

# MICHIGAN COUNTIES

Official Voice of the Michigan Association of Counties | October 2019



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**ON THE COVER:** Michigan county leaders pose for a photo at the White House complex during a special day of briefings from federal officials on Oct. 3

# MAC

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the last two weeks, MAC has received six resolutions from counties, ranging from one in Oakland County on delinquent tax collections to a difference of opinion between Gladwin (support) and Livingston (oppose) counties on local option for nonpartisan county elections.

Neither the number nor the scope of policy matters reflected in those 14 days is unusual. County governments have much ground to cover to protect and enhance the local services their constituents count on.

For years, MAC has worked to collect these resolutions to stay abreast of thinking among our members and to share with state lawmakers to advance county priorities in legislation and rule-making.

Last month, Board President Veronica Klinefelt and I sent a reminder request to all county clerks to include MAC in the sharing of resolutions approved by county boards of commissioners. This was not out of any lack of service from our colleagues in the clerks' offices; rather, we want to make sure we are doing everything we can at MAC to be a resolutions resource for our members.

To that end, we have created a **"County Resolutions Database"** on our new website to allow members to search 24/7 to see what their colleagues across the state have or have not done on trending issues. Just type in your subject or key words and the search function will pull from the hundreds of resolutions that our staff has been loading to the site since spring.

Commissioners also can avail themselves of the assistance of the MAC staff in vetting statements or acquiring the appropriate information. Governmental Affairs Director Deena Bosworth and her team are here to keep you updated on where legislation stands and what the political currents may be in Lansing.

And, to remind of yet another service, MAC produces resolution templates on key issues for members. For example, we just created **a template for counties to use in support of bills** that would lengthen county commissioner terms to four years from the current two, starting with the 2022 elections.

All these services are designed to aid all our members in creating the most effective statements they can make in support of, or opposition to, state or federal proposals or actions.

If you have any questions about these services, just call us at 517-372-5374.



**Stephan W. Currie**  
MAC Executive Director





## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Now that summer is in our rearview mirror, our seven policy committees are back at work to develop and enhance our policy platforms for 2020. About 60 county commissioners are sitting on MAC committees as voting members. They are assisted in their work by two dozen non-voting members, such as MAC Board directors, county administrators and other county elected officials.

MAC sets its policy platforms via the work of these seven committees. After the platforms are created and approved by the committees and the MAC board, they are debated and voted on at one of our general membership meetings. On occasion, amendments are offered and voted on separately at the same meeting. This process can get heated at times, but MAC embraces a healthy process of policy development and priorities that should never be the result of unquestioning unanimity or inattention. Debate is at the heart of the democratic process.

Not everyone will be happy with every aspect of the final platform, but everyone has a voice and that is crucial to the success of our association. Ultimately, our platform is a comprehensive and effective expression of the collective views of county commissioners from across the state. Large or small, urban or rural, counties confront a lot of the same challenges each and every day: funding, staffing, efficiency, communication, and more. We also have challenges that are unique to different areas of the state. That is why it is so important that MAC gets as much input as possible from commissioners all around the state.

I'm calling on all commissioners to consider joining our policy committees. This is an excellent way for individual commissioners to express their opinions and give representation to their area of the state. **For all the details, [click here](#).**

Are committees are as follows:

- **Finance** — This committee recommends policies and reviews legislation pertaining to property tax revenue, property tax exemptions, property tax appeals, property tax assessments, sales tax issues affecting the state's general fund and subsequently county revenue sharing, special millages and any other tax policies that affect county revenues. This committee considers legislation governing all forms of local government revenue, including fees and state reimbursements for services, unless the item is specifically covered by another MAC committee (e.g., child care funding or court funding). This committee also reviews economic development, labor and retirement issues.
- **General Government** — This committee oversees government operational issues, such as policies and legislation pertaining to the Open Meetings Act; the Freedom of Information Act; election issues; interactions with other county-wide elected officials; conflicts of interest; regionalism and consolidation issues; zoning and planning issues; buildings and maintenance; insurance and liability issues; and other issues that have a county-wide impact that are not covered by another MAC committee.
- **Environmental, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs** — This committee oversees issues pertaining to mining; state and federal land acquisitions; PILT; state and local parks; landfills and solid waste and recycling management systems; stormwater and wastewater systems; conservation districts; water quality issues; energy issues; and animal management.
- **Health and Human Services** — This committee recommends policies and reviews legislation pertaining to prevention and treatment initiatives for human services, such as, but not limited to: mental health; substance abuse; homelessness; children's protective services; the stabilization of families; the prevention and control of diseases; county medical care facilities; aging programs; and veterans.
- **Judiciary and Public Safety** — This committee recommends policies and reviews legislation pertaining to court system operations; court system funding; specialty courts; 911 funding; response and dispatch issues; juvenile justice; probation and parole issues; indigent defense services; sheriff department issues (including jails and secondary road patrol); community corrections programming and funding; and prisoner re-entry issues.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure** — This committee oversees issues relating to the operation and funding of Michigan's transportation infrastructure network, ranging from roads and bridges to ports and ORV trails.
- **Agriculture and Tourism** — This committee oversees agricultural and tourism issues.

I look forward to working with all of you.

**Veronia Klinefelt**  
President, MAC Board of Directors

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Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan  
 CCE Central Dispatch  
 Community Economic Development Association of Michigan  
 Community Mental Health Association of Michigan  
 County Road Association of Michigan  
 Health Care Association of Michigan  
 Michigan Association for Local Public Health  
 Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers  
 Michigan Association of County Clerks  
 Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners  
 Michigan Association of County Park and Recreational Officials  
 Michigan Association of County Treasurers  
 Michigan Association of County Veterans Counselors  
 Michigan Association of Register of Deeds  
 Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council  
 Michigan County Social Services Association  
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Thank you to all MACPAC members. To support MACPAC, please visit our website, [micounties.org](http://micounties.org).



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN BEGINS FOR FOUR-YEAR COMMISSIONER TERMS

By MAC Governmental Affairs Staff

For 50 years, Michigan has directly elected county commissioners from geographic districts. And for 50 years, commissioners and voters have had to try to balance the oversight of the ever-expanding portfolio of county services with the demands of political campaigns every two years.

