	Loss of Sense of Time, Place or Person	Lack of Capacity for Enjoyment	Pacing
Nausea/Vomiting	Disturbed Thinking	Apprehension	Erratic Movements
Thirst	Nightmares	Intense Anger	Decreased Personal Hygiene
Hunger	Inescapable Images	Irritability	Diminished Sexual Drive
Dizziness	Flashbacks	Agitation	Appetite Disturbance
Excessive Sweating	Suicidal Ideas	Helplessness	Prolonged Silences
Chills	Disbelief	Mistrust	Accident Prone
Weakness	Change in Values	Feelings of Worthlessness	
Fainting	Search for Meaning	Apathy/Boredom	

This information is not intended to serve as medical advice. If you experience symptoms that cause you concern, please consult your physician.

County News

New Park County Road Brochure

Park County has 1152 miles of county roads. Approximately three cents of each tax dollar received by Park County is spent on maintenance, grading, and plowing of county roads.

This brochure provides a broad overview of Montana county road law and answers basic questions about county roads. Various questions include 1. What is a county road?, 2. How are county roads created?, Who is responsible for maintaining county roads?, 4. If I live on a county road, how often will the county road be maintained?, 5. If my road has been maintained by the county, does this mean it is a county road?, 6. I live in a subdivision, who is responsible for maintaining the roads in the subdivision? All of the questions and more are answered in Park County's latest Road Brochure.

As Seen in New Brochure
Convicts' Grade, east of Livingston, Montana, 1914.

Tara DePuy, Civil Attorney for Park County, drafted the FAQ and answers and Jerry Brekke, historian for Park County, designed the historical photos as well as the document's layout.

For your own copy of the newly created brochure, please contact Park County Montana:
Park County Montana, 414 East Callender Street, Livingston, MT 59047; (406) 222-4106; (406) 222-4100 (fax); www.parkcounty.org

Tidbits: Pieces of News About Various Montana's Counties

New National Council on the Humanities Member

Jamie Dogget, Meagher County Commissioner and Vice Chair of NACo's Transportation Steering Committee, was recently confirmed as a member of the National Council on the Humanities. She is the first Montanan to serve on the council. The National Council on the Humanities is an independent grant-making agency of the U. S. government dedicated to supporting educational and public programs in history, literature, philosophy, languages, and other humanities disciplines.

Airport of the Year

The Montana Aeronautics Division named both Lincoln Airport, Lewis and Clark County, and Plains Airport, Sanders County, "Co-Airports of the Year" at the 2007 Montana Aviation Conference that was held in Missoula in March.

Job Notice:

The Board of Madison County Commissioners will accept applications until May 21, 2007 at noon for the full-time position of Planning Director. Job is based in Virginia City, the County seat. Job offers challenging work with good people, in a rural but growing part of beautiful SW Montana. Starting wage DOE. Interested candidates may obtain a job description and application information by contacting the Madison County Commission Office at (406) 843-4277, or via e-mail at madco@madison.mt.gov. EOE.

Request for Proposals

Sealed proposals are invited by the Broadwater County Commissioners, for an Assessment and Report on the Feasibility of the Implementation of Impact fees, Broadwater County, MT.

The scope of work shall be to provide an overall assessment and recommendations to Broadwater County, Montana for the Feasibility of Implementation of Impact Fees for Impact Fees for economic relief of impacts due to development. A detailed scope of work may be obtained from the Broadwater County Planning Office, 1275 Maple Street, Suit F, Helena, Montana 59601 (Telephone 406-266-9210).

Five (5) copies of the proposal must be received by 4:00 p.m. on May 25, 2007 at the Broadwater County Planning Office. Proposals will be reviewed at the June 4, 2007 Commissioners Meeting. Priced Proposals will be submitted in a separate sealed envelope accompanying the proposal. Proposals received after 4:00 p.m. on May 25th will not be considered.

The Owner reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any irregularities or informalities.

County Spotlight

Who is Vic Miller: Profile

Vic Miller: Blaine County Commissioner

In this issue, MACo spotlights a fun-loving Blaine County commissioner. Here are a few facts to help you better know Vic Miller:

