

MICHIGAN COUNTIES



Silver Bells in the City is held in November and is the traditional start of the holiday season in Lansing. The event culminates with a light show at and above the State Capitol.

Credit: Rod Sanford Photography



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ON THE COVER

STATE CAPITOL,
LANSING

PHOTO CREDIT:

ROD SANFORD
PHOTOGRAPHY

CORRECTION

Calhoun County's employee count in 2020 was 749. The October "Counties by the numbers" feature had an incorrect figure for Calhoun.

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MAC
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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Letter from the Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Currie', written over a light blue horizontal line.

STEPHAN W. CURRIE
MAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Earlier this month, commissioners were sent a donation envelope as part of MACPAC’s fundraising. While I understand everyone is peppered with requests for money this time of year, allow me to make a quick case for your help, no matter the size of the check.”

“Joyous” is not a word I would usually apply to a MAC Board of Directors meeting, but there is just no denying that our Dec. 10 gathering in Lansing was joyous.

After so many years of discussion and negotiation, Governmental Affairs Director Deena Bosworth was able to inform the Board that legislation enacting four-year terms for county commissioners was on its way to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s desk – and she is expected to sign it.

So, with the 2024 elections, commissioners will be vying for a term that will last from Jan. 1, 2025, to Dec. 31, 2028. Commissioners, like their counterparts in countywide elected offices and in almost all the states around the country, will be free to devote more attention to the numerous, and growing, challenges confronting our communities.

And what makes this victory extra sweet is the bipartisan nature of its enactment.

First and foremost, we owe thanks to the bills’ sponsors, Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson) and Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Oakland). They didn’t just put their names on these bills; they worked every step of the way for passage, gamely fielding every question and calming every concern their legislative colleagues had.

That work was reflected in the broad bipartisan majorities for the two bills, capped by the 75-29 final vote in the House on Dec. 8. Those of you who have visited our Lansing offices know they are usually a sedate place, but when that vote came through, the shouts of appreciation were quite loud.

None of this would have been possible, though, without the consistent participation of our members, both in MAC itself and in this legislative campaign. Board Director Jim Storey of Allegan, for just one example, could have grown tired of coming to meetings and committee sessions to make the case for four-year terms after so many roadblocks in the past. He didn’t. He never gave up and his energy and enthusiasm were inspirations to Deena and her staff to stay optimistic, to keep pushing.

The end result was a case study in why it is so important to be an active member of MAC, both through our advocacy campaigns and through our political action committee, MACPAC. Earlier this month, commissioners were sent a donation envelope as part of MACPAC’s fundraising. While I understand everyone is peppered with requests for money this time of year, allow me to make a quick case for your help, no matter the size of the check.

MACPAC exists to help legislators who have shown themselves to be allies of county government. And if we aren’t able to help our friends stay in the Legislature, how can we expect them to help us when the need is acute? There, that’s my pitch.

I will leave you my holiday “wish list” from MAC:

If you have never served on a MAC policy committee, volunteer to do so. (Send a note to Hannah Sweeney at sweeney@micounties.org to get your application rolling.)

If you have never given to MACPAC, do so, in whatever amount you can. (Easy online donations can be made at www.micounties.org.)

If you have never attended a MAC event or shared with us an idea or issue, join us at our 2022 Legislative Conference in March or give us a call at 517-372-5374. MAC is a member-driven organization; let us help you serve your communities.

May the holiday season bring blessings to you and your families. ♦

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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

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83 COUNTIES: MANY MORE STORIES

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Letter from the President



Phil Kuyers

PHIL KUYERS
PRESIDENT, MAC BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

“And I am saying now, as a simple matter of practicality, we, as county leaders, have to lead our communities on a practical path back to some measure of unity in public life.”

FINDING UNITY IN THE AGE OF COVID

I’m old enough to remember when the primary concern we had about people attending county board meetings was not enough of them were bothering to show up.

These days, I’m sure some of us in the commissioner ranks probably would enjoy a few sparsely attended board sessions in 2022. As we have seen in our board rooms and our communities, generating heat is not the same as providing light in the age of COVID.

In October, a school board in my area was told by a member of the public that she would call on “the militia” to protect student rights against a mask mandate. The policy that had this individual so upset wasn’t even made by the school board. They were just following the orders of the local health department.

Two months before that, we had hundreds show up at an Ottawa County Board session to oppose a mask mandate for schoolchildren — even though the county board doesn’t run the schools and the mandate in question from the local health department was not something the county board could reverse. Again, lots of heat; very little light.

I’m not the type to wonder about the motives of other people or to debate the philosophy. When you farm, you need a practical approach to deal with a practical world.

And I am saying now, as a simple matter of practicality, we, as county leaders, have to lead our communities on a practical path back to some measure of unity in public life. We’ve all heard the line: “You can disagree without being disagreeable,” but I fear we are way past that point in too many places. The first order of business now is creating an environment where the ability to disagree is just plain recognized, for all.

As I recall from that August meeting, most of the folks in the audience didn’t want a mask mandate and had few nice things to say about our health department. OK, that’s one view.

Then there are the results of a regular survey we have taken of county residents about county government. In the August 2021 version, nearly 70 percent of those polled gave a “positive” rating to how the health department was handling a public health crisis.

I’ll leave it to others to decide who has the “right” answer here, but I am committed to delivering the same message to both:

Your view has been heard and will be taken into account as public decisions are made under the law. We will decide together, and we will accept the results of the decision together.

I say this because if we don’t, if the only “acceptable” decision by an elected body is one that meets your demands to the letter, regardless of anyone else’s views, then the word “community” will have lost all meaning in Michigan.

My board in Ottawa County recently voted to produce, print and mail a newsletter twice a year for residents to give them direct and clear information on what their county government does on a daily basis. ♦

Turbulent year ends with legislative victories for counties

BY DEENA BOSWORTH/MAC GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR



“In December, MAC scored a victory to ensure ongoing and proper funding for one of our critical public safety duties: 9-1-1 emergency communications.”