This juggling act, however, soon may become a little less frenetic.



Storey

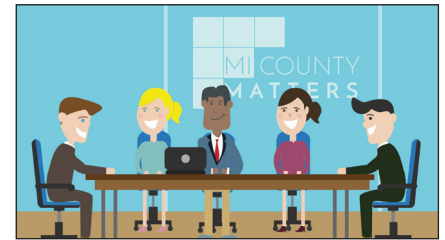
New legislation — **House Bills 4937-38** and **Senate Bills 504-505** — that received initial legislative hearings in early October would create four-year commissioner terms.

MAC, which has long supported the four-year term in its policy platforms, has worked closely with the bill sponsors, Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson), Rep. Ann Bollin (R-Livingston) and Rep. Sarah Lightner (R-Jackson), to get this reform before the Legislature.

Their bills would:

- Create four-year terms for commissioners, thereby bringing commissioners into parallel terms with all other county elected officials (clerks, treasurers, prosecutors, registers of deeds, drain commissioners, sheriffs); and
- Go into effect with the 2022 November General Election and continue on what's called the "gubernatorial election cycle."
- In testimony for legislative committees this month, Allegan County Chair (and MAC Board Director) Jim Storey noted that:
- Michigan is one of just five states with two-year terms on all commissioners.
- The 1850 Michigan Constitution fixed the terms of county officers - that is, the sheriff, clerk, register of deeds, treasurer and prosecutor - at two years. The Board of Supervisors, which was the predecessor body of today's Board of Commissioners, was elected every year.
- The current Constitution, that of 1963, expanded to four years the terms of the county officers and allowed the Board of Supervisors to choose whether to have two-year or four-year terms. As you know, most township boards have chosen to select four-year terms for their supervisors and other board members.
- When county boards of supervisors were abolished and Boards of County Commissioners were created in 1966 as their replacement, the Legislature chose to fix commissioner terms at two years.

That county electoral system hasn't changed since LBJ was president; what has changed - and plenty - are the responsibilities carried by county commissioners.



As Storey testified, "In the past 50 years, the functions of counties have grown exponentially. Where the focus was once just basic duties - such as jailing criminals, making and storing records and keeping agricultural drains flowing - a modern county ... must also focus on road patrols; providing for indigent defense; operating mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention programs; providing for solid waste pick-up and disposal; ensuring food and water supplies are safe through well, sewer and food service permitting; operating parks; leading economic development efforts; exercising responsibility for emergency management and response due to natural and human-created disasters; and, most prominently, hiring and overseeing the work of a county administrator in those many counties who do not have an elected executive.

"(A)s the Citizens Research Council observed in its 2016 report, 'Counties in Michigan: an Exercise in Regional Government,'" Storey continued, "the tasks assigned to counties by either the state government or sought by cities, townships and villages are expected to grow even more as funding issues cause local government leaders to seek regional, rather than local, solutions. ...

"The types of decisions we commissioners are expected to make require steady outreach to those many communities within our boundaries affected by our actions, and thoughtful consideration for the future that is best supported by a term of office longer than two years," Storey argued.

One example of how the current term disparity hampers good governance, commissioners elected to two-year terms are expected to work with elected department heads who serve four-year terms on proper funding levels and staffing needs.

"The initial response by the House and Senate committees were quite positive," said MAC Governmental Affairs Director Deena Bosworth. "Jim Storey has done some outstanding work on this as a member. Now, we need other members to help by using our **Advocacy Center** to contact their legislators and express support. This is especially important if you are represented by the key committee chairs, Rep. Julie Calley (R-Ionia) and Sen. Dale Zorn (R-Monroe)."

## BEST PRACTICES

# ST. JOSEPH TRANSFORMS LONG-VACANT MOTEL INTO FRESH APPROACH ON SENIOR HOUSING

By 2030, 1 in 4 Michigan residents will be a senior citizen or senior adjacent. And while “60 may be the new 50,” many of those Michigan seniors may not want or may not be able to remain in the homes in which they raised their families.

Counties in Michigan — which as of 2017 already led the nation in the number of counties with a median age over 50 (13) — that are now seeking innovations to address the effects of what’s been called a “silver tsunami” may end up envied by their counterparts.

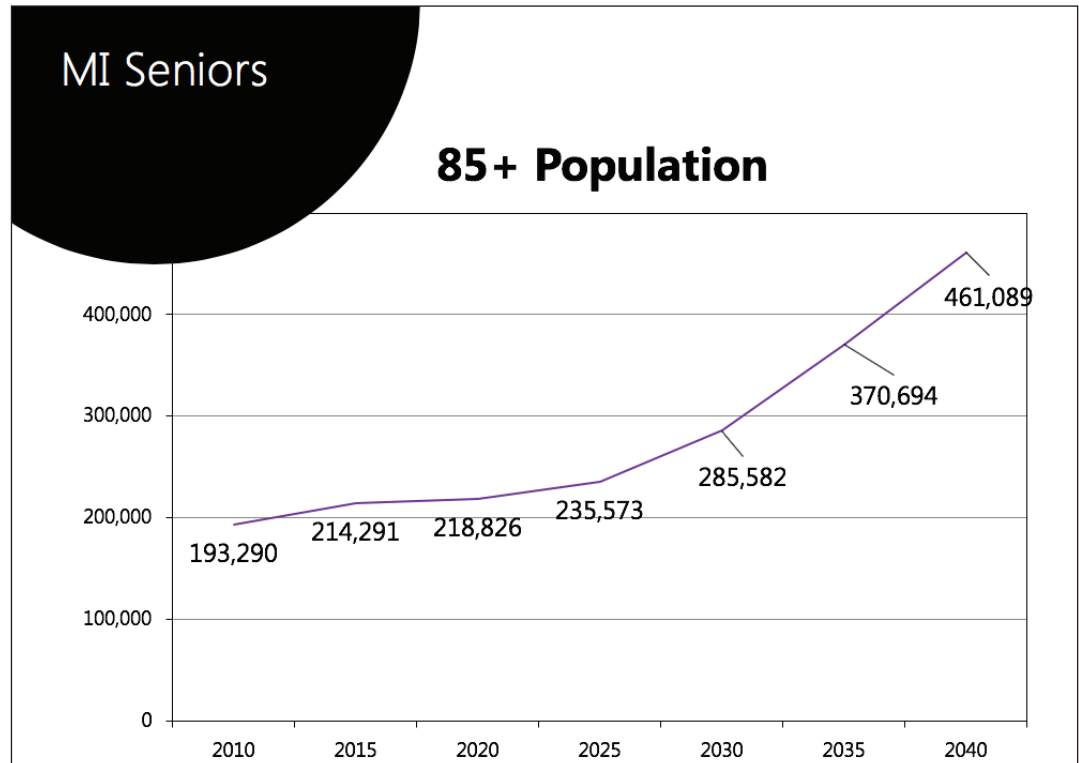
Put St. Joseph County in that “to be envied” category.