Who is Vic Miller?
Good question. A lot of people want to know that haha.
If you have a spouse, what is her name? Nope, divorced.
How many years have you been in public service?
Some would say when I was born—officially since about 1984 in various capacities.
What is your occupation?
Blaine County Commissioner, Professional Musician, Business Consultant
What did you do professionally before becoming a commissioner?
Social Work/Psychology Aide in Bad Kreuznach, Germany (Military Experience); Instructor Advisor Committee, Fort Belknap College; Grant Writing and Administration; Mayor, City of Harlem; Upward Bound; Business Consultant; Professional Musician/Percussionist; Plant Manager, Cenex Soil Service; Tutor, Flathead County Community College
Education. Where and what did you study?
Northern Montana College, Teacher Training Fellow, second Bachelor's in Education (Social Studies Broadfield), OPI certified 8-12, Social Science Department Distinction; Montana State University, Master's of Education in Adult and Higher Education (emphasis in adult education), completed course work toward doctorate, ABD; University of Montana Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (emphasis in economics); U.S. Army Academy of Health Sciences, Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Ford Fellow, Institute for the Second Generation of Tribal College Leaders held at Montana State University in conjunction with Salish Kootenai College and Ford Foundation (Charter Class); Rural Community College Initiative Project; Certified NxLevel Instructor for Start-Up Businesses, U.S. West Foundation, 1996, recertified 2001, certified "Tilling the Soils of Opportunity", 2001
What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
Recount votes on a contested sheriff's election
Name three people (living or dead) you'd invite to dinner (can be anyone).
Jesus Christ, Thomas Jefferson, Terri Clark
What is a dream you have?
Whoa, I am pleading the fifth.
What is something people would be surprised to learn about you? My shyness
What is the most adventurous thing you've ever done? Not sure, I ain't afraid of much. Life is one big adventure.
What is your favorite way to relax? Behind a drum set, fixing drums, or time at home
What are you most proud of? Serving people
What is something you read every morning and/or night? Drum magazines
What is your favorite meal?
Popcorn and Tab
What is your pet peeve? People who are greedy, egotistical, controlling, and plain ornery just because the law lets them
What is your motto? The same as my blood type: Be positive
What was the last book you read? I am currently reading "Lyndon Johnson, Master of the Senate."
What is your favorite movie? Tender Mercies
What is your favorite music? Would have to be rock and roll, but you know, there is good music and good music played badly
What is your favorite sport? Bull Riding

If you would like to contact Commissioner Vic Miller, he can be reached by phone or email: 406-353-2819 (home), 406-357-3250 (work), *vmiller@co.blaine.mt.gov (email).*

County Spotlight

Agencies Seeking Public Comment on Proposed Revisions to Valley County Wind Energy Project

Provided by John Fahlgren, BLM & Hoyt Richards, DNRC

Glasgow—The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) are seeking public comment on a revised proposal by Wind Hunter LLC related to the development of the Valley County Wind Energy Project, north of Glasgow.

The revision proposes that Wind Hunter LLC scale back the size of the proposed wind farm from 500 Megawatt (MW) to 170 MW and the related transmission line from 230 kilovolt (kV) to 69 kV.

Cooperatively, the agencies have released a supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) and a draft Finding of No Significant Impact, which addresses the modified proposal. These documents provide the public with the current information regarding the construction and maintenance of the project. The comprehensive supplemental EA describes the agencies' objectives, the alternatives being considered, and describes the potential environmental impacts.

"We are seeking public comment on this proposed revision, as we want this to be an open process," explained DNRC's Glasgow Unit Manager, Hoyt Richards. "It is an attempt to meet all the parties' needs and desires related to this wind farm, and that includes the public's concerns."

These documents can be viewed or downloaded at http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/trust/wind/valley_county.asp or you can request a copy of the EA from John Fahlgren at the BLM's Glasgow Office at 406-228-3757 (john_fahlgren@blm.gov).

If you would like your comments considered regarding the construction, maintenance, or operation of the proposed wind farm, please submit written comments by May 4th to the BLM's Glasgow Field Station , P.O. Box 871, Glasgow, MT 59230.

Primary Election Preliminary Results

Despite Low Voter Turnout, Commissioner Race Narrows

By Anthony Quirini, Ravalli Republic

Voters trickled into the polls and narrowed the competition in the Ravalli County commissioner race. According to preliminary results, Democrats James Rokosch, vying for the District 1 seat, and fellow Democrat Kathleen Driscoll, vying for the District 4 seat, led by a safe margin in the partisan primary.

Republican Steve Hall led David Hurtt by a mere two votes in the GOP District 1 race after early counts. In District 4, Republican Carolyn Weisbecker led the race with some 80-plus votes more than fellow Republican Richard O'Brien. Republican Gary Zebrowski dropped out of the race but still appeared on the ballot.

In District 1 on the Democratic ticket, Rokosch led by 300-plus votes over fellow Democrats Rich Marcus and Vicky Varichak.

In District 4, Driscoll garnered 1,113 votes compared to 175 votes for fellow Democrat DeAnne Harbaugh. Voters chose to elect two more commissioners and shorten term lengths in November forcing two special elections.

In Ravalli County's special general election June 5 voters will elect three candidates to represent three separate commission districts: District 1, the Florence area; District

("Election Results" Continued on Page 17 . . .)