What at times looked like a difficult, even ominous, year for county governments at the State Capitol concluded with a flurry of victories in Lansing.

After 50 years of discussion and negotiation over the appropriate term of office for county commissioners, the Michigan Legislature this year approved bills to lengthen commissioner terms to four years, a campaign that concluded with a huge, bipartisan vote in the Michigan House on Dec. 8.

Although Michigan’s 1963 Constitution provided for four-year terms for what were then the County Boards of Supervisors, the Legislature, in adopting the election of commissioners from geographic districts in 1966, voted to use two-year terms starting with the 1968 elections. And ever since then, commissioners have been on a hamster’s wheel of filings, primaries and general elections.

That will end, though, with the 2024 election cycle. Thanks to the dogged assistance of our MAC Board of Directors and members, MAC was able to get through four-year terms in the Legislature that will bring Michigan in line with 45 other states. Those bills are, as of this writing, before Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who is expected to sign them.

MAC and its members are deeply indebted to the sponsors of Senate Bills 242 and 245, Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson) and Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Oakland) respectively. Their able support will mean future commissioners can focus more of their time on county governance and less on electioneering.

Also in December, MAC scored a victory to ensure ongoing and proper funding for one of our critical public safety duties: 9-1-1 emergency communications.

Due to previous legislative actions, our 9-1-1

system was in jeopardy of losing the funding necessary to keep up with technology and the demand for timely public safety responsiveness to our constituents. However, Rep. Julie Calley (R-Ionia) introduced and pushed through House Bill 5026 to extend authorization for 9-1-1 operations and funding beyond the planned expiration on Dec. 31, 2021. Under the newly revised Emergency 9-1-1 Service Enabling Act, funding authorization will continue until Dec. 31, 2027, ensuring fee revenues are on target with projected costs of statewide implementation of Next Generation 911 framework.

Of course, no review of 2021 would be complete without mentioning the effects the pandemic is having on county governance. Prior to the pandemic, county boards could convene a meeting and, as long as a quorum was present, could allow commissioners to attend and vote remotely. To allow for continued governance and combat the spread of COVID-19, the Legislature changed the Open Meetings Act (OMA) to allow for full virtual participation through December 2021.

Unfortunately, that provision and the option of remote participation in any form will no longer be possible as we

head into 2022. MAC is working tirelessly to convince the Legislature to revert to pre-pandemic OMA provisions but has encountered initial resistance at the State Capitol. We hope to continue the conversation and get some movement on it in early 2022.

As 2021 grew to a close, MAC joined with more than 50 other associations, business groups and individuals to form the Coalition for a Strong and Prosperous Michigan, which has developed a Prosperity Roadmap for leveraging the state's billions in American Rescue Plan aid to make historic investments in public services in our state.

At the beginning of December, MAC participated in a Lobby Day at the Capitol to discuss the plan with key legislators. While the response was generally positive, the legislative calendar precluded action before the end of year. However, the Coalition will continue its efforts in early 2022, as timing remains critical to ensure Michigan public projects can secure the materials, plans and workers necessary to repair and improve our infrastructure.

Please contact me at bosworth@micounties.org if you have any questions about MAC's advocacy work in 2022. ♦

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House passes bills for 4-year terms; historic change headed to governor

The largest change affecting county commissioners since 1968 is headed to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's desk after the House of Representatives approved this week two bills to adopt four-year terms for commissioners.

Whitmer was expected to sign Senate Bill 242, by Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson), and SB 245, by Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Oakland), which cleared the House this week on 75-29 votes. The legislation would start four-year terms with the 2024 election cycle.

"Deena (Bosworth) and I have been at MAC for 10 years and this has been at the top of the MAC to-do list every day," said Executive Director Stephan Currie. "This is such an exciting victory after so many years of work in the halls of the Capitol. All credit goes to Deena and Meghann; Board Director Jim Storey for his consistent advocacy and testimony before committees; and, most importantly, our members who kept reminding legislators of the need for this change."

Since 1968, voters in Michigan have elected county commissioners to two-year terms from geographic districts. Michigan has been one of only five states that has required two-year terms for all commissioners, even though all other elected county offices have four-year terms.

"This is just one of those moments you hope to have in your career in public advocacy," said Bosworth. "I want to thank the bill sponsors, Sens. McBroom and Moss, and all of the county boards who passed resolutions in support of our effort. The power of MAC is in our members and that fact shone through this year on this issue."

Legislature sets up future funding crisis on Personal Property Tax

MAC joined with other local government groups in mid-December to urge the Legislature to address the consequences of a massive Personal Property Tax exemption which lawmakers rushed through Lansing in a late-night session on Dec. 14.

While the Legislature voted for House Bill 5351 without a clear understanding of its effects on local governments, estimates of the impact are as high as \$75 million each year. This results through the bill's lifting of the PPT exemption threshold for small taxpayers from \$80,000 to \$180,000 in true cash value.

Lawmakers did also vote for a \$75 million reimbursement for the first year of this exemption scheme (which starts in 2023), but they did not provide for the years beyond. As the statement from MAC, the Municipal League and the Michigan Townships Association said, "(T)he ongoing erosion of funding that supports local services will be permanent unless the Legislature and the governor fulfill their commitment to find revenue replacements."

While MAC is not arguing against efforts to combat the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will push lawmakers to permanently replace funds from what has been counties' most reliable and most relied upon revenue source, said Deena Bosworth, director of governmental affairs.

HB 5351 now moves to the desk of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who, as of print time, was expected to sign it.

For more information on this issue, contact Deena Bosworth at bosworth@micounties.org



MATTHEW

Branch commissioner donates conference prize to local CMH

Branch County Commissioner Tom Matthew turned his recent attendance at the 2021 Michigan Counties Annual Conference into an opportunity to pay it forward.

Matthew won a door prize from Securitecture, one of the exhibiting vendors, in the amount of \$250, which he directed be donated to Pines Behavioral Health Services, the CMH serving Branch County.

Matthew is highly active in MAC, serving on two of our policy committees: Health and Human Services and Agriculture and Tourism. Well done, Commissioner Matthew!



