

the Courthouse Journal

W A C O U N T I E S . O R G

February 27, 2009

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Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties

Washington Counties Scholarship Fund

It is that time of year again! Through the joint endeavor of WACO and WSAC, there are educational scholarships available to dependent children of county employees for the 2009/10 school year.

Since 1993, 70 awards have been made totaling \$125,000. The funds have been raised by auctions, challenges and lots of arm-twisting by both associations... and all for a great cause! All counties have had applicants but only 26 counties have won. It is also interesting to note that more applicants last year were children of sheriff's office employees! Pierce County submitted the largest number of applications.

Start gently urging your high school seniors and undergrad children to apply for a Washington Counties Scholarship. This year five \$3,000 awards will be given. Students have one month left to apply. All applications must be postmarked no later than April 1 and are available at www.wacounties.org.

Update on WACO Legislative Package

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

Each year, the WACO membership produces a 'WACO Legislative Package' comprised of the highest priority legislation among each of the seven WACO affiliates. WACO staff prioritizes their time and attention during the legislative session advocating the contents of the WACO Legislative Package to the Legislature.

As of Friday, February 27, the WACO Legislative Package stands as follows:

SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

- Implement annual revaluation of real property in all counties of Washington by 2014. **SB 5368** passed from the Senate Ways & Means Committee and is now in the Senate Rules Committee.
- Improve ballot title information. **HB 1057** died in the House State Government Committee and **SB 5098** died in the Senate Government Operations Committee.
- Require that all property taxes are current and due through the full current year when a Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) Affidavit is processed. Legislation was not introduced.

Job announcements & links to County Employment pages at:

<http://wacounties.org/>

the Courthouse Journal

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and the **Washington State Association of Counties**

(WSAC) wacounties.org/wsac

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly / bi-weekly deadline is noon Wednesdays. Direct inquiries and correspondence to - *The Courthouse Journal*, 206 Tenth Av SE, Olympia, WA 98501

WACO - (360) 753-7319 / Fax (360) 664-2812

Debbie Wilke, Executive Director

James McMahan, Deputy Director

Robin Chase, Financial Operations Manager

Bob Carlton, Research Associate

Kathleen Houts, Administrative Assistant

WSAC - (360) 753-1886 / Fax (360) 753-2842

Eric Johnson, Executive Director

Policy

Scott Merriman, Deputy Director

Rashi Gupta, Policy Director

Josh Weiss, Gen'l Counsel/Policy Director

Brian Enslow, Policy Director

Brad Banks, Policy Analyst

Jeff Killip, WSALPHO Managing Director

Linda Powell, WSALPHO Admin Assistant

Operations – Finance & Technology

Karlynn Parten, Finance Director

Barbara Warden, Finance Specialist

Justin Kerrihard, Technology Manager

Operations – Member Services

Michelle L. Nelson, Communications/Member Services Director

Sarah Bright, Member Services Coordinator

Beth Dubey, Member Services Assistant

Program Contractors

Neil Aaland, Columbia River Basin Project & Puget Sound Partnership

Tom Robinson, Timber Program Manager

Gary Rowe, WSACE Managing Director & Integrated Permitting and Mitigation Project (IPRMT)

Tonia Sugarman, County Training Institute (CTI) and L&I Retro Project Manager

SAVINGS IN GOVERNMENT

- Reduce the number of spring special elections from four to two. **HB 1018** is on the House floor awaiting a vote of the House, and **SB 5016** is on the Senate floor awaiting a vote of the Senate.
- Remove language requiring Auditors to send a ballot request form or official ballot to inactive voters prior to each election. **SB 5017** is on the Senate floor awaiting a vote of the Senate.
- Apply the restriction against unfunded mandates to local governments to non-constitutionally mandated court rules. **SB 5240** died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- Expand the court authority to enjoin harassing public records requests. **HB 1316** died in the House State Government Committee.
- Urge members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation and the United States Congress to pass **HR 5698**, the Restoring the Partnership for County Health Care Costs Act of 2008. **HJR 4000** passed the House and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee.