Report: NACo Transportation Steering Committee

By Jamie Doggett, Meagher County Commissioner

Leadership on the NACo Transportation Steering Committee arrived in Washington DC one day early to review several funding issues facing federal, state, and county transportation. We met for four hours, hearing from industry, government, and county officials, getting perspectives on the Fuel Tax and Alternatives for Transportation Funding; Future Highway and Public Transportation Finance; Current Trends and Emerging Issues in Surface Transportation Finance; and The Federal Excise Tax on Gasoline and the Highway Trust Fund. We were joined by Janet Kavinoky, Director of Transportation Infrastructure, U.S. Chamber of Commerce who gave an overview of a recent transportation survey the Chamber completed.

The fuel tax has provided stable and growing revenue for transportation programs for many decades, but this tax and other special taxes that highway users now pay are becoming unreliable funding sources. Transportation officials see two possible threats to the viability of the established finance arrangements:

-Changes in automotive technology, increases in fuel prices, or the introduction of new regulations on energy or the environment could depress fuel consumption and fuel tax revenue; and

-The user-fee principle of highway financing may be eroding, as applications of user-fee revenues proliferate, and as dependence on revenue from sources other than user fees grows.

However, Federal motor fuel taxes have lost about one-third of their purchasing power since 1993 because they are not indexed to inflation.

County officials on the Transportation Steering committee discussed the gas tax, its future, and what can be done since the original funding mechanism was established in 1956 by President Eisenhower, dedicating fuel, and heavy vehicle taxes. Admittedly, a lot has changed since those days, including more cars and heavy container trucks and industry using our highways more than could have been predicted in 1956. Several states and counties are looking at toll roads, and while not an immediate possibility in Montana there needs to be some consideration of all options. Montana's roads, highways and airports need attention just as other states. The Highway Trust Fund is likely to be in deficit before the end of the SAFETEA-LU authorization period or through 2009.

As would be expected, there were few decisions from our special meeting, but the discussion will lead to further legislation and dialog with Congress, states and counties.

The Steering Committee's four subcommittees (Highway-Highway Safety; Mass Transit-Railroad; Airports; and Ports) met. There was general discussion of relevant issues within each subcommittee as well as comments leading to NACo policy. I enjoy attending each subcommittee and learning the different issues facing commissioners across the country.

Margaret Cummisky, staff director of the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over airport and aviation, passenger and rail freight, and port legislation was a guest speaker. Also addressing the committee was David Heymfeld from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which has jurisdiction over highway, transit, aviation, airports, and rail and port legislation. They both gave informative perspectives on the current legislative process in the new Congress.

NACo staff coordinated a special workshop for conference participants titled: “Future Options for the Federal Highway and Transit Programs”. Several members of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission were on hand to give their perspectives. Another workshop, “Don't be Late for Your Plane,” looked at reauthorization of the federal airport and aviations programs and featured staff from relevant Congressional committees.

Special items of note from each committee include Aviation, Highways and Transit, Transportation Funding, and Amtrak.

The Transportation Steering Committee passed a resolution on the Reauthorization of the Federal Airport and Aviation Program. The committee presented a policy statement which can be found in your NACo news or by emailing me at cattlqn@mtintouch.net. We also had testimony on Port Security passing a resolution which was rewritten and reintroduced due to continued concerns from counties with last year's proposed purchase of American ports by Dubai Port Authority. This resolution was eventually passed out of the Justice and Public Safety Committee.

Report: Justice & Public Safety Steering Committee

By Gary Fjelstad, Rosebud County Commissioner

The NACo Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee met in Washington D.C. on March 4th, 2007, as part of the NACo Annual Legislative Conference. There were a number of outstanding speakers that presented to the Steering Committee. After a brief overview by Tony Bennet, the Chair of Public Justice and Public Safety, our first presenter was David Hagy, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice and Programs. Hagy's presentation dealt with the non-violent, mentally-ill persons in jail and reducing jail recidivism. The next presenter was LaRochelle Young, Legislative Assistant to Senator Brownback of Kansas.

There was a lot of discussion by the Members of the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee about the loss of Medicaid Benefits for pre-trial defendants. Under current federal law, Medicaid benefits stop when an individual is incarcerated, leaving the county responsible for medical costs. NACo's position is benefits should continue until conviction. The counties should not be responsible for those individual medical expenses prior to conviction. It was unanimous in the Justice and Public Safety meeting to endorse a resolution asking for a change in the federal law/rule to recognize the date of conviction as the determining factor for Medicaid benefits instead of the date of incarceration. The rule is 453.1000. Roughly 3000 counties in the United States are required to pay medical costs of these inmates until the federal benefits are restored, which can take up to three months after an inmate is released. Many local officials are upset that the benefits are terminated regardless of a person's guilt or innocence. Even if a person is released and not charged or charged and later acquitted, the federal medical benefits are terminated. One county in Minnesota reported this policy cost them three million dollars a year annually. The Justice and Public Safety Committee offered a draft resolution for all counties to adopt and send to their respective congressional delegations asking for the federal rule to be changed. Rosebud County has provided a copy of their resolution concerning Medicaid benefits for pre-trial defendants.