This summer, the St. Joseph Commission on Aging (COA) opened its River Enrichment Center and Residence, the result of a conversion of an old and long-vacant motel into 46 living units for the over-60 set, plus a new COA headquarters and senior services center. Occupants must be 60 or older and rents run from \$725 (1 bedroom) to \$850 (2 bedrooms).

The timing could not be better for a county where 22 percent of the population is over age 60 and is expected to trend even older.

“We had been operating a senior center in the Three Rivers community and we always have struggled with not having enough space for our programs, so that had us thinking about potential sites in the community that would accommodate our needs,” said Tim Stoll, COA’s executive director. “The county commissioners had considered building a new center, as well looking at other locations that might be a fit.

“Being a lifelong resident of the area, I was familiar with the old hotel — my wife and I, in fact, had our senior prom there,” he added. “I thought the combination of a senior center (we actually call it an Enrichment Center)



*This slide from a 2018 presentation to MAC by the Area Agencies on Aging Association reflects the growing demographic shifts that are making Michigan one of the older states in the U.S.*

and a senior housing community made perfect sense.”

The motel, formerly known as the Three Rivers Inn, had been vacant for about 12 years, Stoll said, and its highly visible location in Three Rivers made it “an ideal location” for a combo service center/housing complex.

The discussions gained momentum when Stoll and commissioners became aware the motel site was in tax foreclosure.

“Once COA put together a plan ... to share with the commissioners, they got on board pretty quickly and the excitement throughout the county just built from there,” Stoll explained.

That excitement continues at the now operating facility with new residents such as Glenn and Billie Chambliss, who credit their return to Three Rivers to the new facility.

“We had basically lived all of our married life in Three Rivers,” Billie Chambliss said. “But when we decided to

**Continued on page 7**



# ST. JOSEPH TRANSFORMS LONG-VACANT MOTEL INTO FRESH APPROACH ON SENIOR HOUSING from page 6

sell our home, it sold quickly, and then we could not find a facility nearby that we liked. So, we went to Portage.

“About six months later, we heard about (the Enrichment Center project) because Glenn had worked for COA as a Meals on Wheels driver. As soon as we found out, we talked to Tim because we wanted to move back ... everyone we know is here.”

Asked what advice he would give other counties facing the senior housing challenge, Stoll replied: “I know there are quite a few communities that are dealing with the lack of housing, whether it be low-income housing,

single family housing, work force, etc. This project has shown that providing senior housing in this way can have a ripple effect and provide some relief to a community in need of housing. Many of the people who are moving in are coming from homes that will be great starter homes for young people looking to settle down in our area.

“Our county is developing an overall plan for housing,” Stoll added, “so my advice to other communities in need of housing is to consider how developing senior housing may help address housing needs at all socioeconomic levels.”

## SHARE YOUR ‘BEST PRACTICES’ WITH MAC

From challenges come creativity, and boy have Michigan’s counties been challenged in the 21st century.

MAC continues to highlight how counties have found ways to continue or expand services in the most hostile of fiscal environments. Our “Best Practices” initiative isn’t a competition, but a celebration — of Great Lakes ingenuity, passion and plain ol’ grit.

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](mailto:melot@micounties.org).

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



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## MACNEWS

# MEMBERS APPROVE AMENDED PLATFORMS AT 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

More than 400 county officials, speakers and others from across Michigan gathered at the 2019 Michigan Association of Counties' Annual Conference at the Grand Traverse Resort, Aug. 18-20.

The event was keynoted by Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, who led the audience through a detailed review of the changes to election laws brought by ballot proposals enacted in 2018. She also pledged to make her office available to any county that wished to hold a town hall to educate voters on their new voting options, such as "no-reason" absentee ballots and voter registration on Election Day itself.

On Aug. 19, Commissioner Veronica Klinefelt of Macomb County was sworn in as the MAC Board President. Klinefelt is the 112th person to hold the president's position for the organization that represents the leaders of Michigan's 83 counties. In her remarks after taking the oath on Monday, Aug. 19, Klinefelt emphasized the themes of service, stopping to honor veterans in the audience, and county coordination.

Klinefelt will lead a board that gained one new member via elections held at the conference: Scott Noesen of Midland County for Region 6 (covering the northeast Lower Peninsula). Joining Klinefelt as officers for the MAC Board for the 2019-20 term are Phil Kuyers of Ottawa County (first vice president) and Stan Ponstein of Kent County (second vice president). Ken Borton of Otsego County moves to the role of immediate past president.

On Aug. 20, during MAC's Annual Business Meeting, about 150 MAC members approved **policy platforms** developed by MAC's seven policy committees overseeing issue areas ranging from finance to agriculture and tourism. During the platform discussions, members approved three amendments submitted by commissioners to the draft platforms:

- Added language to the Health and Human Services Platform to emphasize the value of local control in community mental health operations
- Added language to the Environmental Platform to support the continued operation and safety improvements to the Line 5 pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac that is operated by Enbridge
- Removed language from the General Government Platform that supported a county option to allow for nonpartisan elections for county officials

"We say it again and again: MAC is a member-driven organization," said Stephan Currie, executive director. "The Business Meeting was a great example of that



*Veronica Klinefelt addresses the 2019 Annual Conference after taking the oath as MAC's 112th president. (Rod Sanford photography)*



*Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson urged county leaders to promote local briefings on the voter-initiated Redistricting Commission, which will begin its work after the 2020 Census, during her keynote remarks to the 2019 Annual Conference (Rod Sanford photography)*

principle in action as members discussed, debated and voted on policy positions. It's great to see members show such passion for finding the best ideas, the best practices to make our state an even better place to live."