BETTER GOVERNMENT

- Safeguard the Local Government Archives Records Account and repeal the authority granted in the State Capital Budget to transfer funds from the Account for support of the Washington State Heritage Center. **HB 1374** is scheduled to pass the House Ways & Means Committee.
- Support the recommendations of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to develop possible legislation and policies that will most effectively increase the amount of funding provided to law enforcement for boating safety activities, emphasize the activities related to law enforcement, and increase the overall efficiency of the Boating Safety Program (BSP). **HB 2237** is in the House General Government Appropriations Committee and **SB 5691** is in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.
- Amend several statutes that were not revised with the passage of **SB 5732**, Chapter 105, 2007 Laws, which allows county treasurers to receipt property taxes paid before February 15, updates an archaic statute for the use of a "stamp" and amend statutes allowing for refunds of taxes. **HB 1208** is in the House Finance Committee.
- Amend miscellaneous county clerk fees in order to make them consistent with the fee schedule passed by the Legislature in 2005: amend the language in the statute from "paper" to "document" to reflect court business which is transacted electronically; and, clarify

Legislative Committee Schedules and Agendas:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

statutory authority. **SB 5013** is on the Senate floor awaiting a vote of the Senate.

- Limit the responsibility of county clerks in certain actions and appropriately place it with the parties to the action by amending certain statutes: 1) direct the petitioner in an action to dissolve a public utility district to give notice of hearings; and 2) require the state, rather than the clerk, to publish notice of dependencies. **HB 1003** died in the House Judiciary Committee.
- Secure legislation to allow local government association staff to participate in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Legislation was not introduced.

Support legislation to allow members of Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) Plan 1 to earn an additional benefit of two percent of their average final compensation for each service credit year of membership service in excess of thirty years to a maximum of ten percent. Legislation was not introduced.

Governor Gregoire Launches Updated Economic Recovery Website

Recovery.wa.gov will provide a one-stop site for recovery information

Governor Chris Gregoire today launched an updated website with information about how the federal economic recovery plan is being implemented in Washington state. The address for the updated site is <http://www.recovery.wa.gov>.

“One of the most important parts of the federal recovery plan is the emphasis on accountability and transparency,” Gregoire said. “Our website will provide a place for Washingtonians to see where the recovery money is going and the results that are being produced.”

Included on the site now are:

- A link to sources of money and contact information that local governments can use to find out how to apply for funds.
- Links to state agency websites that contain more information about agency recovery efforts.
- Links to federal websites, including the primary federal site, recovery.gov, which provide details about the plan.

The contact information for local governments to use to apply for money is especially important.

“Because each fund source will have unique criteria that must be met by the applicant, local projects will need to follow the application process each agency has established to be considered for funding,” said Victor Moore, director of the state’s Office of Financial Management (OFM). “Since the timelines for distributing funds are generally very short, I encourage organizations with projects to contact the relevant agency as soon as possible to find out what you need to do to apply.”

“Having sent your project to the Governor’s office or to OFM does not mean you have applied for any specific program or program funding,” Moore added.

Several additional components will be added to the site in the coming days. The site will include:

- Information for the public on what projects have been approved and the results of those projects.
- A place for state agencies to apply to have the projects they have approved certified by the Governor.
- Forms for agencies to use to provide reports required by the federal government.
- Application deadlines for various sources of money.

REMINDER: WACO Legislative Committee

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

The WACO Legislative Committee meets every week during the legislative session. Unless otherwise announced, the Committee meets by conference call at 9:00 AM each Tuesday. All WACO members are welcome and invited to participate. The Committee reviews recently introduced and active legislation related to any affiliate and considers requests for WACO to take a position or take action on legislation. The Committee also reviews the WACO Legislative Package and provides guidance to the WACO staff in that effort. Each WACO affiliate, time permitting, has an opportunity to review legislative action from their perspective.

The WACO Legislative Committee conference call dial in number is 1(866) 393-8073. The PIN is *8093393*. Please announce yourself when you arrive on the call.

New Bill Tracking Format

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

You may have noticed that WACO's legislative tracking format has changed. As legislation is introduced throughout each session, the WACO Watch List tends to get pretty lengthy. Additionally, we have found that a 'one tracking sheet fits all' approach doesn't.

To better serve the needs of each WACO affiliate, we are now utilizing a new legislative tracking system that allows us to create customized tracking lists for each affiliate. As legislation is introduced, WACO staff review the legislation to determine which affiliate(s) have an interest in the bill. Each bill is 'tagged' according to each affiliate and is added to that affiliate's tracking list. As weekly bill updates are sent out, each affiliate now sees only bills that are of interest to their office.