Old picnic tables get new life in Dickinson

The principle of “waste not, want not” swung into action this fall when Dickinson County Commissioner Joe Stevens (pictured) was told the county park was removing 40 to 50 old picnic tables.

“My idea was to save the wood from going to the landfill, recycle the material and make a few dollars for the park,” explained Stevens, who set to the work himself of breaking down the tables of white pine and cedar into firewood for sale in the spring.

“We plan to sell the wood in smaller amounts than what’s seen in the photo,” Stevens said, and hope to raise as much as \$4,000 for the parks department. Though what is more important than money is just to take reusable materials that were headed to the landfill.”



ROSSMAN-MCKINNEY

MAC mourns loss of Rossman-McKinney, MACSC Board member

The Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) joined with the rest of the Lansing community in November in mourning the loss of our friend Kelly Rossman-McKinney.

Rossman-McKinney, who joined the Board of Directors for MAC’s Service Corp. in 2013 and helped spur a transformation in the organization’s promotion of services to county governments, passed away Nov. 9, 2021, after a long battle with cancer.

“Like so many in Lansing, I had the honor of calling Kelly my friend and enjoyed the gift of being able to call on her experience and her wisdom whenever I confronted any challenge with MAC,” said Stephan Currie, MAC’s executive director. “Kelly’s tenure on our Service Corp. Board of Directors was marked by success and growth – no surprise, since Kelly excelled in whatever she put her mind to.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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FROM PAGE 9

Sam Hopkins, president of the MAC Service Corp. Board of Directors, said:

“I knew Kelly for many years in my roles as fire chief in Lansing and East Lansing, but it was not until I began to serve with her on the Service Corp. Board that I learned the full measure of her gifts and her passion for Lansing and Michigan. You knew where you stood with her, but she always treated everyone with respect in debates, whether you had the ‘right’ answer or not. Our community has lost a true champion.”

MCWCF issues record dividend to members

The Michigan Counties Workers’ Compensation Fund recently announced a record dividend to its members for the 2020 plan year of \$3.65 million.

“It’s wonderful to end the year with such positive news for our members,” said MCWCF Administrator Timothy McGuire. “These dividends reflect the hard work of members in improving safety processes for employees and the diligent supervision of our resources by our Board of Trustees.”

The MCWCF provides workers’ compensation insurance, claims servicing and safety training to public agencies throughout the state of Michigan. We have more than 80 members in our nonprofit pool, including counties, villages, libraries, courthouses, transit authorities and other government-funded entities. MCWCF has been in operation since 1979; learn more at www.michigancountieswcf.org.

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Michigan Association of Counties**

MAC in Action

MAC staffers regularly attend state and local meetings, events and briefings to stay abreast of key policy developments and the views of our 83 member counties.



- 49** LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS
- 20** EXECUTIVE MEETINGS, WORKGROUPS, ETC.
- 4** MAC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS
- 427** BILLS TRACKED

- | | |
|--|--|
| NOV. 12
Tri-County Summit | DEC. 14
County Visit to Ingham |
| NOV. 16
County Visit to Isabella | DEC. 6
Northern Michigan
Counties Assoc.
Meeting |
| NOV. 29
County Summit Meeting | DEC. 2
County Visit to Berrien |
| DEC. 14
County Visit to Arenac | |

SAVE THE DATES!



Michigan Counties Legislative Conference

March 21-23, 2022

Lansing Center/Downtown Radisson
Lansing

Michigan Counties Annual Conference

Sept. 18-21, 2022

Blue Water Center/Doubletree Hotel
Port Huron



For a century, CRC has helped inform Michigan policymakers, public

BY ERIC LUPHER/PRESIDENT, CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN



MAC strongly supports the work of the **Citizens Research Council of Michigan**, a nonpartisan, independent public policy research organization. MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie currently sits on the CRC Board.



As county commissioners, I'm sure you find politics and public policy inherent in all you do. Politics is about who is affected by your decisions. Who benefits from the services provided in the county budget? Who is receiving contracts? In a sense, virtually all aspects of county government have political consequences.

Each of those decisions also is rooted in public policy. Public policies determine how services are provided. Public policy affects the water we drink, the cost of operating a business, workforce and worker safety concerns, the education of our children, our transportation system and our health. Policy impacts everyone, and good policy means a better quality of life.

More than 105 years ago, community leaders in Detroit created our not-for-profit organization, the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, based on the fundamental principle that better information leads to better public policy, and better policy leads to better government.

The Citizens Research Council provides fact-

based analysis of the most important public policy issues affecting Michigan. This work provides thoughtful, accurate, unbiased information that policymakers can trust. While elected officials are our primary audience, we understand that good policymaking relies on an educated and informed public. For this reason, our work is also aimed at broader audiences including journalists, students, businesspeople, trade associations, and citizens cast in policymaking roles as electors of representatives and deciders of initiatives and referenda placed before them.

We are a 501(c)3, not-for-profit research organization dedicated to improving government. Our reputation for unbiased, accurate, and impactful research built on a combination of expertise and independence sets us apart from other public policy organizations in Michigan.

Our guiding principles aim to create government whose operations are efficient, effective and accountable. We do this by monitoring trends in state and local finances, analyzing

the structure and organization of government, conducting deep-dive studies of major public policy issues, identifying options to address policy concerns and informing and educating public officials and concerned citizens.

Our independence allows us to focus on important issues that might not have an underwriting champion. It allows us to pursue reforms over many years.

The law enabling charter counties is one example of this independence and perseverance. Before governance of counties changed in the 1960s to comply with the one-man-one-vote requirements, Michigan had county boards of supervisors with many departments and commissions often operating independently of one another. We first wrote in 1921 that a charter county organization, with either appointed or elected heads of county government, would be an effective remedy to the ills of this system. We illustrated the benefits of this reform many more times over the following years until it became authorized in the 1963 Constitution and was given statutory implementation in 1966.

Our analyses of initiatives and referenda on the statewide ballot and some local ballot questions are an example of our education efforts. We do not endorse or oppose the proposals but provide the facts so voters can make informed votes.