# MACNEWS

## SCENES FROM THE 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

More than 400 county leaders, exhibitors, speakers and others gathered at the Grand Traverse Resort Aug. 18-20 for the 2019 Michigan Counties Annual Conference. To see even more photos from the event, visit the **MAC website**.



Photos by Rod Sanford Photography



**MACNEWS**

**MICHIGAN COMMISSIONERS RECEIVE SPECIAL WHITE HOUSE BRIEFINGS**

Several members of the MAC Board of Directors joined a contingent of nearly 80 county leaders on Oct. 3 at a White House Conference to discuss greater cooperation between local and federal leaders.

The Michigan visit, held in conjunction with delegations from Ohio and Kentucky, is part of an ongoing effort by the Trump administration to solicit local views on public policy challenges. Michigan's first such visit to the White House came in the summer of 2017

"Building relationships is critical to the policy process, be it at the local, state or national level" said Stephan W. Currie, executive director of the Michigan Association of Counties. "Two years ago, I was proud to see a delegation of about 50 travel to the White House. I'm even prouder that this year's contingent is even larger.



We appreciate the efforts of the administration and NACo to solicit the views of our membership on the challenges facing regional governments in our state."

Before traveling to the White House for a tour of the East Wing and policy briefings in the West Wing, NAME attended a breakfast briefing from the Michigan Association of Counties and National Association of Counties.

Among those addressing the county leaders in the West Wing on such themes as economic development, the opioid crisis and the "Waters of the United States" rule were: Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos; Andrew Wheeler, head of the Environmental Protection Agency; Lawrence Kudlow, director of the National Economic Council; and Jim Carroll, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.



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**CRC ANALYSIS****HEADLEE AMENDMENT LAWSUIT UNLIKELY TO AFFECT COUNTIES**

By Eric Lupher, President, Citizens Research Council

Some cities are hopeful they can convince Michigan's highest court that flawed accounting has allowed the state to short their revenue sharing payments. While the Headlee Amendment would seem to protect local governments against tax shifts and reduced state spending, its wording has allowed some to benefit at the expense of others.



Lupher

But let's get the bad news out of the way up front: Neither the cities that filed the suit nor the counties cheering them on should count on seeing more money as a result of this litigation.

The case rests on the calculations involved with Article IX, Section 30 of the Michigan Constitution, part of the 1978 Headlee Amendment. Plaintiffs (the cities) scored a partial win recently at the Michigan Court of Appeals, but it is not likely to result in an immediate state funding windfall they initially hoped for.

A quick primer: Section 30 forbids the state from reducing the amount of funding it sends to local governments below that which was provided in 1978 — 48.97 percent of spending from state collected taxes. The state currently sends 55.3 percent to local governments, about \$2 billion more than is required.

So why do they feel shorted? The spending requirement applies to local governments as a group, comprising not just cities, villages, townships and counties, but also schools, intermediate school districts, community colleges and special authorities. Some local governments can receive more funding at the expense of another if the state sends more than the minimum to local governments as a group.

This provision, along with Section 29's prohibition on unfunded mandates (the state requiring local governments to provide a service without supplying the necessary funding), was designed to keep the state from living within its means by creating more fiscal pressure for local governments.

A group calling itself Taxpayers for Michigan Constitutional Government filed a lawsuit in 2016, alleging that 1994's Proposal A school funding changes unfairly allowed the state to cut back on funding to general-purpose local governments. They claimed that the new state funding to schools should not count in the Section 30 calculation because it resulted from a tax shift, something that should have changed the accounting according to the Headlee Amendment.

They further argue that funding to charter schools should not count because charter schools do not meet commonly used definitions of local governments.

They also argue that a proper accounting of state spending to local governments to comply with Section 30 should not include state funding provided to local government as a result of Section 29 mandates.

In late July, the Court of Appeals delivered a mixed bag. Plaintiffs prevailed in their argument to exclude mandate funding from the state's calculations, but they lost their argument that the Proposal A fund shift must be excluded from Section 30 math and on charter schools.

It remains to be seen if either side will appeal and if so, what arguments will be made.

Using rough accounting, we estimate that changing the accounting for state mandate funding will not be enough to eliminate the difference between the current 55.3 percent and the 48.97 percent Section 30 threshold (a \$2 billion difference). For the lawsuit to make a difference, the cities must win on at least one of the other charges. Backing charter school spending out would change the accounting more than \$2 billion of state spending and make a difference.

It is estimated that the shift in spending related to Proposal A totals \$5.4 billion, so winning on this charge would make a big difference.

There is another victory for local governments in the appellate court ruling. A law was written to implement the Headlee Amendment requiring identification of all state mandates, those in existence and newly created, but the state has never taken action to fulfill that requirement. The Court of Appeals' ruling directed the state to now carry out that task. If doing so identifies additional mandates, and the associated spending is pulled out of the Section 30 math, the state could fall below its required revenue-sharing obligation.

Thus far, though, this is only a paper win. The state is not yet forced to send any more money to local governments.

And even if the state is forced to send more money to local governments, there is no assurance that all local governments will reap the benefits of increased spending. It could, for example, comply with a court ruling and make political points by increasing for K-12 schools, community colleges, roads and infrastructure or other needs. Only locals providing that service would benefit.

## MACAO ARTICLE

# CALHOUN SCORES BIG WITH ON-SITE EMPLOYEE HEALTH CENTER

By Kelli Scott, Calhoun County Administrator/Controller

Imagine this: You use a mobile app to schedule an annual physical appointment and can get in as soon as the next day. You arrive and have no wait in the lobby. You spend 20 to 40 minutes with the doctor. There is no fee for the visit. And you can look up your records whenever needed online within the electronic medical records system. Free and easy — no hassles!

Oh, and you can get most prescriptions free there too, as well as flu shots and health and wellness coaching services.

This is the patient-centered model that Calhoun County employees and their families enjoy within our CareHere Employee Health and Wellness Center.

In 2014, Calhoun collaborated in the launch of what we believe to be Michigan's first public/private employee health care clinic. We partner with local companies in Battle Creek — Musashi, Systex Products Corporation and Toyota Tsusho America — to make this personalized care possible.