Additionally, this new system allows us to produce customized committee hearing schedules. Rather than having to browse through each committee of the Legislature looking for bills of interest to you, we are able to create a committee hearing schedule for only those bills on an affiliate's bill tracking list.

New systems always take time to learn and get familiar with. As you learn to appreciate the new system, we hope that you will take the opportunity to become more active in your affiliate's legislative operations.

Cut-Off Dates Are Here

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

This week is an important week for those who live in the legislative world. Wednesday, February 25, was the first cut-off date. Monday, March 2, is another cut-off date. Cut-off dates are administrative deadlines that the Legislature imposes on itself to control the number of bills that flow through the legislative process.

There are seven cut-off dates in each legislative session. The following lists each cut-off date for the 2009 legislative session:

Monday, March 2: Bills must pass from fiscal committees in their chamber of origin (House bills must pass the House Finance, Transportation, Appropriations and/or Ways & Means Committee(s), and Senate bills must pass the Senate Ways & Means and/or Senate Transportation Committees);

Thursday, March 12: Bills must pass their chamber of origin (House bills must pass the House, and Senate bills must pass the Senate); and

Monday, March 30: Bills must pass from policy committees in the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate policy committee(s), and Senate bills must pass the House policy committees);

Monday, April 6: Bills must pass from fiscal committees in the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate, Transportation, and/or Ways & Means Committee(s), and Senate bills must pass the House Finance, Transportation, Appropriations and/or Ways & Means Committee(s);

Friday, April 17: Bills must pass the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate, and Senate bills must pass the House).

The 2009 Legislative Session ends on Sunday, April 26.

Bill Count

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

As of Friday, February 27, there have been 2,615 bills introduced in the 47 days the 2009 Legislature has been in session. Of those, 1,361 are House bills and 1,254 are Senate bills.

House members are introducing bills at a rate of nearly 14 bills per Representative (there are 98 members in the House of Representatives). Senators are introducing bills at a rate of nearly 26 bills per Senator (there are only 49 Senators in the Senate).

Of the 2,615 bills introduced, 10 have found their way to the Governor's desk.

Budget, Finance and Taxes

Do Sovereign Nations Pay Taxes?

by Robert Carlton, WACO Staff

Recently in the House of Representatives, **HB 1526** was heard before the House Finance Committee in a public hearing. During the course of the hearing, some spreadsheets were provided to House Finance members by WACO staff. These spreadsheets will be posted on the WACO website and will be accessible there.

The spreadsheets deal with two issues. One, the cumulative effect of the first Tribal Land Exemption Bill, **SHB 1322** which was passed in 2004. This exempted lands that were "essential government services ...such as tribal administration, public facilities, fire, police, public health, education, sewer, water, environmental and land use, transportation, and utility services." (Letter from Peri Maxey, Assistant Director, Property Tax Division, Department of Revenue, dated May 6, 2004 to County Assessors).

Per a DOR report on lands to date that had been exempted, the total value of the exemption created under **SHB 1322** to date is \$139,009,213. This is almost double the amount originally projected to be exempted in the bill's fiscal note, which stated \$77,000,000 as the total amount. It is eye-opening when you realize that the \$139,009,213 represents the taxable value on these properties that only reflects what may be their Current Use or Timber Value, not necessarily their market value. If the true market value of these lands was calculated, the dollar amount would be much greater.

The second spreadsheet listed is the taxable total of all currently taxable Tribal Lands in the State of Washington. We have 25 counties with this type of lands, and their combined taxable value total is \$339,283,156. This figure is slightly higher than presented in committee due to one county discovering it did have some Tribal Land. The sheet still only reflects one property in King County, the Emerald Downs Race Track. King County has found it difficult to provide

figures reflecting the total value, but is working toward that end. It should be pointed out that these current figures do not represent any Tribal Casinos which are located on Fee Land, or any other Tribal Fee Land property already exempt, nor does it contain any of the values of the Great Wolf Lodge in Thurston County.

The heart of the issue is whether or not the proposed leasehold excise tax will offset the Property Tax Loss and inevitable tax shift. Because many of these lands would apparently not be subject to Leasehold Excise tax, the answer would almost assuredly be no, and certainly not in all counties.