Homeland Security

Michael Alexander and Jessica Herrera-Flanigan presented information on Federal Initiatives impacting county governments. Both these individuals, one from the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the other on House Committee on Homeland Security.

Interoperability

There was also general discussion and reports in regards to radio communications, FCC requirements, and changes regarding interoperability and telecommunications as a whole. The Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee encourages people to register for interoperability academy that is going to be held in Ramsey County Minnesota, May 17 and 18. NACo has funding for people to attend this program and is looking for teams to participate. You can find out more information about the interoperability summit by visiting the NACo website at www.naco.org.

At the conclusion of the Legislative Conference, the delegation of Montana Commissioners met on Wednesday, March 7th with the Montana Congressional Delegation and presented information from our respective steering committees as well as our state association. Most Commissioners have read through recent correspondence that our congressional delegation has made progress in many issues affecting local government in regards to PILT, the highway bill, and secure rural schools; and there was also unanimous support for the federal rule change in regards to inmate medical costs.

In summary, the NACo Legislative Conference was very informative and productive in regards to issues facing Montana counties. It will take a lot of continual follow-up work in contacting the congressional delegations to see our projects are followed through.

Report: NACo Labor & Employment Steering Committee

By Cyndi Johnson, Pondera County Commissioner

In March 2007, the National Association of Counties Labor and Employment Steering Committee focused on the following major issues:

Once again, reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, federally funded workforce training programs is a priority. Although the House and Senate (by unanimous consent) passed their respective reauthorization bills, HR 27 and SR 1021 last session, it wasn't finalized. WIA reauthorization will be considered in the 110th congressional session.

The second issue will be WIA appropriations. Through Continuing Resolution, Labor Appropriations for FY 2007 were funded primarily at 2006 levels. The Bush Administration's budget includes significant funding cuts for WIA. At a minimum, sustaining current funding levels is a priority.

The third is to build stronger relationships with the Labor Department. The committee would like to continue enhancing communication and cooperation with the Labor Department regarding workforce programs' issues, including funding, reporting systems, administrative costs, and program consolidation issues.

The fourth is workforce and economic development linkages. The committee recognizes the importance of workforce and economic development collaborations. The committee will foster partnership between workforce development and economic development and support legislation that uses such linkages to improve the workforce system for all workers.

The final issue was retirement savings. The committee will work to ensure that any new plans or legislation do not detrimentally affect local public sector pensions and retire

("Labor and Employment" Continued on Page 17 . . .)

Report: Agriculture & Rural Affairs Steering Committee

By Kathy Bessette, Hill County Commissioner

Agriculture Subcommittee

Peter Gage, Field Administrator for 25 x '25 spoke about his organization and the Action Plan they have developed. Commissioner Peggy Beltrone, Cascade County, who serves on the board of directors spoke to the group about the goals of 25 x '25. Anyone wishing more information should contact Gage at pgage@25x25.org.

Some of the information discussed was:

- Vision: By the year 2025, Americas' farms, ranches and forests will provide 25 percent of the total energy consumed in the United States, while continuing to produce safe, abundant and affordable food, feed and fiber.
- While energy demand in the United States is projected to increase 24 percent by 2025, this Action Plan, combined with strong efficiency measures, provides a roadmap for safely, securely, and profitably meeting America's energy needs.
- Specifically, the Action Plan calls for supportive policies in each of five areas:
  - Increasing production of renewable energy
  - Delivering renewable energy to markets
  - Expanding renewable energy markets
  - Improving energy efficiency and productivity
  - Strengthening conservation of natural resources and the environment

Two sample resolutions supporting the 25 x '25 alliance were presented and Gage urged all counties to pass the resolution supporting the concept.

Rural Development Subcommittee

Marcie McLaughlin, Director, National Policy Programs, Rural Policy Research Institute presented a Farm Bill Policy Brief provided by her agency.

- Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) seeks to create a broader public policy discussion regarding the need for a more regionally-focused, asset-based national rural policy, centered around innovation and entrepreneurship, in both the public and private sectors. This new approach has great potential to provide an alternative framework for federal commitments to rural economic and community development as part of the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization.
- RUPRI's alternative approaches to rural development:
- Maintain structure and tools for existing programs, but refine program targeting.
- Focus on new business formation, supported with rural private investment.
- Move toward greater regionalized funding.

According to McLaughlin, rural is no longer synonymous with agriculture and only 1% of Americans live on farms. In America only 440 counties out of a total of 3066 counties are classified by the Economic Research Service as "farming dependent."

Rural poverty is deep and persistent and highest in the most remote rural areas. High and persistent poverty is disproportionately rural (340 out of 386 total counties).