We do not lobby or endorse candidates for public office. That means we have to be effective communicators, active educators, and trusted voices so that policymakers of all persuasions know our motives are in improving government, not pursuing other policy agendas.

As we enter our second century of service to the people of Michigan, I am proud to say that our work continues to promote the important goals of better decisions by policymakers and elected officials; better oversight by citizens; and better accountability in government.

We are a resource for the policymakers and the media because you can trust that we will explain issues without spin or politics. Visit us at crcmich.org and let us know what policies would benefit from our brand of independent, nonpartisan research. ♦

“More than 105 years ago, community leaders in Detroit created the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, based on the fundamental principle that better information leads to better public policy, and better policy leads to better government.”



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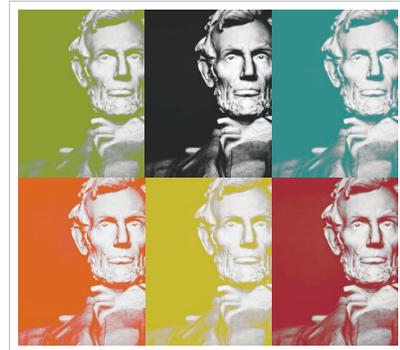
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Emmet County forms citizens panel to advise on commissioner pay

BY STACY COX/EMMET COUNTY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

“In early November, the board directed the creation of a new Commissioner Reimbursement Committee of citizens to tackle certain inconsistencies in commissioner compensation.”

With the challenge of hiring and retaining crucial personnel rising, the Emmet County Board of Commissioners recently conducted a full review and revamp of employee compensation, with changes intended to reward loyal employees and make Emmet County an attractive option for potential recruits.

But there was one personnel issue the board members didn't think they were properly equipped to handle: themselves.

So, in early November, the board directed the creation of a new Commissioner Reimbursement Committee of citizens to tackle certain inconsistencies in commissioner compensation.

“With a rural county like ours and with committee meetings scheduled monthly in counties nearby, the time commitment and costs can really add up, especially for county commissioners in the more rural districts,” said Toni Drier, chairperson of the Emmet County Board of Commissioners. “All the commissioners are here because we want to serve our communities, but without fair compensation, I worry future representation on the Board will continue to be limited to those who are retired or don't work a full-time job or who can afford to lose hours at their regular jobs. Allowing a group of citizens to study the issue and bring a recommendation to the Board that establishes a process for fair compensation going forward will hopefully resolve a long-standing problem. I think we all want a compensation policy that encourages committee participation by county commissioners so they can make informed decisions and fully represent their constituents.”

In addition to attendance at their own board meetings, the Board is also required to have commissioner representation on more than 30 other boards, committees and commissions.



Participating consistently and fully on these other important panels can be time-consuming and expensive. The Board wants to establish a plan that provides fair and adequate compensation to all commissioners, now and in the future, for their participation on these other boards.

The job for the Reimbursement Committee, which will have five members, appointed by the Board of Commissioners, will be limited to determining the overall compensation amount for the county commissioners as a group. When considering appointments to the new committee, the Board will give preference to individuals with experience in elective office or other relevant expertise. All committee members must be residents of Emmet County.

The county administrator will coordinate meeting dates and provide a meeting location at the county building while also offering guidance to the committee in all pertinent areas, including, but not limited to, current and historical practice, legal requirements, budget considerations and IRS regulations.

Outside legal counsel, with expertise in commissioner compensation, will be retained by the Board to assist in constructing a compensation plan that complies with state law and IRS rules. Communication with outside legal counsel will be handled by the county administrator. The committee will elect its own leadership and will function in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, including making the meeting minutes available on the county's website for public review.

Once a compensation plan has been drafted, it will then be submitted for review and approval by the Board of Commissioners under regular procedures. After submission and approval of its report to the Board, the Reimbursement Committee will be disbanded. ♦



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Big or small, technical or simple, we want to hear how you have found a new way to serve your constituents.

Please send a brief description and contact information for the point person of your “Best Practice” to
Derek Melot,
melot@micounties.org.

For questions, call Melot at 517-372-5374.



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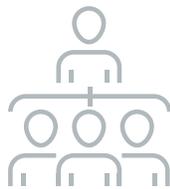
Counties affect the lives of residents every day. When our frontline staff are empowered as leaders, we deliver services more effectively. **The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a resource that connects your staff with practical leadership training.** HPLA uses an innovative, interactive online learning platform that combines real-time webinars, recorded sessions and small group discussions to deliver effective training without traveling away from the county – saving money and maximizing time.

THE ACADEMY FOCUSES ON FIVE ESSENTIAL SKILLS:



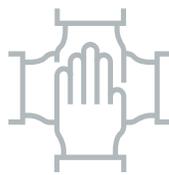
LEAD:

Engage teams and stakeholders to foster positive climates and exceed common expectations



ORGANIZE:

Plan, lead and execute organizational change more effectively and consistently



COLLABORATE:

Establish alignment and strong partnerships through building stronger relationships



DELIVER:

Measure projects and processes to deliver results aligned with county and community priorities



COMMUNICATE:

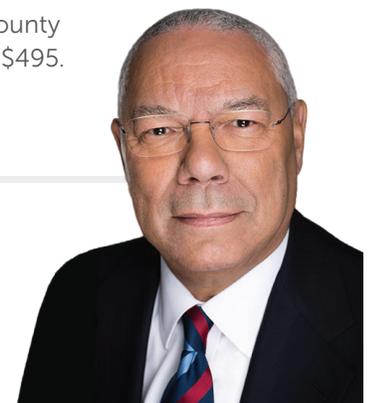
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Treasurers navigate new rules on claims to tax foreclosure proceeds

BY BOB ROBINSON/EATON COUNTY TREASURER

Bob Robinson is the president of the Michigan Association of County Treasurers, a MAC affiliate member.

“Under Public Act 255, county treasurers must notify property owners who lose their homes or businesses to foreclosure of a new pathway to claiming leftover auction proceeds.”