If you total all the tax dollars from **SHB 1322** (\$2,780,184) over a biennium that have been lost, and the additional tax dollars that would be lost under **HB 1596** (\$7,307,292), there is a cumulative effect of \$10,087,476 over a biennium. These would result in a substantial tax shift to all other taxpayers.

Now, back to the issue of *do sovereign nations pay taxes?* Actually, they do. The United States Government pays Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to State and Local Governments on Federally owned lands in their respective states and counties. So, the argument that sovereign nations do not pay taxes is a false argument.

In closing, I am including the text of a recent article that appeared in the National Association of Counties (NACo) newsletter. It addresses an interesting problem in South Dakota. Please see the article below.

Trust Lands and Balancing County Budgets

by Rolf H. Kraft, Board of Commissioners Chair, Bennett County, South Dakota,

Counties are in a financial bind. Property tax revenues — the largest single local revenue source for most county governments — are shrinking. And with this loss of revenues, county officials often find themselves cutting services to balance their budgets.

Exacerbating this problem for many counties across the nation is the federal policy of taking lands into trust for Native Americans. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was intended, in part, to restore some traditional lands to Native Americans for economic development. But when these lands are taken into trust by the federal government, local governments may be adversely affected because the lands are no longer subject to local taxation. Since county governments are required to provide services for all people living in the county, this loss of revenue hurts everyone.

For example, the 2006 South Dakota Legislative Audit predicted that Bennett County will deplete its general fund and begin to default on its operational expenses in less than three years without significant property tax increases on a static taxpayer base. The prediction is coming true. Bennett County will not be able to fund its 2010 budget without tax increases or significant cuts in county services.

One reason for the property tax funding crisis is that 24 percent of the county consists of trust lands, which are exempt from county property taxes. As a result, out of a population of approximately 3,574 people, only 850 people currently pay property taxes. When less than one-fourth of the population has to foot the bill for all county services, the tax burden can become overwhelming, particularly when the median income in Bennett County is \$25,313, according to the Rural Life and Census Data Center at South Dakota State University (SDSU). While property tax increases will have to be considered for the 2010 budget, Bennett County has a desperate need for an improved revenue stream from other sources.

It is time Congress recognizes the financial impacts this policy has on county governments. In 2008, NACo members adopted two resolutions addressing the lands-into-trust issue. More specifically, NACo urged the secretary of the interior to “place greater weight on the revenue implications for county governments when considering such lands, and deny applications to take land into trust when it determines that the loss of property tax revenue would have negative financial impact on affected counties.”

With a significant population of people in Bennett County living on trust land that is property tax-exempt, a new source of reimbursement from the federal government for Indian trust lands seems appropriate. That is why I am proposing the Tribal Impact Funding for Counties (TIFC) program.

TIFC would be similar to the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which helps offset property tax losses local governments experience because of nontaxable federal lands in their boundaries. PILT payments, which are made annually, help pay for such vital services as fire and police protection, road construction and so on. TIFC funding could be administered and used in a similar manner.

While the federal government has been providing funds for the administration of Indian affairs through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and directly to the tribes, it fails to acknowledge that many Native Americans live on trust lands outside reservation boundaries and that these residents receive county services. But these services are expensive. To help offset this expense, the federal government should exercise some financial responsibility by making TIFC payments to affected counties.

Elections, Licensing & Recordings

Digital Archives Touted

The House Ways and Means Committee heard nothing but praise on Tuesday for the Local Government Archives Programs from Kittitas County Auditor Jerry Pettit, Chair of the Archives Oversight Committee, and long-time committee member Chelan County Clerk Siri Woods.

Ranking first on their list of achievements is the Digital Archives, located in Cheney, which now houses 60,000,000 electronic records and was voted best in the nation by Ancestry magazine. The facility is also held as a leader internationally. Second is a local government grants program that has awarded nearly \$4 million to cities, counties, and junior taxing districts to get their historical and essential records out of attics and barns and onto 21st century media. Both officials expounded on the success of the partnership between the State Archives and local government since 1993 to bring Washington's records management and preservation into the world's spotlight.

