NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

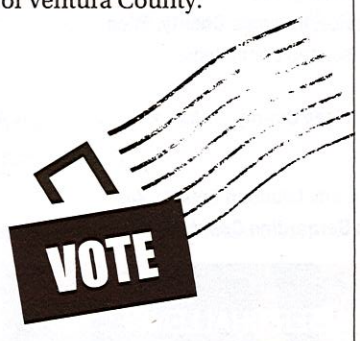
ARIZONA

A new law **prohibiting the use of hand-held phones** while driving went into effect June 1 in **PIMA COUNTY** to combat distracted driving, after a 3–2 vote May 2. Sheriff's deputies will now have the authority to pull over drivers they see breaking the law. If caught, drivers face a $100 fine or $250 if they're involved in an accident while on a phone. There is a 60-day grace period for drivers to get used to the new measure.

Fourteen states prohibit all drivers from using hand-held cell phones while driving; 37 states ban all cell phone use by novice or teen drivers and 20 states ban any cell phone use by school bus drivers.

CALIFORNIA

- **VENTURA COUNTY** supervisors narrowly approved a program to **aid and recruit farmworkers** in the county's $2 billion agriculture industry. Voting 3–2, the board gave the greenlight to the Farmworker Resource Program with funding of up to $200,000. Labor shortages in the county reach 25 percent during peak season, according to the Farm Bureau of Ventura County.



- The **SACRAMENTO COUNTY** Board of Supervisors earlier this month voted to adopt the election model created by the Voters Choice Act, an **election reform measure** signed into law in 2016 by Gov. Jerry Brown (D). The county is one of 14 in the state allowed to adopt the Voters Choice Act this year. All other counties will be allowed to adopt the reforms in 2020.

All registered voters will be sent a ballot 28 days prior to Election Day. They'll be able to return their ballot by mail, take it to a drop-off location or cast it in-person beginning the Saturday before Election Day at any vote center in the county.

ILLINOIS

DUPAGE COUNTY remains firm in its decision to **take a pass** — once again — on **legalizing video gambling.** County officials said businesses and a Veterans of Foreign Affairs post wanted to offer the games, first allowed by the state eight years ago. Following 90 minutes of discussions from community members June 13, the county board's finance committee declined to vote on the ordinance. DuPage was the first county in the state that decided against video gambling, citing potential social problems. Counties that allow video gambling receive 5 percent of each machine's profit.

INDIANA

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY and 14 other counties were recently selected to participate in the state's new **"On My Way" pre-K program.** The primarily rural counties will receive state funding to help families send their children to preschool. It's estimated that 6,700 4-year-olds would be eligible in the newly added 15 counties in the program.

State legislation requires the counties to contribute a minimum of 5 percent of the state's total investment in the county program, which allows participants to attend public or private preschools. To qualify for the program, a family of four cannot make more than $30,861 or 127 percent of the federal poverty guideline.

MAINE

PENOBSCOT COUNTY recently began offering a new education program to **female inmates,** its fastest-growing jail population. The pilot program offers a variety of free classes in a partnership with Riverside Adult Education Partnership, the University of Maine's College of Education and Human Development and Literacy Volunteers of Bangor.

The women get help with completing high school and preparing for college, child development and parenting and one-on-one tutoring in reading and writing. About 50 women have participated in the program, which started in January.

The University of Maine is tracking the numbers, including any recidivism.

MICHIGAN

Last fall, **CHIPPEWA COUNTY** and the City of Sault Ste. Marie planned a legal battle against Walmart to fight back against a **"dark store" loophole** that would have seen a loss of $370,000 after the retailer disputed its property tax assessment. But there's good news: The giant retailer backed down, withdrawing its appeal. "I would like to recognize the efforts that went into achieving this outcome," said County Administrator/CFO Jim German. "We also commend Walmart for seeing the community's side and taking the fair route in this matter."

MINNESOTA

In a heavy downpour, 150 people recently showed up on a Saturday morning when **HENNEPIN COUNTY** held **"Warrant Forgiveness Day"** to resolve warrants for people with misdemeanors. In all, 145 warrants were cleared for 96 people — with the oldest outstanding warrant from 22 years ago. The event was organized to help people clear or resolve their warrant without being arrested, resolving their cases after meeting with a public defender and a prosecutor.

Settlements included doing community service work at or near the event, receiving time

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CALIFORNIA

KERN COUNTY Supervisor Leticia Perez (l), first vice president, California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY** Public Health Director Trudy Raymundo unveil an original oil painting, commissioned by CSAC and the County Administrative Officers Association of California to **commemorate those fallen, injured and affected by the 2015 terrorist attack** in San Bernardino County. The 4 by 6-foot original oil painting by artist Calvin Canepa is titled "Mountain Tranquility." Next to the artwork is a plaque that reads: "In honor of those taken from us, those who were wounded, and the countless others affected by the tragedy of December 2, 2015." A dedication ceremony was held June 16 outside the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chambers, where the painting now hangs. Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County, Calif.

to pay a fine or scheduling a court date in the future to handle a case. People who could not participate in Warrant Forgiveness Day? Anyone with felony or domestic charges, juvenile court cases or DWIs.