Food Safety Subcommittee

Policy Analyst for USDA, Homeland Security, Diane DiPietro talked about food safety issues. She stressed the economic and health interest in keeping food safe plus the importance of maintaining partnerships with federal, state, and local governments as well as the private sector. Those relationships are imperative to enhance security efforts to keep food safe.

Voluntary security guidance materials provided by USDA and HHS/FDA should be reviewed. They are: 1) Guide for Security Practices in Transporting Agriculture and Food Commodities; 2) Pre-harvest Security Guidelines and Checklist 2006. Visit the EDEN sit for bio-security and planning tips at http://www.ede.

Committee members expressed concern about country of origin labeling:

- Americans must take pride in our farms and ranches - trust American quality and practices and purchase American products.
- American consumers have no idea what practices are being used in places like Mexico. China still uses raw human waste as fertilizer.
- USDA states that "country of origin" labeling is more of a marketing tool than a safety/quality mechanism. All committee members feel COOL must be put in place and the sooner, the better.
- Animal ID - some areas have been doing a lot of work with animal ID's while others have concerns about implementing the program.

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee

Rob Larew, Staff Director of the House Agriculture Committee discussed the Farm Bill at length. Representative Colin Peterson from Minnesota is chair of the committee which Larew stated is a bi-partisan group that is working well together.

Key points of the Administration's 2007 Farm Bill:

- Converting the current price-based counter cyclical

("Agriculture & Rural Affairs" Continued on Page 11 . . .)

Nationwide Retirement Solutions
a Nationwide Financial company
NACo National Association of Counties
The Voice of America's Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in Partnership with Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS), and state associations of counties, provides county employees with a Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program.

Since its inception in 1980, NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement program available to county employees.

NACo Launches Obesity Initiative:

Survey to Help County Officials Define Their Role in Obesity Prevention

By Peggy Beltrone, Cascade County Commissioner

Rising obesity levels in citizens in all counties put our nation at risk of raising the first generation of children whose life expectancy *decreases*. The vast majority of research and funding to solve this problem is targeted at urban and suburban areas, despite the fact that citizens in more rural areas often have reduced opportunities for physical activity as well as obesity levels that outstrip more urbanized areas.

Please be on the lookout for the NACo Rural Obesity Prevention Survey. It is the cornerstone of an effort to gauge County Commissioner perceptions about the extent of the obesity problem in their communities and the tools needed to reduce the overweight and/or obesity levels in adult and youth populations.

This is the first time a nationwide group of rural policymakers will describe the problems and suggest solutions to obesity. "The NACo Center for Sustainable Communities has gone to bat for rural communities in securing the funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for this research," said Cascade County Commissioner Peggy Beltrone, chair of the NACo Rural Obesity Prevention Initiative.

"A primary objective is to come up with a common set of defining issues/challenges specific to rural America and a corresponding series of recommended policies/action steps that can be utilized by the Foundation and other stakeholders in the arena to positively impact rural communities," Center Director Martin Harris said.

The initiative was unveiled at NACo's March gathering in Washington, D.C. The survey will be released in April, and workshops will be presented during the Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference in Fairbanks and the Annual Conference in Richmond.

One of the expressed goals of the project is to have a report for US Senator Max Baucus to use during his Rural Philanthropy Summit to be held in Missoula in August. The purpose of this summit is to highlight reasons for more philanthropic giving in rural states.

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Agriculture & Rural Affairs: *Continued from Page 10*

program to a revenue-based program that is responsive to actual conditions and provides a strong safety net.

- Reforming and modernizing the marketing assistance loan program for program commodities.
- Tightening payment limitations and working to close payment loopholes. To receive commodity payments, producers must meet a limit on Adjusted Gross Income of $200,000 (reduced from $2.5 million).
- An additional $7.8 to protect our natural resources through conservation programs by increasing the acreage limit on the Wetlands Reserve Program from 2.5 to 3.5 million acres.
- Consolidating the cost-share programs into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and creating a regional water enhancement program with an additional $4.2 billion if funding.
- Continuing the Conservation Reserve Program at the current acreage limit and focusing program benefits on lands that provide the greatest environmental benefit.
- Includes more that $1.6 billion in new renewable energy funding for bioenergy and biobased product research, renewable energy systems, and loan guarantees for cellulosic ethanol projects in rural areas.
- Includes $1.6 billion in guaranteed loans to complete the rehabilitation of more that 1,200 Rural Critical Access Hospitals and $500 million to reduce the backlog of rural infrastructure projects such as water and waste disposal loans and grants.
- Providing nearly $5 billion to significantly increase the support of fruit and vegetable producers.
- Providing $3.2 billion to improve nutrition assistance programs.
- Increasing trade programs by nearly $400 million to continue the creation, expansion, and maintenance of agricultural exports.