Their goal now is to pass [HB 1374](#) and secure the future of the Digital Archives, the grants program, and the Local Government Archives. [HB 1374](#) will reverse a \$4 million appropriation from the Local Government Archives Account and repeal all future spending authority from that account for the construction of the Heritage Center. The Heritage Center is a building project above Capitol Lake. A surcharge collected by the county auditor on recordings will provide 62% of the revenue for the project and proponents of [HB 1374](#) say that is enough. The \$4 million transfer would provide another 3%. [HB 1374](#) is a WACO priority and is up for executive action in the House Ways and Means Committee this afternoon.

Environment, Land Use & Resources

State's Waters Getting Cleaner Faster with Innovative Actions

An increasing number of Washington's waters are getting cleaner faster, thanks to innovative water cleanup strategies when sources of pollution are apparent.

The findings come as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gives the state Department of Ecology a thumbs-up on its 2008 assessment of the state's waters. The new assessment provides the most up-to-date picture of the state's water quality, including the most current account of polluted waters.

"When the sources of pollution are obvious, we shouldn't waste time and money studying the problem," said Kelly Susewind, manager of Ecology's water quality program. "It's obvious that our waters are cleaner when we fix failing septic systems, keep livestock out of streams, create healthy vegetation for stream sides, and keep polluted runoff from entering storm drains."

The 2008 assessment notes such innovative strategies are working in Adams, Asotin, Garfield and Kitsap counties. The assessment counts 84 waters across the state that local jurisdictions have cleaned up this way. The 2004 list counted 23 waters.

Among the statewide totals, Kitsap County's innovative Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program accounted for cleanup of 19 waters on the 2004 list and 33 on the 2008 list.

Ecology shares the assessment online through a set of interactive maps that allow people to customize and sort areas by geographic location, pollutant type, degree of concern and other factors.

According to Mike Bussell, director of EPA's Water office in Seattle, Washington has taken a rigorous approach to assessing water quality and involving the public in the process.

"Washington continues to be a regional leader in monitoring the health of its waters," said EPA's Bussell. "Besides doing a good job cataloging their stream segments, they've clearly taken public involvement in the assessment process to a new level. Their Web site gives Washington residents an outstanding opportunity to participate, and fosters a strong proprietary interest in protecting local water quality."

The assessment, which is required by the federal Clean Water Act, is a combination of the state's updated list of polluted waters plus a status of all state waters where monitoring has occurred. It includes data about water quality taken in the water column as well as data about sediment quality taken from fresh and marine waters. The assessment is based on data that Ecology received or collected as of December 2006. Ecology last issued its assessment in 2004.

Ecology and local jurisdictions use the assessment to identify pollution problems and set priorities for improving water quality so water can be safe for swimming, fish habitat and drinking. Ecology based the 2008 assessment on updated water quality standards Ecology submitted to EPA in December 2006. The new standards require colder water to assure healthy summertime spawning and rearing habitat for endangered fish.

The 2008 assessment added about 900 new water listings to the state's list of polluted waters, also called the 303(d) list. It counted approximately 800 waters where cleanup planning is under way. The innovative, speedy cleanups are a subset of this figure.

Find the 2008 Water Quality Assessment online at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/2008/index.html.

Read about the innovative cleanups at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/wqassescat4b.html>

For more information: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/wqhome.html>

Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Save Family Forests with Conservation Plans

by Tom Fox and F. Lee Grose, The Seattle Times

Small family forest businesses are increasingly convinced they do not have a future in forestry in the state of Washington.

Family forest landowners represent about half of the state's 10 million acres of private forestland and federal and state government agencies have not yet come to grips with how to address our needs.

Small, family forest landowners in Lewis County, led by the Family Forest Foundation (FFF), working with Lewis County Commissioners have spent 12 years trying to find a voluntary incentive-based solution to this dilemma. These grassroots

family forest owners have led the effort to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the state's natural-resource agencies to develop a countywide Family Forest Habitat Conservation Plan.

The conservation plan was originally submitted to the federal agencies on September 4, 2007, but was withdrawn at their request. After over a year where only two meetings were scheduled and no constructive suggestions for improvement or scientifically valid reasons to change the proposal from the federal agencies were provided, Lewis County resubmitted the conservation plan January 12.

