

# Courthouse Journal

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Washington State Association of Counties  
Washington Association of County Officials

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## WSAC and WSALPHO Meet with Governor

Last week officers and staff of WSAC and WSALPHO met with the Governor and LOFM Director to discuss state and local budget problems. The Governor outlined the severity of the state's financial situation. He pointed out that he needs to solve a \$1.2 billion problem in the last half of the state's two year budget. (The state's two year general fund budget totals \$22.8 billion.)

The Governor told the local officials that he did not think the state could continue the backfill support for counties and public health beyond December 31, 2002. Most counties received their checks for calendar year 2002 in July 2001. The counties engaged in the superior court judge compensation dispute received their checks when they agreed to the terms in the biennial budget. Public health funding is on a state fiscal year basis. Public health checks for the '01-'02 fiscal year were distributed in

July of 2001.

The local officials talked about the strains on their budgets. They also talked about how seriously they took their oath to uphold all the laws – not just ones that are adequately funded. They told the Governor they thought that many county officials were at serious risk of being unable to uphold their oaths of office. This resulted in a discussion about opportunities to repeal state requirements. The Governor said he would be interested in considering such proposals. He asked the associations to give him suggestions.

The discussion also covered the issue of expanding county revenue options. The Governor said that he had long felt that counties, in particular, needed expanded revenue options. He said he would sign any expansion of county revenue options that reaches his desk.

## U.S. Forest Service Payments Will Cut into PILT

This may come as a surprise to some counties and not to others, but those counties that receive federal PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) funds likely will see their PILT payments drop as a result of the increased payments they are receiving from the U.S. Forest Service for HR 2389 implementation. NACo Associate Director for Public Lands Paul Beddoe explained that since PILT was always impacted by the predecessor to HR 2389 (basing fund distribution on forest harvest revenues), it was always assumed that HR 2389 funding would also impact PILT payments.

It was not clear, however, whether Title II or Title III distributions would reduce PILT funds. By September 2001, counties receiving HR 2389 funds had to determine whether to allocate between 15 and 20 percent of their county-wide distribution to Title II (community-directed forest and watershed projects) and/or Title III (county-directed forest and watershed projects). No one suggested that this decision would impact PILT revenue, which was just over \$6.5 million statewide last year. Until now.

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PILT payments will be reduced for most counties in Washington electing Title III. The reduction is based on the share of Title I (Road money) and your Title III projects. Title II allocations and the school share of Title I does not re-

duce PILT payments. The PILT formula is complex and the impacts will vary by county.

According to Bill Howells at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), most counties in Washington are affected by electing Title III. Counties not

affected by choosing Title III include Clark, Cowlitz, King, Lewis, Skamania, Thurston and Yakima Counties.

It is too late to change Title II and Title III allocations this year. The BLM PILT website can be accessed at <http://www.blm.gov/pilt/>.

## Legislators Meet with Counties

As the holiday season approaches many counties have been schedul-

ing briefing sessions with legislators from their areas. Recently Pierce and Snohomish county officials met with their delegations and discussed the state budget shortfall and what impact that could have on their county.

Pierce County officials pointed out to the legislators that they rank last in state distributions per capita and that their crime rates rank at or near the top in many categories. They made the point that the 695 backfill was critical for law and justice and public health, as well as a new local option revenue source.

Snohomish County officials discussed the importance of a regional transportation package with connecting routes between Highway 9 and I-5. Several legislators discussed the need for an increased gas tax in conjunction with a regional revenue source.

Asotin, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor and several other counties have already met with their legislators. Other counties have meetings scheduled in the next two weeks. If you have not scheduled a meeting with your delegation you are urged to do so before the Legislature convenes on January 14.

## The Courthouse Journal

The *Courthouse Journal* is published weekly by the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) and the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC).

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly deadline is noon Thursday.

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## Human Services, Housing & Juvenile Justice Developmental Disabilities Council Seeking New Members

The Developmental Disabilities Council is currently seeking applications to fill positions on the Council. They are recruiting nominees for membership in the following categories:

1. Individuals with developmental disabilities from throughout the state; and
2. Parents, guardians, family members of children or adults with developmental disabilities from throughout the state.

In addition, the council strives to reflect the rich geographic, cultural and ethnic diversity of the state in its membership.

Serving as a member of the council

provides the opportunity to get involved and work alongside state policy makers, local providers and consumers to plan and conduct activities which will help increase and support the independence, productivity and integration/inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.