Property owners — business and residential — who have gone through the tax foreclosure process now have the option to reclaim monies leftover from a property tax foreclosure auction. Taxpayers who’ve suffered the tragedy of foreclosure now have new rights. County treasurers across the state are working to make sure people know what those rights are.

Under Public Act 255, county treasurers must notify property owners who lose their homes or businesses to foreclosure of a new pathway to claiming leftover auction proceeds.

Those who held title or equity interest in a tax-foreclosed property at the time of foreclosure may file a formal claim for such leftover proceeds (if any are available) on parcels which sell for more than taxes, interest, penalties, fees and costs.

Claiming potential proceeds begins with filing Form 5743 Notice to Intention to Claim Interest in Foreclosures Sale Proceeds with the county treasurer by July 1 immediately following the date of the foreclosure. As the Foreclosing Governmental Unit (FGU), the treasurer’s office will respond by Jan. 31 following the foreclosure auctions with Form 5744 Notice to Claimant to File Motion with the Circuit Court and disclose the amount for

which the property was sold, the amount of any outstanding and unpaid taxes (including federal, state and local tax liens) and the total amount of any remaining sale proceeds, if any.

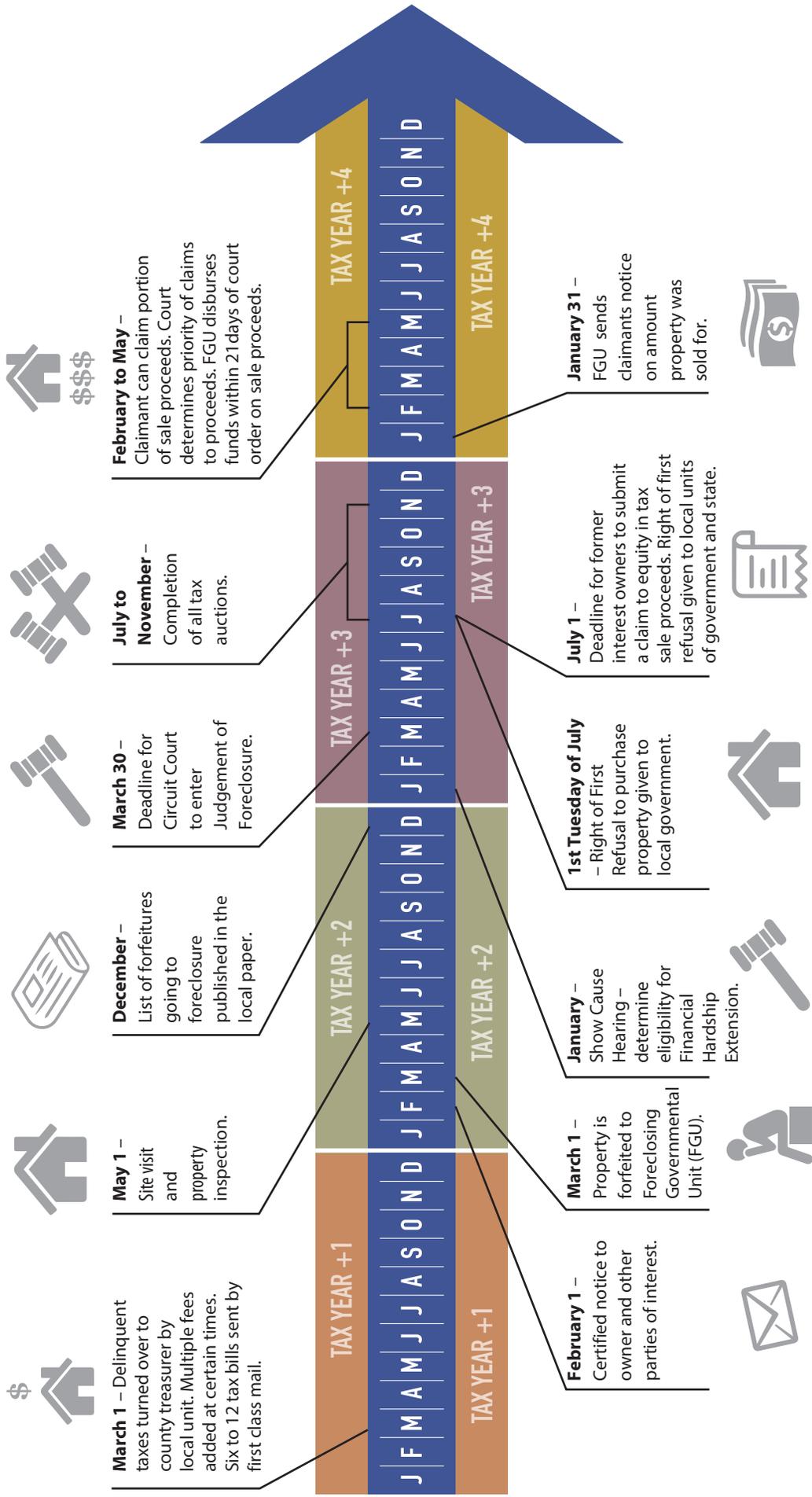
The law also allows for a 5 percent fee to be retained by treasurers for their work to rehabilitate and sell properties. Providing there are proceeds remaining from the property sale, the claimant may then file a motion with circuit court between Feb. 1 and May 15 following the notice from the FGU. The court will then set a hearing date and time to determine payments, if any.

The FGU must provide the court with complete information including all claimants for a parcel, minimum bid, sale amount, and the taxes that were owed on the sold property. Within 21 days after entry of a court order directing the disposition of sale proceeds, the treasurer disburses funds.

The work of county treasurers statewide prevented 95 percent of property tax foreclosures in 2021. Treasurers use a variety of methods and numerous community resources to help people pay their delinquent taxes and prevent foreclosure.

For more details on the four-year-long foreclosure process, see the graphic at right. ♦

FORECLOSURE TIMELINE



Unique ways to save on your employee benefits program

BY ARAM TOULOUKIAN/AMERICAN FIDELITY

Aram Touloukian is manager of the Midwest District for American Fidelity, a MAC-sponsored program.