The federal agencies' non-scientific rationale for refusing to submit the conservation plan for public review has led many to think that this debate is not really about scientific issues. Rather, it seems to be about some agencies' unwillingness to consider alternatives to the Forest and Fish Agreement. This point is underscored by the fact that while the agencies claim there is a "scientific dispute," they refuse to engage in an independent, scientific dispute-resolution process.

Family forest landowners — those most at risk of conversion — are limited only to the statewide "one-size-fits-all" forest-practice regulations that significantly limit the ability of small forest landowner businesses to survive economically. For these family businesses, the average loss of economic value resulting from these regulations exceeds 20 percent, and in some cases is as high as 100 percent.

This science-based habitat-conservation plan provides significant environmental enhancements beyond the Forest and Fish Agreement, such as smaller harvest size, increased rotation ages and robust conservation measures for upland species. An investment of more than \$3 million in private and public funds, not to mention thousands of hours of volunteer time, have gone into this plan's grassroots effort over the past decade. Included in this investment was a collaborative, transparent and consensus-based independent scientific-review process on the fundamental element of the proposal. Agency staff participated in the process and the outcome supported the plan's key findings, but the agencies refused to acknowledge the outcome.

The potential refusal by federal agencies, and lack of support from state agencies to allow public review of this science-based plan leaves family forestland business owners feeling betrayed, frustrated and wondering where to turn.

Rather than embrace new science within the regulatory construct, state and federal leaders appear to be focused on an incentive-based approach that relies upon public financing for ecosystem services. This concept has been around for a long time, yet no financing is available for family forest landowners. It will be a long time, if ever, before the public will pay for services they currently get for free, plus this will not solve the problem. Given this, family forest landowners appear to have two choices:

- Continue to manage under the ever-increasing regulatory bar of the Forest and Fish agreement with its disproportionate impacts on small-scale ownerships, or
- Convert their lands to a more profitable land use

We believe it's in the public's best long-term interest to help find ways to support sustainable forest management, especially for family forests, the most vulnerable to regulatory excesses. The implementation of tools that provide regulatory relief and stability, such as the Family Forest Habitat Conservation Plan would be a significant step in the right direction.

Tom Fox is president of the Family Forest Foundation and F. Lee Grose is chairman of the Lewis County Board of Commissioners.

General Government Issues

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program was funded at \$3.2 billion, however, only \$2.8 billion is strictly dedicated to the EECBG formula created through the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17151 et seq.). The remaining \$400 million will be awarded on a competitive grant basis, yet to be determined. The purpose of the EECBG program is to help local governments reduce greenhouse gases and promote energy efficiency in their jurisdictions.

The 2007 enacted energy bill created the following formula for the EECBG program: 68 percent of the total appropriated funds will be given as grants to “eligible” units of local government; 28 percent will be allotted to the states; two percent to Indian tribes; and two percent for competitive grants to non-eligible communities. In county-speak, “eligible” units of county government are those over 200,000 in population and/or the ten most populated counties in a state.

The EECBG program is under the auspices of the Department of Energy (DOE). While the guidelines for the EECBG program have not been published, the DOE has indicated that the guidelines will be released shortly. In the meantime, the DOE suggests that entities who plan to apply for these funds start a registration process that may take upwards of 21 days. The process is as follows:

Step 1: Request a DUNS Number at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do>.

Step 2: Register with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) at: <http://www.ccr.gov/>.

Step 3: E-Business Point of Contact registers at: <https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/>.

Only after the registration process is completed can an eligible grant recipient submit an application for funding. Application website is: https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/PublicPages/FedConnect_Ready_Set_Go.pdf

DOE Announces Public Works Fleet Funding

The Washington Department of Ecology thanks county members for participating in our diesel retrofit programs. With support from Washington counties, we’ve made great strides in improving air quality by installing emissions control technologies on thousands of diesel vehicles. I also want to inform you of new funding opportunities that will reduce more emissions, conserve fuel, and result in a cost savings for counties.

On February 17, President Obama signed the 2009 Federal Stimulus Package which includes \$300,000,000 for the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA). Each state and D.C. will receive a state allocation of about \$1,700,000. DOE expects to reserve about \$300,000 of our state allocation for the purchase and installation of idle reduction technologies. Ecology will also apply for a competitive grant for \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000, which will include a request for a larger pot of funds for idle reduction projects. These funds will not only help us clean up the air, but will also generate and sustain good paying jobs.