Council membership requires a commitment of 20-30 hours per month for council meetings, preparation, reading, etc.

Additional information is available by contacting Cathy Townley at 360-586-3567 or 1-800-634-4473. Completed applications are due by January 2, 2002.

## Developmental Disabilities Council Issuing Request for Qualifications

The Developmental Disabilities Council is requesting public and private non-profit organizations to submit responses to the following Request for Qualification.

### 01-02 Special Education Advocacy Project

The purpose of this project is to educate and collaborate with policy

makers and policy influencers about special education rights and responsibilities, resulting in improved compliance with IDEA and improved educational opportunities for special education students within the framework of general education. One contract will be awarded in an amount not to exceed \$20,000 for one

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year. It may be renewed on an annual basis for an additional four years at \$20,000 per year.

A 25 percent in-kind or hard cash match from a non-federal source is required. Proposals must be submitted by 4 P.M., Monday, December 24 to the Developmental Disabilities Coun-

cil, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, 2600 Martin Way E., Suite F, PO Box 48314, Olympia, WA 98504-8314, attention: Clare Billings. For additional information contact Clare Billings at 360-586-3565, 1-800-634-4473.

## WSAC Offering Training for New Councilmembers

The nine newly-elected county councilmembers from King, Snohomish and Whatcom counties are invited to attend a one-day orientation to county government hosted by WSAC on December 13, 2001. This orientation is an abbreviated version of that offered to newly elected commissioners and councilmembers in even-numbered

years.

"There is a larger number of new councilmembers than usual this year," explained WSAC Executive Director Bill Vogler. "And, in light of our increased commitment to member education, we're offering this brief introduction to county government – with a focus on councilmember roles and respon-

sibilities."

"I'm pleased that all of the new councilmembers are planning to attend," he added.

All the major substantive areas of county policy will be covered in the Orientation, along with a briefing on the county judicial system by newly-appointed Court of Appeals Judge Ann Schindler. Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg and WACO Executive Director Debbie Wilke will talk about roles and relationships with other elected officials in the courthouse.

## Boards & Commissions

### Forest Practices Board Appointee Sought

The Governor will soon be appointing a new county representative to the Forest Practices Board. The Board regulates forestry on private lands.

Typically the Governor will ask WSAC to provide him three names for consideration. The nominees will be forwarded to the Governor by the WSAC

Board of Directors. The appointment is the Governor's, however, and he need not appoint from the list forwarded to him.

Any commissioner or councilmember who wants to be considered should send WSAC a letter of interest by January 7, 2002.

## News Brief

### COUGARS CAUSING BIG TROUBLE

Okanogan and Ferry counties have declared states of emergency in portions of their territory as a result of what officials say is a threat to public safety posed by a proliferating population of cougars. Last weekend, state Fish and Wildlife agents helped track and kill two cougars in the Wauconda area, where 11 horses and dogs have been killed at one ranch in the last three years. A cougar that killed a goat in the Tonasket area was also killed last weekend with help from the state agency.

The Okanogan County Commissioners considered a plan to hire and authorize its own game agents to hunt down problem cougars. But in the face of a likely legal challenge from the state, the commission on Tuesday instead created a seven-person volunteer county wildlife service. The volunteer service will work with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife to handle complaints

about cougars, bears and bobcats.

Commissioner Dave Schulz suggested the new wildlife service gather information about financial losses due to inadequate cougar control, and bill the state for the losses. He said one llama killed recently in Wolf Canyon near Winthrop was valued at \$60,000.

Okanogan and Ferry counties jointly requested Governor Gary Locke also to declare a state of emergency so they could initiate a plan "to control the overwhelming populations of nuisance cougars in our area."

The resolution said that confirmed encounters between cougars and people in Washington had "almost doubled since the passage of Initiative 655" - a measure sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States, which is a national animal-rights organization, and approved by Washington voters in 1996. It prohibited using dogs to hunt cougars or bears. As a result of an increase in the number of encounters between cougars and people that followed the initiative, the Legislature passed a bill in 2000 that directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission to authorize removal of some ani-

mals with the aid of dogs in areas where public safety appeared to be threatened.

"We feel that the problem is a lot more serious than the game department is willing to admit," said Mike Blankenship, a Ferry County commissioner. "I think they're going to have to open the general (cougar) season with hounds, just to control the population. And I think shortly ... we will have to do something with the black bears," he said.