“Effective benefits communication helps employees so they can be motivated to make better decisions.”

In a time where the price of almost everything seems to be skyrocketing, finding savings can feel like finding a unicorn. As with housing, food, furniture, gas and what have you, even employee benefits are having a costly moment.

How do you find savings within your benefits program?

There are strategies to help control benefits costs, such as implementing wellness programs and telemedicine. But, possibly one of the most effective ways to find savings on your current program is to educate your workforce on the benefits you offer and how to best use them.

Having a benefits-savvy staff could mean lower claims costs for you.

Set your strategy

Many employers are struggling with how to communicate to their employees in this new age. The same challenges that always existed — tight budgets and slim staff — are now coupled with the reality of a remote workforce.

Effective benefits communication helps employees so they can be motivated to make better decisions. By doing this they will naturally become smarter consumers. In fact, 94% of employees do not have a very high level of understanding of their health benefits¹

Start your strategy by asking yourself how you like to receive information. If you're like many, you want consistent education through multiple, easy-to-understand mediums.

Best practices for employee education include frequent and targeted communications through postcards, email, and your organization's social outlets, and group meetings prior to enrollment to reach all your people. Individual education may now be more essential than ever in ensuring employees understand their benefits and how to use them.

Geoff Macy, former chief operating officer at Northwest R-1 School District in Missouri, turned to American Fidelity for help communicating

benefits information to his multi-location district.

“The idea that people are utilizing the benefits people are paying for and they're utilizing it to increase their quality of life, to me that's the greatest thing that American Fidelity has done for Northwest.” Macy says.

Once you determine and set your communication strategy, consider other tools to help drive additional savings.

Promote total wellness

Across organizations, there's a surge in prioritizing employee wellness programs. Traditionally, these included benefits like group fitness programs, on-site medical facilities, healthy snacks or subsidized healthy lunch options. In some programs with more complex benefits, it could mean biometric screenings to identify areas of improvement.

Today, more employers are also adding access mental health resources to which may provide employees free counseling sessions or subscriptions to wellness apps, as examples. Upfront access to preventative services that support total wellbeing may help your organization from incurring claims often related to behavioral health.

Include access to telemedicine

Telemedicine also provides opportunities to develop lower-cost alternatives to traditional primary care. Telemedicine can be a good first line option for basic care, and can be particularly effective in rural communities, where access to doctors may require significant time and effort. Usually, the cost-per-visit is lower than an in-person appointment and allows your employees to visit with a provider on their schedule.

Implement health literacy

Employers can encourage cost-saving behaviors by offering employees opportunities to learn more about making healthy choices, from the food they eat to the benefits they elect. If done well, these can be win-win, reducing costs for both the employer and the employee. ♦

COVID-19 Relief Consulting Services

CoPro+ is a program that provides public entities with the opportunity to collaboratively procure valuable goods and services at competitive prices, while receiving a dividend as a reward for being a shareholder in the program.

AVAILABLE CONTRACTS:

The Covid-19 Relief Consulting Service contracts are hosted by Livingston County; however, available to all counties. They were competitively bid and approved through the county's procurement process and are posted at coproplus.org.

The vendors chosen through this process are prequalified to provide various services to the counties to assist them in managing the Covid-19 Relief funds allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The contracts will offer a means to counties to receive financial accounting, oversight monitoring, auditing, and/or reporting services as required for each individual project.

Four Contracts Were Awarded

Guidehouse

Jeff Bankowski
jbankowski@guidehouse.com
734-644-0595

iParametrics

Michelle Erste
michelle.erste@iparametrics.com
Direct: 770-290-1477
Cell: 770-238-7408

Pierce, Monroe & Associates

Kim Ball
kbball@piercemonroe.com
313-961-8419

Public Sector Consultants

Misty Elliott
melliott@publicsectorconsultants.com
517-371-7434

PROCESS:

The contractor will deploy a team of one or more professionals to the requesting county. The number of staff required will vary with each county and will depend on the individual needs of each county.

The contractor will work at the direction of each county's designated lead to help them determine proper use and distribution of the funds to intended beneficiaries, recordkeeping, compliance for SEFA and dashboard-like reporting to governing boards and other community stakeholders. The county will have access to the full range of the contractor's knowledge and tools will be updated daily on what the contractor learns from its federal expert sources and from experiences/insight from similar projects in other states.

Prior to closing the contracts, the contractor will provide a roadmap and recommendations for continued use of tracking and reporting tools, and any other knowledge transfer to key county personnel to successfully complete in progress tasks/outcomes.

BENEFITS:

- Reduced workload for your staff
- Competitive pricing
- User interface is easy to use
- Approvals can be set by management so proper procedures are met
- Interface provides valuable reporting tools so managers can see purchasing trends of many organizations
- Fulfills shared services category of EVIP
- Pays dividend back based on participating contracts

CoPro+ is a time and cost savings program. It offers strong collaboration between the private and public sector, allowing the program to save your organization valuable dollars. The collaborative procurement program provides your organization assistance in every phase of the supply chain, ensuring quality products and services brought to you in the most efficient, cost-effective manner.

For more information, visit www.coproplus.org

THE TASK MAY INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, THE FOLLOWING:

- Inventory finding opportunities along with requirements for obtaining, utilizing, and accounting
- Assist in administering Federal and State grant monies
- Track and manage progress (applications made, receipts, distributions, etc.)
- Provide project reports
- Project auditing
- Project budgeting
- Financial forecasting
- Recommend internal controls
- Schedule and conduct/assist in meetings
- Other activities as deemed beneficial for the outcomes, and as mutually agreed to by the participating county and the Contractor

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The future of work: 5 strategies for adapting to a new reality

BY AL VANDERBERG/KENT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR-CONTROLLER

Al Vanderberg is a member of the Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers.

“Organizations grounded in traditional principles will have a harder time adjusting to allowing employees to work remotely.”