The 2007 Farm Bill proposals spend approximately $10 billion less than the cost of the 2002 Farm Bill over the past five years (excluding disaster aid).

Jim Fitzgerald, USDA, Chief of Staff for the office of Undersecretary for Rural Development spoke about the Farm Bill also. One item to note is the fact that many of the grants that were available are changing from grants to a guaranteed loan program. This committee had no new resolutions.

Innovative Purchasing Alliance Saves Counties, Cities, Schools, and Non-Profits $735 million on $5 Billion in Purchases

Provided by Jim Philipps & Steve Swendiman, NACo

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Marking its 10-year anniversary, an innovative government purchasing alliance has saved counties, cities, schools, and non-profit organizations across the country $735 million on $5 billion in purchases, officials representing the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance announced on April 12, at the National Press Club.

U.S. Communities provides a money-saving national purchasing forum for local and state government agencies, school districts (K-12), higher education, and non-profits nationwide by pooling the purchasing power of tens of thousands of public agencies in the U.S. and Canada. The alliance was founded in 1996 by the National Association of Counties (NACo), the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO).

The cumulative savings were immediate and have grown steadily since the purchasing alliance was implemented: $3 million saved in 1997; $8 million saved in 1998; $16 million saved in 1999; $29 million saved in 2000; $34 million saved in 2001; $48 million saved in 2002; $53 million saved in 2003; $74 million saved in 2004; $108 million saved in 2005; and $152 million saved in 2006. Officials estimate that U.S. Communities will generate $210 million in saving this year.

"Since the program's inception, counties, cities, schools, colleges, special districts, bureaus, townships, villages, towns, state agencies, and non-profit organizations have achieved more than

$735 million in hard dollar savings on purchases of commodities through the contracts," said Rick Grimm, chief executive officer of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing and chair of the U.S. Communities Board of Directors. "Total purchases have exceeded $5 billion over the 10 years of the program including 2007 estimates."

Grimm said U.S. Communities was born of the need for local agencies to find more efficient ways to purchase commodities and services. This was never more apparent than in 1996 when Congress decided to close Federal General Services Administration schedules to local agencies. In an effort to bring efficiencies and savings to local governments, the idea of a national buying cooperative took hold.

"While we suspected it would be successful, the savings, purchasing power, and reach of the alliance have far exceeded our expectations," Grimm said. "In 2006 alone, savings of $150 million were documented on purchases exceeding $1 billion. Today more than 20,000 public agencies are registered and participating in the program."

Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Fairfax County, Va., a founding member of the alliance, and an original member of the advisory board, said using the U.S. Communities program has "saved Fairfax County millions of dollars in purchases on a plethora of products including office and school supplies, computer products, office furniture, and industrial supplies."

Hyland cited the office and school supply program as a prime example of savings.

"By using the existing contract under Los Angeles County, Fairfax County saved more than $1.6 million in fiscal year 2006 on these supplies," Hyland said. "That $1.6 million a year plus significant savings from other alliance contracts allows us to fund other vital county services without having to ask for additional taxpayer assistance."

Nancy Locke, purchasing manager, Seattle, Wash., said the city has taken full advantage of the number of offerings though U.S. Communities, including office supplies, technology solutions, janitorial supplies, maintenance and repair supplies, and playground equipment.

"In 2006 we estimate our total savings at more than $350,000," Locke said. "In addition, the city of Seattle was able to piggyback on contracts and free our staff to work on more complicated solicitations for the city."

Darren Muci, director of operations, Wichita Public Schools, said, "Using the expertise of the school team members of U.S. Communities we have been able to build significant savings and improvements in the school product offerings."

Hyland said the soft dollar savings are as significant as the hard dollar savings. He again cited the Los Angeles County school supply contract as an example.

"In addition to hard dollar savings, are process or soft savings," Hyland said. "We no longer warehouse office and school supplies because the Los Angeles County contract requires 'just-in-time' delivery to our work sites. We no longer have to spend money on the bidding process because Los Angeles County incurred those costs on behalf of all users of the program."

According to the U.S. Communities Web site at www.uscommunities.org the primary advantages of the purchasing alliance are as follows:

- Competitively solicited contracts by a lead public agency;
- Most favorable public agency pricing;
- No cost to participate;
- Nationally sponsored by leading associations and purchasing organizations;
- Broad range of high quality products;
- Aggregates purchasing power of public agencies nationwide; and
- Managed by public purchasing professionals.

The alliance is guided by a national group of professional public purchasing advisors:

http://www.uscommunities.org/gpa/keyPart/ab.html.

For more information contact Jim Philipps at 202-942-4220, jphilipps@naco.org or Steve Swendiman at 202-942-4282, sswendiman@naco.org.