(Excerpted from reports in the Spokane Spokesman-Review)



## A.W.O.L. ' Absentees Without Leave' Policy Would Hurt Mail-in Voting for Little Gain

When George Washington was first elected president in 1789, the news took days, even weeks, to reach the far reaches of the former colonies.

Such a delay might seem out of place in the one-touch, easy-open, instant-everything world of the 21st century. So the chief elections officer in the state named after the first president wants to bring quicker closure to the process by requiring absentee voters to mail their ballots earlier.

However, it's a fix for nothing that's actually broken. If candidates and the news media dislike waiting for the last absentees to trickle in, too bad; democracy is meant to serve the people, not the politicians and pundits.

As The Seattle Times reported last week, Secretary of State Sam Reed believes that the increasing number of permanent absentee voters is causing intolerable delays in determining the outcome of close elections. Reed doesn't need to look far for examples: the three weeks it took to find out that Maria Cantwell had defeated Slade Gorton for U.S. Senate last fall; the nine days before Seattle residents knew their new mayor would be Greg Nickels, not Mark Sidran, this month.

Reed's prescription: Rather than counting all mail-in ballots that are postmarked by Election Day, require that absentee votes be in the hands of county elections officials by 8 that night, when polls officially close. Ballots that arrive later, no matter when sent or postmarked, would be invalid. AWOL, in effect: absentees without leave.

The change, which would need approval from the Legislature, might seem appealing to those who value fast results over

all else. But who would truly benefit? As Clark County Auditor Greg Kimsey so astutely notes, "I haven't had anyone tell me how this would benefit the voters or improve the election system."

Moving up the deadline would actually penalize mail-in voters, forcing them to cast their votes days ahead of the election -- before the campaigns were concluded -- to make sure the ballots arrived on time. Even so, they would be at the mercy of the mail service. Would elections officials really be willing to discard thousands of ballots delayed by, say, a postal strike or an anthrax scare?

True, absentee voters can always hand-deliver their ballots to the auditor's office or a voting place on Election Day. But if a special trip is required, what's the point of vote-by-mail?

Always getting a firm vote count before bedtime on election night may be an empty hope anyway. Oregon election rules require absentee votes to be in hand on election night. But the outcome of the presidential race in that state last year was up in the air for days because the torrent of ballots turned in during the final hours overwhelmed the state's vote-counting capacity.

Critics of our state's postmark standard are correct that it can cause problems in close primary races, with neither candidate able to launch a general-election campaign until the last votes are counted. However, that's less an argument to change absentee voting rules than it is to move our September primary election to the summer or, preferably, the spring -- something the Legislature has been unwilling to seriously consider. Talk about AWOL.

Vote-by-mail hasn't succeeded in turning every apathetic voter into an enthusiastic one, but the system at least offers one more incentive for participation. State officials should think twice before taking that incentive away.

-- *Michael Zuzel*  
for the editorial board

## NACo Internet University

The National Association of Counties (NACo) Internet University (NIU) is now on-line! With NIU your county agencies and offices have immediate and cost effective access to the new world of e-learning. NIU offers hundreds of self-paced courses that focus on the critical skills, knowledge, and tools that are required of a 21<sup>st</sup> century county workforce.

NIU offers two libraries of courses: the **IT Library** and the **Professional Skill Development Library**. Each library has hundreds of courses at all levels. NIU prices are per person, per library, for one full year. You may purchase one or both libraries. Purchases can be made by individuals and by groups -- with discounts for large groups. Investigate NACo Internet University

and review the full course catalogs now at [www.nacoiu.org](http://www.nacoiu.org). Direct your inquiries to [education@naco.org](mailto:education@naco.org) or call NACo's Education Division at (202) 942-4267.

**Q: What is NACo Internet University?** **A:** NIU is NACo's electronic training arm. It offers comprehensive, training and education of county employees and officials through the Internet. This type of training is often called e-learning. NIU offers two libraries of courses for lease, the **IT Library** and the **Professional Skill Development Library**. Also, extensive free information about counties and e-learning is also featured on the NIU homepage (click the blue buttons).

**Q: Why is e-learning popular now?** **A:** **E-learning** is a highly efficient, cost effective way to broaden trainees' knowledge. Trainees can receive "just in time learning"— information that brings up their individual skill levels when *they* need it. Learners can

take training on their desktop computer or anywhere and any time they have Internet access. They don't have to travel to take it. It can also supplement in-class courses.