CareHere, LLC, a national health care leader specializing in offering convenient, one-stop health and preventive services, operates the center. It is a near-site location, within walking distance of where most of the county's employees work. Convenience is a key component to encouraging employees to utilize the center and manage their well-being and health.

Over the past four years, 65 percent of county employees who had health risk assessments (required to receive our wellness program incentive pay) have decreased or maintained their risk levels in key indicators such as body mass index (BMI), glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol and tobacco. Calhoun has a healthier work force because of this positive health risk movement. We also engage CareHere to provide all of our occupational health services, including pre-employment screenings and required drug testing for road workers and other employees.

Cost savings are significant, too. For employees, there are zero co-pays or deductibles for primary care visits, labs and prescription medications at the health



*Calhoun Administrator Kelli Scott (back row, sixth from right) participates in festivities for the new CareHere facility in Calhoun County in May. (photo courtesy of Battle Creek Chamber of Commerce)*

center. In accordance with IRS regulations, we charge individuals on our high deductible health care plan a nominal fee based on market value for non-preventative services and medications. Employees who visited CareHere in 2018 saved approximately \$200 each in out-of-pocket costs alone for the year.

For the county, savings are two-fold. Immediate savings come from increased efficiency of the operating model versus "retail" systems, amounting to about \$40 per employee per visit in our case and totaling more than \$150,000 per year. Longer term, we've seen improvements in employees' health through better disease management and chronic care programs, which reduce catastrophic claims. CareHere estimates cost avoidance is approximately \$600,000 per year, creating the real value added over time for self-funded health insurance plans like we have.

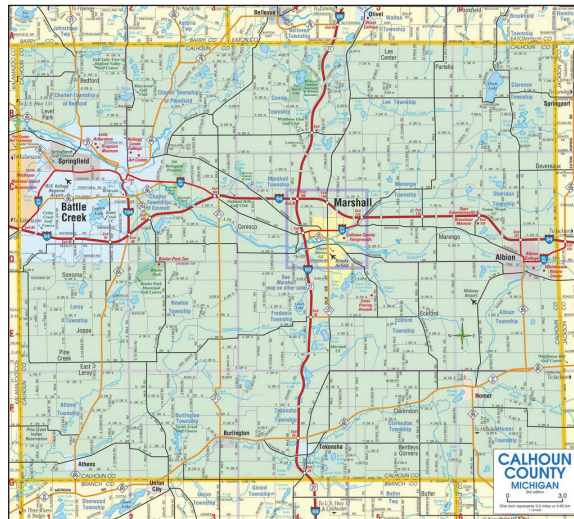
With CareHere, employers pay an administrative fee per employee and then all direct costs for the providers' compensation, supplies and medications are passed through as well. Essentially, we are procuring our employees' health care through the center directly, instead of paying insurance claims that include markups and overhead. Indirect charges including facilities usage are shared proportionately between employers, minimizing administrative costs.

**Continued on page 13**

**MACAO ARTICLE**

**CALHOUN SCORES BIG WITH ON-SITE EMPLOYEE HEALTH CENTER** from page 12

One of our original partners, the City of Battle Creek, ended participation earlier this year, which created an opportunity for the county to renovate a vacant building and create more capacity for future expansion of services and room for additional employers to join. Since the county owns this building, we are recouping some of our capital investment through rent. We also reinvest a small portion of the savings into boosting our employee wellness and recognition programs.



Employees continue to praise the personal attention from the providers, coupled with the convenient location and low cost.

Calhoun’s health care costs are nearly \$6 million per year just for our 725 active employees. Year after year, we find that CareHere provides the best infrastructure for care to our employees by removing barriers to access that exist with traditional services.

This model is an example of what’s possible when private and public sectors work together. Employees of the three partner companies represent about 60 percent of the clinic’s utilization, while the county’s share is 40 percent.

Patient satisfaction is positive within the center, and 95 percent of those surveyed last year indicated they would recommend CareHere to a family member or co-worker.

Calhoun County’s mission statement is “building a better county through responsive leadership.” One of our most important goals is valuing our employees. To that end, our Board of Commissioners supports investments in employee health and wellness initiatives such as CareHere. Taxpayers and their public servants are saving money on health care benefits, and public and private entities are partnering together for effective health care solutions.

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## AFFILIATE CORNER

# CLERKS ARE COMMISSIONERS' ALLIES IN BOOSTING COUNTIES

By Kristen Millard/Montcalm County Clerk

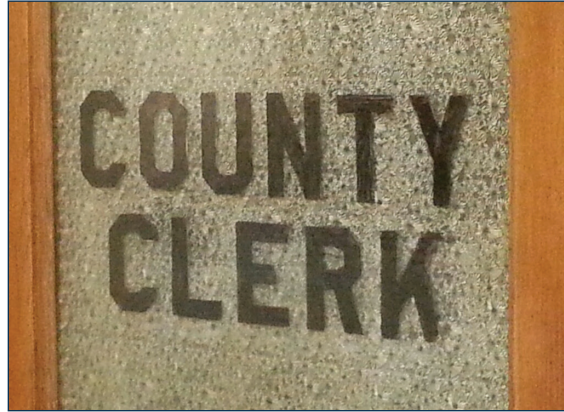
For each of Michigan's 83 counties, there is a county clerk, who is a constitutional officeholder, just like the sheriff, treasurer and prosecutor. Often underappreciated but critical to county government, the county clerk is behind the scenes, doing the work of the people.

The average person may think that the only responsibility of county clerks is conducting elections, which are generally held in May, August and November, but we do even more, most of which is unnoticed or taken for granted. Some of those responsibilities have a great impact on the lives of our residents and the workings of the county government.

County clerks are elected to a four-year term and are responsible for keeping records of birth, death, military discharge papers (if filled in office), assumed names, co-partnerships, all contracts with the county and issuing and filing marriage licenses. In addition, the clerk's office processes concealed pistol licenses (CPL) and notary applications. The clerk also serves as the clerk of the board of commissioners, the board of canvassers and the circuit court. The clerk is a member of the plat board and election commission. The clerk also serves as an officiant for wedding ceremonies. The clerk is a member of the apportionment commission, which determines the number of seats and district boundaries of county commissioners after each decennial census. The clerk also is a member of statutory committees to appoint replacement registers of deeds and treasurers.