County government has not been short of challenges in recent times — the COVID-19 pandemic in conjunction with the fallout from the murder of George Floyd, divided politics, and mistrust of time-tested elections procedures. These tribulations do not even consider issues unique to individual counties, such as the immigration issue in Kent a few years ago and the historic Lake Michigan erosion in Ottawa around the same time. County governments are facing what I believe will be even more significant challenges because these developments could directly impact our ability to deliver excellent services to the public we serve. Leaders will need to look forward and reassess their strategies rather than remain stagnant in old ways.

Organizational capacity

Many counties are still organized with older hierarchical organizational structures that react very slowly to change. The old models

of organization are highly unlikely to allow counties to meet the growing complexity and uncertainty and quickly unfolding “wicked problems” as we move into the future. We need to be focused on increasing our organizational capacity for rapid change and responding to change in a manner that protects the high quality of services delivered and the safety of our residents. Many local governments utilize five-year strategic planning models to try to focus efforts and resources. Five-year strategic planning models have worked well in the past because certain aspects of the future were predictable for five years and more. In the Great Rewrite, Forbes states that the grasp of futurist predictability is now considered to be 730 days. This presumption requires local government to shorten its thinking span to be more agile and resilient to the complexity of change. Five-year plans with annual strategy review and ranking is one strategy to keep the plan fresh and relevant in times of rapid change.

Networking

Organizations also face the need to transition to networked organizations, as outlined brilliantly by Gen. Stanley McChrystal in his tome *Team of Teams*. Local government employees will need to be empowered to work internally in cross-functional teams to meet organizational challenges better, thus breaking down “silos” that have separated county functions for decades. Individuals and work teams will need to be networked externally in the greater community as well.

Hybrid-remote work

Perhaps the most considerable related organizational challenge local governments face is successfully navigating the remote work-hybrid work puzzle. This challenge is also part of the transition from the old hierarchical organization to the networked organization. COVID-19 proved that many classifications could complete work successfully from home or other non-business locations. Organizations grounded in traditional principles will have a harder time adjusting to allowing employees to work remotely. The hierarchical model and seeing butts in seats for 8-hour workdays bring a level of comfort that really has no relationship to productivity. In my estimation, more pressure will be on managers to identify appropriate outcomes and metrics to measure results to assess the necessary quality and quantity of work to be completed. At some point, we need to ask whether we care where the work gets done as long as it gets completed proficiently. The nature of attracting the talent we need to survive will dictate some form of hybrid-remote work opportunity. Many applicants are asking whether these opportunities exist when they put in an application, and many will not follow through if

these opportunities are not available. It is becoming a competitive necessity.

Equity

Equity issues will arise as classifications are made for positions that must report to work physically due to the nature of the work (i.e., direct customer service, management of people onsite, public safety, parks, facilities, etc.). These employees will likely perceive that they are at a disadvantage financially because they still must put gas in their cars and take the time to drive to work. Therefore, compensation systems will need to be reviewed and adapted. At Kent County, we have created a work team led by HR Director Amy Rollston to thoroughly study these issues during 2022 and recommend future action by the end of the year.

Work environment

Physical space needs update and will tie-bar the plan for hybrid-remote work with future space needs projections. Kent County is currently completing a campus master plan. We will also plan to implement open office systems where appropriate for those who remain at the worksites and those hybrid workers who will need “hoteling” space availability to complete onsite work. The bottom line of talent attraction makes a thorough look at providing remote work/hybrid work opportunities will likely be a deciding factor in attracting talent in the future.

This is an exciting and challenging time to be in local government management. Having a hand in these significant paradigm shifts will shape a path ahead that works for many, and the potential to make positive and enduring change has never been greater. ♦



MACAO

Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers

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For six decades, the Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers (MACAO) has been a trusted resource to county administrative officers as they continuously improve their abilities in serving county boards of commissioners by:

- Providing forums for information exchange and experiences while delivering solutions to common challenges
- Offering guidance and best practices from educational, governmental and professional organizations to members searching for leading edge practices in public administration
- Promoting and advancing high ethical standards and values as a foundation of managing Michigan public organizations

Melissa Daub



Name: Melissa Daub

County/MAC Region: Wayne/5

Position: Director

County Service: Wayne County Commission, 2019-present

Profession: Accountant

Previous Public Service: N/A

What part of the job of county commissioner gives you the most pleasure or pride? Why?

Counties have a direct impact on the everyday lives of residents ranging from public

health to infrastructure, yet, oftentimes we're the most overlooked level of government by our constituents. I have worked hard to make our County more transparent and accessible by advocating for the installation of audio-visual equipment that now allows the Wayne County Commission to broadcast meetings and post recordings to YouTube to allow constituents to better connect with their county government, as well as include closed caption zoom options for our deaf/hard of hearing residents. I also participate in regular coffee hours and townhalls where we answer residents' questions and concerns directly. ♦

Joe Stevens



Name: Joe Stevens

County/MAC Region: Dickinson / 1

Position: Director

County Service: 1994-present

Profession: Retired

Previous Public Service: 12 years on Kingsford City Council

What part of the job of county commissioner gives you the most pleasure or pride? Why?

I take pleasure that our millage is low; our police and fire are fully staffed; and our

social services are robust. I'm proud of our industry, our local health care systems, our Road Commission and the wonderful people who live in Dickinson County and the state of Michigan as a whole. I'm proud of our past and present collaborations throughout the Upper Peninsula as we have had to learn to utilize shared services with other counties due to limited resources. I thank God every day for being born in the United States of America and that I am able to live in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. ♦

What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

Right now, while in my district, what I hear about the most is worker shortages.

Recruiting and retaining dependable, able-bodied workers are what many businesses are struggling with. There are businesses that are closing their doors or cutting back on their hours of operation because they cannot find people to work. It goes beyond the food service and retail industries and is affecting building, home healthcare workers, transportation of goods and services, and countless other professions and Michigan industries.

Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

Counties play a critical role in the delivery of public services. Local governments are the front lines of public representation in each of our communities.