**Q: Why is NIU especially helpful to counties?** **A:** **First, county budgets are always tight.** For counties, e-learning attributes can translate into better performance and higher morale on the county job plus time and dollar savings to county departments. **Also, counties can't always train people the way corporations can.** With NIU, managers can make certain courses "requirements", so groups of county learners can all be on the same page. County managers can track learners' performance, so he or she knows where everyone stands and what must be improved. NIU can make the county workplace more competitive with industry for workers. Workers realize that education is a valuable workplace bene-

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fit and know they can use it to move up in the system. Everyone benefits when NIU is used.

**Q: What makes NIU different from other e-learning sites?** **A: NIU is uniquely dedicated to county workers' and officials' needs.** Several NACo-created, county specific courses will soon be posted on NIU. Also, as educational best practices, resources, and anecdotes are gathered from counties, affiliates, and state associations, learners will see these. In the future, we will be streaming audio and video from NACo conference workshops, too.

**Q: What kinds of courses are available?** **A: NIU has two libraries: The Professional Skill Development Library** of training materials contains hundreds of courses in Management, Leadership, Finance, Communications, and more, at all training levels. A few examples include "Communicate to Increase Understanding," "Achieving Success with the Help of a Mentor," "Lead and Develop Your Staff," "Managing Inbound Call Centers," "Difficult People in the Workplace," "Building Effective Intercultural Communications," "Listening, Influencing and Handling Tough Situations," "Communicating Better with Your Team," "Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace," "Components of Financial Statements," "Proactive Approaches to Stop Negativity." **The IT Library** has hundreds of IT courses from the most basic to most sophisticated for IT professionals and

everyday workers, including "Microsoft Office 2000," "Microsoft Exchange Server 2000," "New A+ Certification, Parts 1-7," "Java 2.0," "IBM." Updating is done periodically.

**Q: Will NIU replace NACo's training at conferences and our state's training programs?** **A: NIU is not intended to replace** NACo-sponsored or state association-sponsored workshops, seminars, and educational conferences that take place each year. In fact, NACo strongly believes in "blended learning," which combines the best of face-to-face learning with e-learning.

**Q: Are credits or CEUs available?** **A: Yes.** Trainees can receive CEUs and/or credit designations for many of the courses from several universities. These are listed on the site under FAQs. CEUs and credits are not given automatically. Learners show their transcripts to the schools and apply for CEUs and/or credit.

**Q: Is help available if I have problems?** **A: Yes.** Each trainee receives technical support (Helpdesk). Online mentoring is also available for IT courses 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Q: How much do NIU libraries cost?** **A:** Each one-year access to NIU's IT Library or the Professional Skill Development Library is \$195 for individuals in NACo-member counties. An individual in a non-NACo-member county pays \$250 for a year's worth of access to each library. Access by an

individual to both libraries is \$349 in a member county and \$449 in a non-member county.

**Q: Can I buy access to individual courses?** **A: No.** Individuals buy access to one or both *libraries*. Library costs are extremely low; each course costs pennies. (This situation is due to NIU's unique partnership with a federal agency.)

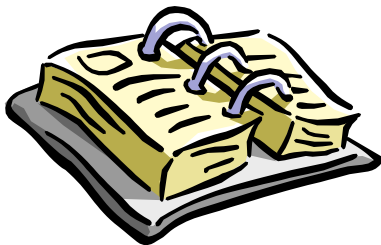
**Q: Can I share my access with others?** **A: No.** Access is good for one person per year per library. Learners in a group are identified.

**Q: Are group discounts available?** **A: Yes.** Price breaks are given at orders of 100, 500 and 1,000. E-mail to [education@naco.org](mailto:education@naco.org) to discuss this.

**Q: How do people sign up?** **A: Click the "Buy Libraries" button on the [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org) site.** You can buy an individual access to one or both libraries. More likely, you will be part of a group of people for whom access is purchased by a county department head, a state association director, or human resources director. Each person who wants access must be listed as part of the group. Group members start at the same date. All gain access to the library or libraries for one full year from the start date.

**Q: Where do I go for more information?** **A: Check the site first [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).** For more information, especially about large group rates, email to NACo: [education@naco.org](mailto:education@naco.org) or call (202) 942-4267.