New Postage Rates

Provided by *County Comment,* a Publication of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners

The Governors of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) approved an increase in the price of a First-Class stamp to 41 cents, authorized the issuance of the Forever Stamp, approved shape-based pricing, and set May 14 as the date for implementation of these changes. However, they delayed implementation of new prices for periodicals and requested reconsideration for some mail classes.

USPS proposed new rates on May 3, 2006, and the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) issued its recommendation on Feb. 26, 2007. The Governors spent considerable time deliberating the PRC's recommendations—meeting six times and rewriting several drafts of their decision over the past 22 days—before voting on March 19th.

"We praise PRC for its early and thoughtful recommended decision," said Board of Governors Chairman James C. Miller III, "and appreciate the comprehensive analysis the Postal Service staff provided in its rate proposal."

Forever Stamp

The Governors approved the Forever Stamp, which will sell at the new 41-cent First-Class Mail one-ounce letter rate. The value on these stamps will always be the one-ounce letter rate and can be used for any future one-ounce letter mailing without extra postage.

"The Forever Stamp is a consumer innovation that delivers convenience and value and will help case the transition for mailing letters when prices change," said Chairman Miller.

Shape-based Pricing

The new prices also reflect differences in the costs of handling letters, large envelopes (flats), and packages. Mailers are encouraged to consider options available to reduce postage costs. For example, if the contents of a First-Class large envelope are folded and placed in a letter-sized envelope, mailers can reduce postage by as much as 39 cents per piece.

Request for Reconsideration

The Governors, however, requested reconsideration of the PRC's rate recommendations for Standard Mail flats (catalogs), the Non-machinable Surcharge for First-Class Mail letters, and the Priority Mail Flat-Rate Box.

- Standard Mail Flats: The Governors are concerned that price increases recommended by the PRC may impose an unnecessary degree of "rate shock" on the catalog industry, particularly small businesses. The recommended increase for some catalog mailers is as much as 40 percent, which is more than double what the Postal Service had proposed.
- Non-machinable Surcharge: The PRC decision on First Class Mail two-ounce and three ounce letters does not differentiate between machinable and non-machinable. The Governors believe this warrants further analysis to ensure there are incentives for mailers to provide letters that can be processed at lower cost on efficient sorting equipment.
- Priority Mail Flat-Rate Box: The PRC recommended a rate of $9.15 for the Priority Mail Flat-Rate Box, which is $1.05 above the current rate and 35 cents higher than the Postal Service proposal of $8.80. The Governors believe a rate below $9.00 would be more appropriate for this popular consumer and business product and would be cost-justified.

Delayed Implementation

The Board of Governors also delayed until July 15, 2007, implementation of the new prices for Periodicals (magazines and newspapers) to allow time for the publishing industry to update computer software and adjust to the complexity of the PRC-recommended rate structure for periodicals. USPS had proposed a single container charge for periodicals to encourage efficiency, but the PRC recommended 55 different prices based on container type, entry point, and level of sortation.

Note: The Postal Service has nine Governors who are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. They are members of the Board of Governors, which also includes the Postmaster General and the Deputy Postmaster General. Only the Governors can approve a PRC rate case recommendation, but the full Board sets the implementation date for the new prices.

MSAWWA/MWEA 2007 Annual Joint Conference

"Managing Water Infrastructure for Montana's Future"

The 2007 MSAWWA/MWEA (Montana Water Environment Association) annual joint conference is scheduled for May 9 - 11, 2007 in Butte Montana. This year's theme, "Managing Water Infrastructure for Montana's Future" is a concept important to all of us responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure to deliver clean water to households and discharge wastewater to our rivers and streams.

Preconference May 9, 2007

Each year, a pre-conference technical session is held on the day preceding the conference. This year the pre-conference will be hosted by MWEA. The theme for the 2007 preconference is "NPDES Permitting for the Future - emphasizing TMDL's and Nutrient Standards"

Conference May 10-11, 2007

For more information about the Annual Conference go to http://www.montana-awwa.org/conference.htm.

Announcements & Reminders

HOME Awards Announcement

FFY 2007 HOME Funded Projects The deadline for the FFY 2007 Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program grant application was February 16, 2007. Eight applicants competed for $2,048,507 in HOME Project funds. The Montana Department of Commerce has tentatively awarded $1,500,000 in funding to three of these projects.

Second Round of Funding The HOME Program did not receive sufficient fundable applications for CHDO-eligible activities to fully award the 2007 CHDO Set-Aside. The HOME Program will hold a second application round in accordance with the 2007 HOME Guidelines, for CHDO-eligible activities only. A total of $548,507 is available during the second round. The deadline for the second round is **August 1, 2007**. Applications for the second round of funding must be received at the HOME Program office by 5:00 pm on August 1, 2007, or postmarked before 5pm that day. Projects proposed within the city limits of Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula are eligible during this second round.