The purpose they serve is to provide a smaller, local version of the state's role; such as law enforcement, transportation, construction and maintenance, local health facilities, and providing public assistance to those in need — to name a few. Each county is unique and therefore a “one-size-fits-all” approach does not work for all counties.

Your legislation (Senate Bill 638) would support local governments in creating and expanding the jail diversion programs through grant opportunities. How do you think state and counties can continue to partner to reduce the number of individuals with mental illness in our jails?

County CMHs can partner with local law enforcement to assist them with a variety of services. These services can provide people suffering mental health issues more appropriate care based on the circumstances and would reduce the cost and burden on law enforcement agencies. Allowing alternative response methods can also improve the response to uncertain and potentially

dangerous situations while adding additional safeguards to protect the lives of those struggling with mental health.

I am currently looking into other ways to create a state pipeline for mental health workers to go to counties of need. MiDOCS was created specifically to expand graduate residency spots in select specialties to recruit and retain physicians in underserved areas in the state. Another potential tool in the state's toolbox is license reciprocity. Currently, Michigan doesn't have reciprocity agreements with any state for the Licensed Professional Counsel (LPC) designation. Currently if you have five years of licensed work experience in another state, you may be eligible for licensure by endorsement. If we allow for reciprocity, we can streamline this process and attract more LPCs to help our citizens struggling with mental health.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army and a strong supporter of our veteran community, in particular through your commitment to supporting veteran-owned companies, what are some ways in which the state is supporting our veteran community? Are there any resources you think county commissioners should be more aware of when they engage with our veterans?

Without veterans, we wouldn't be here today, and it's important that we each take time to honor them.

Currently, the licensing fees are being waived for veteran-owned businesses. Also, PA 25 and PA 26 of '21 were signed into law earlier this year and will create reciprocal licensing and waive licensing fees for veterans, military, and members of other uniformed services and their families so they can pick up their careers where they left off prior to moving and not have to start over.

I also introduced a resolution declaring November as Do Business with a Veteran Month that encourages people to shop at veteran-owned businesses in their communities.



Name:
Sen. Rick Outman

District/counties:
District 33 (Clare, Gratiot, Isabella, Mecosta, Montcalm)

Committees:
Environmental Quality, Chair; Natural Resources; Transportation/Infrastructure; Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health/Human Services, Chair; Appropriations Subcommittee on K-12 Education; Majority Vice Chair

Term #:
First

CONTINUED PAGE 27

Rep. Ken Borton



Name:
Rep. Ken Borton

District/counties:
105th/Antrim,
Charlevoix,
Montmorency,
Oscoda and Otsego

Committees:
Appropriations
Subcommittees on
Corrections, Judiciary,
Agriculture and
Natural Resources
and Transportation

Term #:
First

What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

People's lives have been turned upside down over the past two years; every industry has suffered. The most pressing issues are getting people back to work and getting small businesses back to normal. This is the only way to get Michigan back on its feet.

Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

Counties are very effective, and efficient, in delivering public services at the local level. County officials understand the needs of citizens at the local level, and they complement the work of city, village and township officials to cover all the bases in their communities.

As a past president of the Michigan Association of Counties and former chair of the Otsego Board of Commissioners, what differs from the county level to state level when it comes to serving your constituents?

As I mentioned, counties are very aware of local needs. I represent five counties in my role as a state representative, and each one faces unique circumstances. When making decisions in the Legislature, assessing the different needs of people in each county isn't always easy. County officials are an invaluable resource to me, bringing issues to my attention and working together to find solutions. I can't express how important collaboration can be.

In representing Northern Michigan counties, outdoor recreation and tourism is a key economic driver. What are some of your priorities related to these important topics going into the New Year?

Northern Michigan has unbeatable outdoor recreational opportunities, year-round. Snowmobile season is one of my favorites. I am currently working on legislation to keep wheeled vehicles off snowmobile trails during peak season to preserve groomed

trails. Protecting the snowmobile industry is essential for keeping tourism alive during the winter months and boosting local economies. Additionally, I serve on the appropriations subcommittee that oversees the budget for the Department of Natural Resources, and ensuring proper funding for things like state parks, trails and campgrounds is an important part of that role.

One of MAC's longstanding positions has been to maintain our local public health structure that provides local control and oversight to ensure quality and accessible services for all residents. Legislative initiatives over the years, such as the well-known "section 298 discussion," and most recently a proposal by the Senate Majority Leader, threaten to dismantle the locally driven system and transfer oversight to private Medicaid health plans. Do you believe shifting functions toward private for-profit insurance companies would benefit or harm your constituents?

My home county of Otsego is one of six counties serving Northern Michigan residents together through North Country Community Mental Health. From my experience as a county commissioner, I know how this local health program and others like it meet people's needs. I believe community health systems can continue to serve local residents well, and it is my hope that any policy changes would improve care within the current, community-based framework. With any proposal that could affect the local health structure, my ultimate priority will always be to look out for the well-being of those who need care. ♦

There is also more money, \$4 million, that is flowing to counties through the Veteran's County Service Fund. Public Act 34 '21, which was sponsored by Rep. Annette Glenn, would allow each county to receive around \$50,000 for their Veteran County Service Fund. We have also established a hotline for vets, 1-800-MICH-VET, that reaches our Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center. It is a one-stop shop to help answer any questions veterans or family members may have regarding benefits and assistance.

One of MAC's longstanding positions has been to maintain our local public health structure that provides local control and oversight to ensure quality and accessible services for all residents. Legislative initiatives over the years, such as the well-known "section 298 pilot," and most recently through SB's 597 and 598, threaten to dismantle the locally driven system and transfer oversight to private Medicaid health plans. Do you believe shifting functions toward private insurance companies would benefit or harm Michigan residents?

Regarding behavioral health integration, it is critical that CMH's remain an integral solution as we move forward. Mental and physical health go hand in hand and we do need better coordination of care between the two. We have had great success with the CCBHC pilot program and I feel like as long as we continue to have productive conversations, we will find a resolution that best serves the residents of Michigan. ♦

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