One of the more prominent responsibilities of the clerk is serving as the chief election official in the county. As such, the clerk administers all election functions required by law. Part of those duties include the supervision of all national, state, and local elections and the training of election workers in the county for those communities with a population of under 10,000. The clerk is also responsible for the administration of the Michigan Campaign Finance Reporting Act for those candidates that file for office at the local level. The clerk also oversees recounts held at the county level and serves as part of the election commission that reviews recall petition language for factualness and clarity.

We perform thousands of Oaths of Office. In fact, we keep your Oath of Office on file and probably administered your Oath when you were elected. We keep on file deputizations of sheriff, circuit court clerk and other appointed deputies and often administer those oaths of offices.



County clerks work very hard in and outside of the office. We are currently advocating for additional funding and accommodations for the anticipated increase in absent voter ballots in 2020 and beyond. We often find ourselves the unintended subject of legislation and initiatives, like the Trial Court Funding Commission (TCFC) Initiative. Currently, the TCFC suggests that circuit court clerks become employees of the State of Michigan, which will certainly result in a lack of local control, lack of checks and balances on the Circuit

Court and Michigan constitutional challenges.

In some counties, county clerks are the human resources department, financial services department and the IT department. Clerks also often take on additional roles as the county FOIA coordinator, emergency manager and, at the discretion of the chief circuit court judge, clerk to the jury board.

On behalf of Michigan Association of County Clerks, I encourage you to reach out and work with your county clerk. While we are currently busy preparing for the November 2019 election and what is sure to be a busy 2020 election cycle, we want to be a resource to you. In fact, due to our varied duties across our counties, we are often very in touch with where savings and efficiencies can be found within county government and have the common goal of best serving our county residents.

*Kristen Millard is the president of the **Michigan Association of County Clerks.***

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## EXPERT CORNER

# OPIOID PARTNERSHIP COMMITS \$5 MILLION ON TREATING ADDICTION IN MICHIGAN

By Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Communications

The Michigan Opioid Partnership is a unique strategy that combines public and private funds to support innovative and evidence-based treatment programs for people with opioid use disorder. Called a “no wrong door approach,” the strategy removes the barriers to entry for those needing treatment for opioid addiction and helps them get on a path to successful recovery.



The Michigan Opioid Partnership is a public-private collaborative with a mission to decrease opioid overdoses and deaths through prevention, treatment, harm reduction and sustained recovery. The partnership is made up of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, the Ethel and James Flinn Foundation, The Jewish Fund, the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and the Superior Health Foundation.

Grants will fund planning, training and coordination of treatment for opioid use disorder. The collaborative will make funds available to support the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT), from the first point of medical contact in a hospital or emergency room to continued treatment in a community-based program. Funds will also assist jails using a continuity of care approach focused on long-term treatment of opioid use disorder. MAT is an evidence-based treatment for opioid addiction that usually includes both medication and behavioral therapy.

Two hospital systems across the state will receive grants to pilot projects designed to help change the culture in hospitals and emergency rooms to better combat the opioid epidemic. **Beaumont Hospital** in southeast Michigan and **Munson Medical Center** in Northern Lower Michigan have been selected to receive funds for pilot projects that utilize medication-assisted treatment in partnership with outpatient treatment providers. The grants total over \$1.3 million. Additional hospital grants are expected to be announced in the coming months.

“Hospitals have been selected based on existing

institutional support, expertise, capacity and the relationships with community providers that will enable them to carry out this work,” said Paul Hillegonds, CEO, Michigan Health Endowment Fund.

Continuing the “no wrong door approach” for Michigan, \$1.5 million will be committed to expanding medication-assisted treatment and enhance identification of substance use

disorders at jail intake. Wayne State University, Center for Behavioral Health and Justice will receive a grant to coordinate the effort. County jails will also be selected for funding, to work in partnership with the WSU team to serve inmates with addiction.

The 16-month project will build a lasting partnership between the criminal justice and substance abuse treatment communities. The plan is to accomplish this by supporting county-level implementation coupled with data-driven technical assistance to demonstrate need and generate solutions that will increase access to needed treatment. Once trained, community stakeholders will use administrative data to assess the success of their invention, as well as improve the quality of data within each county.

“Enhancing continuity of care to include jails will assist individuals with opioid use disorder in either continuing or beginning MAT within the jail,” stated Sheryl Kubiak, dean of the Wayne State University’s School of Social Work. “Interfacing with the jail provides another important opportunity for intervention in our communities and reduces the likelihood individuals with opioid use disorders will return to jail. We are committed to improving the lives of those who reside in Michigan.”

“As Michigan’s largest health insurer, we are acutely aware of the devastating impact of the opioid crisis on families,” said Daniel J. Loepp, president and CEO, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. “We are committed to continuing to work with partners to identify and support meaningful solutions like these to improve addiction treatment and enhance awareness of options available to those in need — not only for the members we serve, but for benefit of the entire state. Our ultimate goal is saving lives.”

**Continued on page 16**

**EXPERTCORNER**

**OPIOID PARTNERSHIP COMMITS \$5 MILLION ON TREATING ADDICTION IN MICHIGAN** from page 15

In 2017, drug overdoses killed nearly 2,700 people in Michigan, with 2,053 of those deaths attributed to opioids, according to the **latest MDHHS statistics**. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, overall drug overdose deaths in Michigan exceeded traffic and gun deaths combined in 2017.

Medication-assisted treatment involves utilizing U.S. Drug Administration-approved drugs to treat addiction. Efforts across the country, including in California and Massachusetts, have found success initiating medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder in emergency rooms in tandem with a warm handoff to continued outpatient medication-assisted treatment and behavioral therapy.

“The Michigan Opioid Partnership is working to support emerging ideas to help solve the opioid crisis,” Mariam Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan said. “Serving addiction innovatively in hospital emergency rooms and in county jails can help set the foundation for what is possible across the state.”