## Coming Events



**December 13-14, 2001**  
**Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' Annual Winter Meeting,** Crowne Plaza, Seattle

## 2002 Meetings

**January 11, 2002**  
**WACO Board Meeting,** Washington

Counties Building, Olympia

**January 14-18, 2002**  
**Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course,** Central Washington University, Ellensburg. For information call the Criminal Justice Training Commission at (360) 459-6342.

**January 16-18, 2002**  
**ACHS Meeting,** Olympia

**January 30—February 1, 2002**  
**Legislative Rally,** Olympia

**January 30, 2002**  
**Tri-Association (WSAC/WACO/AWC) Legislative Reception,** St. Martin's College, Olympia

**February 7, 2002**  
**WSALPHO Meeting,** Olympia

**March 20-22, 2002**  
**ACHS Meeting,** Tacoma

**April 11-12, 2002**  
**WSAC Western District Meeting,** Rosario Resort, San Juan Islands

**April 25-26, 2002**  
**WSAC Eastern District Meeting,** Sun Mountain Lodge, Winthrop

**May 15-17, 2002**  
**ACHS Meeting,** Spokane

**June 17, 2002**  
**WSALPHO Meeting, Bellevue** (In conjunction with the WSAC Summer Convention)

# Courthouse Ramblings

With the retirement of long-time **Ska- mania County Auditor Gary Olson**, December 31, county commissioners have named Mike Garvison to the unexpired term. Garvison has worked as an assistant state auditor for the State Auditor's regional office in Vancouver for the past two years. Prior to that, he worked for Portland State University as

an accounting coordinator for the telecommunications department and for the Oregon Department of Energy working as a weatherization accounting technician.

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**Morgan "Jake" Jacobson**, the assistant director of the Audit Services division of the State Auditor's office (SAO) is leaving SAO after 30 years to become the new Treasury Manager/Investment Officer for the City of Tacoma. We will certainly miss him at association various meetings, but wish him hearty congratu-

lations as he starts his second career!

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Another change at the State Auditor's Office: **Ted Rutt**, who just retired from 30 years with Pierce County, is the new Chief of Staff at SAO. Ted was chief deputy to State Auditor Brian Sonntag, when Brian was Pierce County Clerk. Brian ran for Pierce County Auditor in 1986, Ted was appointed county clerk and then served in that position over 14 years, before retiring the end of September.

## Courthouses on Holiday Schedule

A number of county courthouses will observe modified work hours on December 24, 2001. If your courthouse is not listed here and it will be closed or will close early please contact WACO staff at (360) 664-0061 or email [bsandahl@wacounties.org](mailto:bsandahl@wacounties.org).

The following courthouses will be closed, or will close early, on December 24:

<b>Columbia County</b>	Closed
<b>Franklin County</b>	Closed
<b>Grant County</b>	Closed

(Grant Co Superior Court/Clerk's Office will be open from 8 a.m. until noon)

<b>Grays Harbor County</b>	Closed
<b>Kittitas County</b>	Closed
<b>Klickitat County</b>	3 p.m. Closure
<b>Lincoln County</b>	Closed
<b>Okanogan County</b>	2 p.m. Closure
<b>Pend Oreille County</b>	2 p.m. Closure
<b>Whatcom County</b>	Closed



## Employment Opportunities



**Lewis County Programs Analyst II** - Salary: \$3,525.92 - \$4,208.42 per month. Closing: December 21, 2001 at 5 p.m. The position is for an IT Programs Analyst. Duties: project management, application, program development, long/short term program planning. Requirements: BS in Computer Science and two years experience with program development. Strong SQL, and Access

data base experience required. Unix, Informix a plus. Apply to Lewis County General Administration Department, 360 NW North Street, Chehalis, WA 98532. Telephone: (360) 740-1408. Complete package available at <http://www.co.lewis.wa.us>. Lewis County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Request for Proposals - Aquatic Center Design

*(Submitted by Asotin County Board of Commissioners)*

Asotin County, Washington, is soliciting proposals for designers of an aquatic center. The project includes a zero-depth pool, a 50-meter outdoor pool, a 25-yard indoor pool, bathhouse facilities, and other aquatics and site amenities. Deadline for submission of the RFP is January 14, 2002. Interested firms can obtain RFP information by contacting the Asotin County Commissioner's secretary at (509) 243-2060. Questions should be directed to Tim Simpson at (509) 758-1010.