Assistant Chief Judge Toddrick Barnette said the event was a way to make "changes to lessen the social and personal impact on individuals who don't pose a public safety risk, but missed a court date for a low-level misdemeanor offense."-

NEW JERSEY

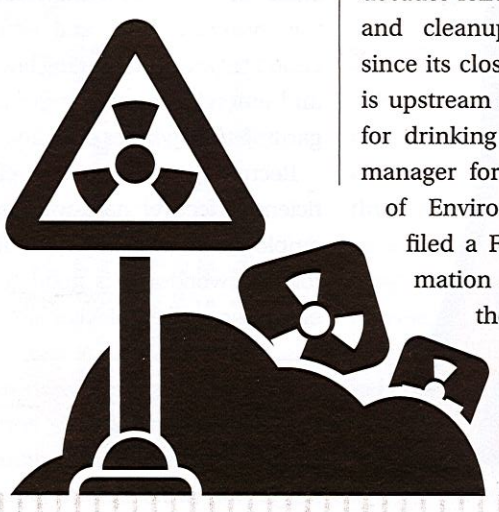
MONMOUTH COUNTY has turned a former youth correctional facility into an **active shooter training ground**.

The Situational Training and Response Simulator (STARS) facility includes a tactical firearms virtual threat simulator, which is equipped with five large screens and shows real life types of scenarios. It's loaded with more than 100 scenarios and has the capability of custom making situations to the areas in which first responders work. It also includes a classroom area for active shooter incidents, a correctional housing unit for cell extraction drills, a domestic violence response training area and a K-9 agility course.

NEW MEXICO

The **SAN JUAN COUNTY** Commission may consider an ordinance requiring business owners to **clean up industrial properties** after their businesses close.

Vacant decaying buildings have been the targets of vandalism and scrapping and are generally eyesores, officials told *The Daily Times*. Contamination is also a threat. Suggested penalties include a $300-a-day fine. A listening board, to hear concerns from local business owners, would likely accompany such an ordinance.



NEW YORK

The **NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES** has formed an advisory group to examine how to best implement new **enhanced indigent legal services** required by the state.

New laws require counsel at arraignment, cap public defender workloads, increasing public defense support staff, and consolidate arraignment court services. All of those measures will be fully in place by 2023.

The task force will provide an initial heavy focus on arraignment enhancements as both the court consolidation planning and arraignment coverage process has already begun in many counties. The task force will include representatives from administration, county attorneys, public defenders and elected supervisors.

OHIO

CLERMONT COUNTY officials are suing the Environmental Protection Agency over a **public records request for information** about a closed hazardous waste dump.

County officials have spent decades following the upkeep and cleanup of the dump since its closure in the '90s. It is upstream from a lake used for drinking water. A project manager for the Ohio Office of Environmental Quality filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the EPA in March 2016, and the EPA's response of nearly 2,900 pages of documents, withheld 60 documents due to attorney-client privilege, WCPO News reported. EPA released nine of those documents, including redacted versions, after appeal, leaving 51.

OREGON

After **WASCO COUNTY** denied Union Pacific's **proposed track expansion** along the Columbia River, the Columbia River Gorge Commission has backed up the county's decision. Thirteen commissioners, appointed by the Washington and Oregon governors and six counties on either side of the river, work with the U.S. Forest Service to set policy for protecting the non-federal lands in the gorge. The commission also serves as an appeals board for land-use decisions.

The county cited concerns about the project's impacts on the treaty rights of Native American tribes, *The Oregonian* reported. The expansion was proposed for a section of track where an oil train derailed in 2016.

PENNSYLVANIA

Downing your favorite sweet drink will still cost you more in the City and **COUNTY** of **PHILADELPHIA** after Philly's controversial **beverage tax on sweetened beverages** survived a challenge in the state's Appeals Court. The tax, passed last summer, adds 1.5 cents per ounce to most drinks with added sugar or artificial sweetener. The tax would bump up the cost of a Gatorade G2 Grape 8-pack from $5.99 to $8.39, according to philly.com.

SOUTH CAROLINA

A healthcare system owned by **ORANGEBURG** and **CALHOUN counties** has begun construction on a freestanding emergency department that will provide services to **BAMBERG** and **BARNWELL counties**. Care available 24 hours a day will include CT scans, x-ray and ultrasound diagnostic imaging and lab and observation services.

The project is funded by a one-time, $3.6 million state Transformation Fund Grant and additional funds resulting from the region's designation as a persistent poverty area. This follows the January closure of the former Barnwell County Hospital, which had seen declining patient volumes and increases in uncompensated care, the *Aiken Standard* has reported.

TEXAS

Starting Sept. 1, **COLLIN COUNTY** residents who do not pay their toll bills **will no longer be able to renew their vehicle registrations**, after the county's agreement with the North Texas Tollway Association.

The *Dallas Morning News* reports that Collin County residents have a higher rate of scofflaws per population than any other North Texas county. Scofflaws account for 8 percent of overall toll road users.

The habitual violators targeted have accrued at least 100 outstanding tolls and have been issued at least two notices of nonpayment over 12 months.

According to the association, four of every 10 registration payments prompts car owners to pay up. Last year, NTTA issued 166,487 vehicle registration blocks in eight counties and projects it will issue 126,585 blocks this year.

WISCONSIN

The **DANE COUNTY** Sheriff's Office will join with the NAACP and United Way of Dane County to create an immigration and refugee task force, aimed at **building trust between local law enforcement officials and the immigrant and refugee communities.**

The task force aims to reduce fear by creating safe spaces for open communication between law enforcement and immigrants and refugees, *The Capital Times* reported.

It is a brainchild of the Law Enforcement and Leaders of Color Collaboration, formed in 2014 after the shooting in Ferguson, Mo.

The group will hold a series of community engagement sessions throughout the summer, and a public radio station will hold a question and answer session and participants can attend in person, call in or post their questions online.

News from Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Mary Ann Barton, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email cban@naco.org or mbarton@naco.org.