**UPDATE ON 911 CHANGES**

By: Dan Aylward/Abilita

Since our article 911 Changes and How They Affect You was published in August, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer approved **Public Act 30 (HB 4249)**. Here’s the most significant facts necessary to know for your county:

All organizations with a multiple line phone system and workspace capacity of greater than 20,000 square feet and more than 20 phones need to be able to send the geographic location of each caller on the system to the 911 dispatch center. Minimum unit sizes are 7,000 square feet. Those with multiple buildings and/or floors also need to comply, regardless of square footage.

Compliance must be met by Jan. 1, 2021. If you are not able to meet this deadline, you must report this to the State 911 Committee and the Michigan Public Services Committee by this date.

To check if you need to be complying, check [abilita.com/michigan-e911](http://abilita.com/michigan-e911)

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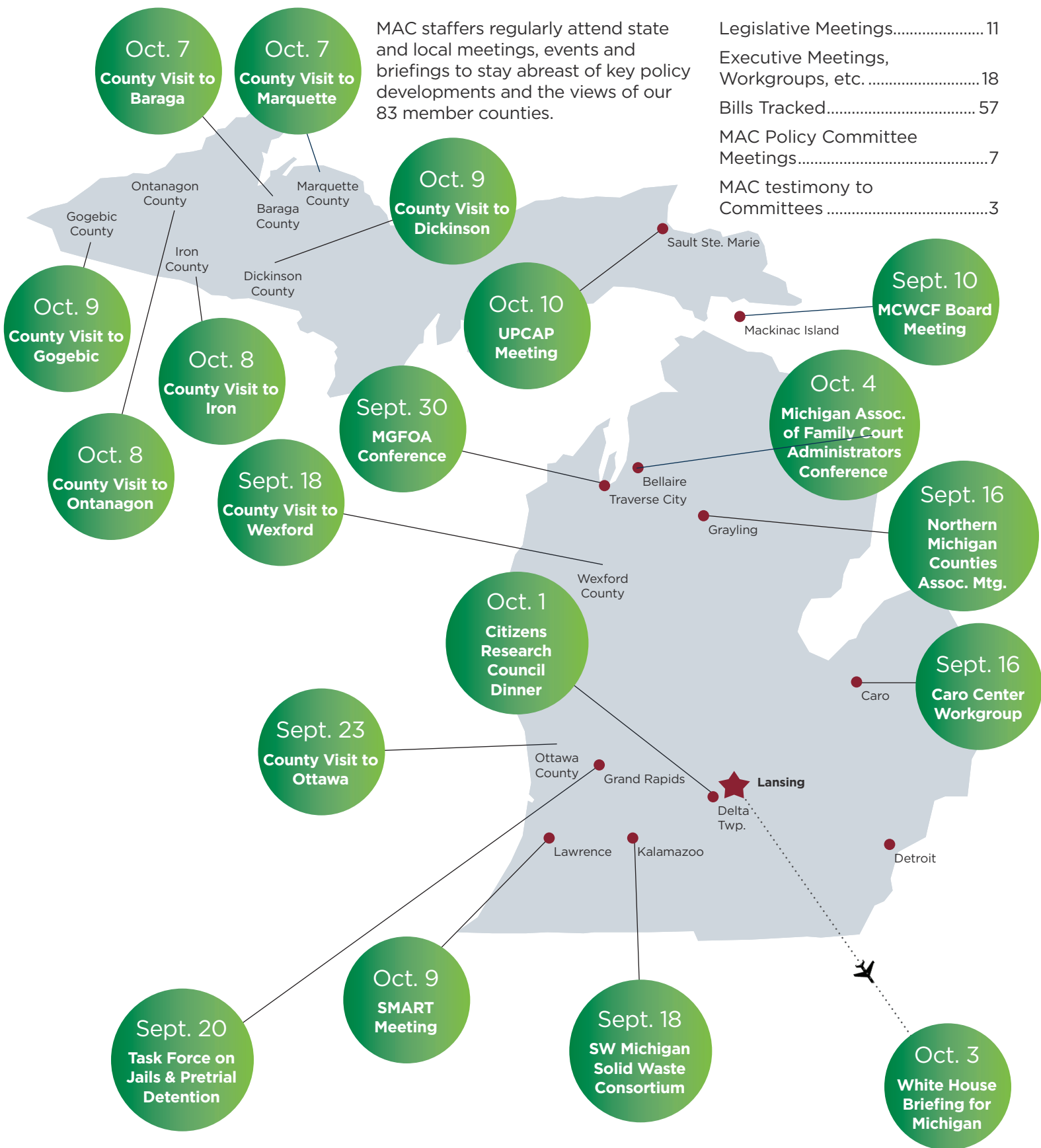
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# MAC IN ACTION

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.

Legislative Meetings.....	11
Executive Meetings, Workgroups, etc. ....	18
Bills Tracked.....	57
MAC Policy Committee Meetings.....	7
MAC testimony to Committees .....	3



**MEET YOUR MAC BOARD**

**VAUGHN J. BEGICK AND SCOTT NOESEN**



**Name:** Vaughn J. Begick  
**County/MAC Region:** Bay/Region 6  
**Position:** Director  
**County Service:** Commissioner, 2004-present  
**Profession:** Physician assistant

**Previous Public Service:** None

**What would you say to a commissioner in another county who doesn't think participation in MAC is valuable?**

The Michigan Association of Counties offers **two opportunities each year** to meet with fellow county commissioners and attend educational sessions on topics pertinent to our positions.

The Legislative Conference earlier in the year in Lansing also provides an opportunity, along with networking and educational sessions, to visit with our local legislators to discuss topics of mutual interest and pending legislation.

The Annual Conference also includes the election of officers and approval of the MAC committee platforms.

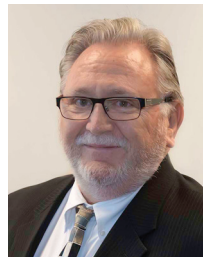
The **MAC committees** offer commissioners the opportunity to participate in developing platforms and guiding our legislative staff to work with legislators on laws that help commissioners in doing our jobs.

MAC also offers new commissioner training along with regional meetings around the state. There is also a **MAC Commissioners Forum** online, enabling you to communicate with fellow commissioners.