For these funding opportunities, Ecology ranks public works fleets as a high priority for conserving fuel and reducing emissions from idling engines. Applying these technologies could significantly reduce fuel consumption, which will immediately provide a cost savings for fleets. However, to take advantage of this opportunity, we need to make some decisions in the next few weeks. Fleets interested in receiving funds should quickly submit a grant application to the Department of Ecology. A 2009 application is available for download from Ecology’s website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/cars/DieselGrantPage.htm>.

Please forward this information to your members and contact me directly if you have questions. We look forward to continuing to work with Washington counties. Mike Boyer, Planning & Program Development, Air Quality Program, WA Dept of Ecology, phone 360-407-6863.

Public Health & Human Services

Health Care

The State Department of Health (DOH) disseminated the new rules and forms adopted for the implementation of the Death with Dignity Act. The Department of Health adopted chapter 246-978 WAC, Death with Dignity Act Requirements on February 20, 2009. These rules will go into effect on March 5, 2009, and will be available on the department's Web site at www.doh.wa.gov. Kitsap County Coroner Greg Sandstrom, President of the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (WACME) provided copies to WACME members.

DOH is responsible for collecting information regarding compliance with the Death with Dignity Initiative Measure No. 1000 and for defining qualifications of witnesses designated by long-term care facilities. The adopted rules clarify definitions, reporting requirements for health care providers, and confidentiality of the collected information.

The department received formal comments during a public hearing held on February 10, 2009 and written comments throughout the rulemaking comment period. Changes were made to the proposed rules before adoption to make technical corrections and clarify language. No substantive changes were made. In accordance with RCW 34.05.330, any person may petition an agency requesting the adoption, amendment, or repeal of any rule. Questions regarding forms and rules should be directed to Carol Wozniak, Death with Dignity Act Manager, at (360) 236-4369.

Association News

WSAC Round Table Brings Members Together

On Wednesday, February 25, 28 County Commissioners from eastern Washington met in Grant County, which had celebrated its centennial the evening before, for a round table discussion with WSAC Executive Committee Officers.

WSAC President Lynda Ring Erickson, Mason County, who was joined by Vice President Merrill Ott, Stevens County, and Immediate Past President Mary Hunt, Douglas County, invited each member at the table to provide updates on their county and bring forward issues for the group.

Pressing topics for eastern Washington counties include addressing budget gaps and staff reductions; wildlife management; federal land acquisition; water supply and management; growth management; regional jail needs; and legislation under consideration that affects local government.

President Ring Erickson expressed her appreciation those in attendance, "I want to thank all of the WSAC members who took the time to participate in the Eastern Washington discussion. It is important for the Association to provide opportunities like this for members to share ideas and solutions, and it is as valuable for its officers to hear from our members directly."

Courthouse Ramblings

The *2009 Directory of Washington County Officials* was recently published and has been sent out. Please note a correction on page 44. Stevens County Prosecuting Attorney Tim Rasmussen's fax number should be (509) 684-7589.

Training & Upcoming Events

Washington Counties – [wacounties.org/Calendar of Events](http://wacounties.org/Calendar%20of%20Events)
County Training Institute – www.countytraininginstitute.org

Local Government Performance Summit Scheduled

City and county government leaders from across the nation are meeting this April to exchange best-in-class performance management techniques that have led to greater strategic accountability and transparency.

Join your colleagues at the [2009 City and County Performance Summit](http://www.uscommunities.org/2009-City-and-County-Performance-Summit) on April 1-2, 2009 to learn strategies to accomplish more with reduced resources during this tough economic cycle.

Attachments

Welcome to the U.S. Communities Purchasing & Finance Agency

(U.S. Communities) website <http://www.uscommunities.org/>

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), jointly sponsor the

U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance (U.S. Communities)

Designed in cooperation with an Advisory Board of local government purchasing officials, U.S. Communities pools the purchasing power of public agencies, achieves bulk volume discounts on behalf of public agencies, competitively solicits quality products through a lead public agency and provides a purchasing forum for public agencies nationwide.

You can obtain information on how to contact all U.S. Communities suppliers by telephoning (866) 472-7467 or by sending an email to info@uscommunities.org

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Ray Burnett, Commissioner of Purchases and Supplies, Kansas City, MO.