2007 Single Family Pilot Program Just over $2 million will be allocated to the 2007 Single Family Pilot Program, and dispersed among 11 districts of the state according to a formula that considers population and age of housing. Funding for the 2007 Pilot Program will be available on June 1, 2007 or on the date 2007 funds are released by HUD (whichever date occurs later) and will be reserved for each district for 12 months, beginning on the date funds are available. After 12 months, unused funds will be made available to other qualified entities on a statewide basis.

To participate in the Single-Family Pilot Program, eligible entities (cities, towns, counties, housing authorities, and Certified Housing Development Organizations) must submit a qualification package to the HOME program. Entities qualified for the Pilot Program in 2006 have no further obligations to qualify for 2007. For more information on the program, to obtain a copy of the qualification package, or to view the district funding levels for the 2007 Pilot Program, visit www.housing.mt.gov/Hous_HM_SF.asp.

County Courthouse Awards

May 7 is the deadline for the 2007 County Courthouse Award. The purpose of the award is to profile elected county officials who have improved the lives of citizens through outstanding governance and strong leadership.

From large metropolitan counties to suburban and rural counties, county executives, board members and commissioners are continually working to address many of our nation's most challenging issues, such as homeland security, air and water quality, information technology, health and human services, public safety, and a wealth of other priorities. Managing and prioritizing county's needs may be a commissioner's most challenging task.

These success stories are the foundation upon which other successes can be built. Those individuals selected for one of three awards, will gain national recognition for their county and will receive a $5,000 college scholarship to present to a student of their choice. All NACo Members are eligible for the award.
For more information contact: Dalen Harris, 202/942-4236.

Lake Missoula AGA Events

The Lake Missoula Chapter of the Association of Governmental Accountants (AGA) will be bringing Susan Nicosia to Missoula again this May for a follow up to last year's budget training. Many of the people who attended last year requested more time on the subject of budgeting issues. If you missed the 2006 training this is a good time to catch up. There will also be an additional two hours by Paul Sepp, CPA From Anderson Zurmuehlen & Co on internal controls. Currently we are considering May 22, 24, 25, 29, 31, or June 1. If you know someone else who would like to receive this information please email me at jennifercote@qwest.net.

If you have not received a flyer yet, the Montana CPA Society annual Governmental Auditing and Accounting Conference is May 10 in Great Falls. This is an excellent conference open to non-CPAs including staff, commissioners, councilpersons, etc. The speaker this year is Greg Allison who formerly worked at the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) (he wrote several guides you might use) and is currently at the North Carolina School of Government. He will be talking about several current accounting issues and common financial reporting deficiencies. Rick Reisig will also be addressing eight new Statements on Auditing Standards. While aimed towards the auditing community, knowledge of these new requirements will help finance officers and audit committees in auditor selection. The price is only $95 for a full day including lunch. Registration can be made online at www.mscpa.org or email me for a flyer by mail.

The last word is that the Lake Missoula AGA tries to present 16 hours of education each year. We have skipped a year of offering the Certified Government Finance Officer training courses, which are required to take the certification exam, because of lack of interest. If there are at least six people who are interested in the three sections we can schedule trainings again. Once you have completed the training you can take the exam at your own convenience at a computer exam center in Helena. Please email me if you would like more information.

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Conclusions

Election Results:
Continued from Page 7

4, the Hamilton area; and District 5, the south valley.

As for District 5, Independent candidate Carlotta Grandstaff's signatures were verified on Monday and she will campaign against incumbent Republican Howard Lyons. Her name did not appear on the primary ballot.

After voters cast their ballots in June, Ravalli County will be the first county in Montana to have a five-member county commission board.

District 1-Democrats:
Richard Marcus - 547
James Rokosch - 1,280
Vicky Varichak - 299

District 4 - Democrats:
Kathleen Driscoll - 1,901
DeAnne Harbaugh - 279

District 1 - Republicans:
Steve Hall - 1512
David Hurtt - 1626

District 4 - Republicans
Richard O'Brien - 1,244
Carolyn Weisbecker - 1,526
Gary Zebrowski - 361

Labor and Employment:
Continued from Page 9

ment plans that currently exist, particularly any Social Security Reform packages. The committee will continue to oppose mandatory Social Security coverage for county employers.

In August 2006, the committee passed a resolution concerning State Workforce Investment Act Plans. This resolution essentially urged Congress and US Department of Labor to ensure that state governors adhere to the Workforce Investment Act statutory and regulatory requirements regarding the renewal of state WIA plans. At the legislative conference, the Labor and Employment Committee proposed a resolution on funding for Workforce Development programs and reiterated their opposition to cuts in the Workforce Investment Act funds. Their goal is to fund the program at a minimum equal to the Fiscal Year 2005 funding levels.

While visiting with Montana's Congressional Delegation, Montana Commissioner delegates to the NACo Legislative Conference encouraged our Representative and Senators to support Workforce Investment and related programs.

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