The MAC Service Corporation has many sponsored programs such as the Blue Cross Blue Shield Administrative program; CoPro+, which is a collaborative purchasing program with bulk pricing and shareholder rewards; and Nationwide 457, a state-of-the-art retirement planning program. And there are many more. Check them out on the **MAC website**.

**MAC**  
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

**For all the latest news and events, visit**  
[www.micounties.org](http://www.micounties.org)



**Name:** Scott D. Noesen  
**County/MAC Region:** Midland/Region 6  
**Position:** Director  
**County Service:** Commissioner, 2014-present  
**Profession:** Retired from Dow Chemical in 2008

**Previous Public Service:** None

**What would you say to a commissioner in another county who doesn't think participation in MAC is valuable?**

The greatest value of participating in MAC is the sharing of experiences with other commissioners with respect to issues affecting the counties. We can all learn from the various creative solutions developed by the 83 counties to some of the most difficult problems within the state.

Participation in the various committees of MAC, in my case, the Finance and the Environmental and Regulatory Affairs Committees, has also provided me with the opportunity to explore in detail some of the upcoming legislative issues in the state, and to advocate for the best possible outcome for our counties.

Conference breakout sessions cover a wide range of relevant topics, and I believe it is the responsibility of each commissioner to stay informed on the topics most relevant to their communities.

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## LEGISLATOR Q&A

# SENATOR JIM RUNESTAD



**Name:** Sen. Jim Runestad

**District/counties:** 15th/Oakland County

**Committees:** Finance Committee (chair); Appropriations; Education and Career Readiness; Judiciary and Public Safety; Families, Seniors and Veterans

**Term #:** 1st

**Previous public service:** Four years as a state representative, six years as an Oakland County commissioner

### What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

Clearly, we need to channel more resources into upgrading Michigan's infrastructure. The new funding voted in four years ago is reaching its full implementation. Legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle agree on the need to maintain road funding as a priority in the state budget. Lawmakers have scoured the state budget over the past years to dedicate hundreds of millions of additional General Fund dollars into our highways, local roads and bridges. The debate today is how much more needs to be put into roads and whether new tax revenues are necessary or if reprioritizing existing resources in the state budget can accomplish that goal.

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

My experience as an Oakland County commissioner taught me the value of county government as an efficient model for the delivery of vital government services. The size of counties can offer more efficiency in regionalizing services beyond the township and city level, but they are small enough to be nimbler than state government to respond to unique geographic and demographic needs of our constituents. This regionalization works when it is the product of cooperation and mutual benefit between county and local governments but not when it is imposed on them by the state. Power held in the hands of local government is usually the best arrangement. Oakland County was very effective in forging partnerships with local governments on the delivery of basic government services during my tenure because we all recognized the mutual advantage that offered. At the end of the day, county and local government leaders must all be on the same page to make the best use of limited resources to the benefit of our constituents.

### What are your goals as a member on the Michigan Jail and Pretrial Incarceration Task Force?

To learn as much as I can about how pretrial detention practices are affecting our residents' safety, their pocketbooks and their constitutional rights. I'm also

interested in seeing research directed into areas that are currently deficient in answering these questions. Michigan has very little in the way of studies regarding the impact of pretrial detention and more information will help guide us going forward. We need to review these current practices to determine if they are the most appropriate means of protecting the public. It is important to find alternatives to jail for non-violent offenders wherever possible due to the barriers that incarceration can create on future employment. That is why I am in favor of expunging convictions from an individual's record for offenses that are no longer current violations of state law.

### As a member of the Families, Seniors and Veterans Committee, what do you think the state can do to assist counties with the foster care and child welfare system?

Like many states, our current child welfare system is flawed; kids are slipping through the cracks. Our counties are experiencing funding shortages, state computer system failures and case overloads. I was appalled when I read the findings of the Children's Protective Services audit last year that revealed an unacceptable level of service and care toward our most vulnerable children. We should and absolutely must do better. We cannot allow a single child under our care to receive substandard treatment by their case workers. I'm particularly concerned about the findings that show a lack of consistency of standards across our state. A child in one county may be placed in foster care but an exact same set of circumstances may only warrant counseling in another county. We need uniformity to ensure a child at risk in one community is treated as a child at risk in another part of the state.

As a former chair of the Judiciary Committee in the House, I understand the data that shows foster children experience higher rates of sexual abuse and trauma resulting in higher rates of suicide, criminal activity, failure to graduate from high school and failure to successfully enter college or a career. The data also shows that losing parents is more detrimental to a child's future outcomes than any other factor, and that keeping kids in their homes, whenever possible, results in better outcomes.

Toward this goal the federal government is encouraging states to realign their focus to keep more families together and out of foster care by providing services on the front end. This is being incentivized by new federal funding, and our committee is working through passage of legislation in order that Michigan may qualify for new prevention funds under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). This funding will give the state more tools to assist families with prevention services, including addiction services and legal aid, to keep more families together.

**Continued on page 20**

# LEGISLATOR Q&A: SENATOR JIM RUNESTAD

from page 19

**What did you learn during your time as an Oakland County commissioner that has helped you serve your constituents in both the House and Senate?**

Oakland County's clear focus on maintaining fiscal discipline in both prosperous and challenging economic times is a model for anyone in elected office to emulate. Service at the county level provides the best preparation for taking on the responsibilities as a state legislator. As a county commissioner you are involved in the operation of our justice system, mental health services, transportation networks, substance abuse prevention programs, economic development activities and environmental policy. There isn't a more effective training ground for acquiring the tools to analyze state government operations and fiscal policy.



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# MAC EVENTS CALENDAR

## Friday, Oct. 18

**General Government Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Oct. 25

**Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Monday, Oct. 28

**Health and Human Services Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Wednesday, Oct. 30

**County Legislative Caucus Fall Open House**  
8 a.m. to 9 a.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Nov. 1

**Finance Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Nov. 8

**Environmental, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Nov. 15

**General Government Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Monday, Nov. 25

**Health and Human Services Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Nov. 29

**Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Tuesday, Dec. 3

**MAC Board of Directors**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Wednesday, Dec. 4

**MAC Service Corp. Board of Directors**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Dec. 6

**Finance Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

## Friday, Dec. 13

**Environmental, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs Committee**  
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
MAC Offices, Lansing

**For latest event listings, click here.**



## Take good care of the company you keep.

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