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Smith works toward strong economic recovery

Joins 3,000 county officials at NACo Annual Conference in Nashville

NASHVILLE, TENN. – D.I. Smith, Supervisor, Madison County participated in the National Association of Counties' (NACo) 74th Annual Conference and Exposition in Nashville/Davidson County, Tenn. and pledged to work toward economic recovery. The conference was held July 24-28 in the Gaylord Opryland Convention Center.

More than 3,000 elected and appointed county officials representing nearly every state and the District of Columbia adopted resolutions on national issues facing counties, including economic development, transportation and infrastructure funding, and access to healthcare. Attendees also participated in educational seminars and workshops to strengthen their public service skills and heard from leading national experts on various issues important to local government.

Smith is a member of the Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee and the Information Technology Standing Committee.

D.I. attended the day long Technology Summit, General Sessions, Committee Meetings, and attended the following Educational Sessions: Save Lives by Making Rural Road Safety a Priority; Transparency: Fulfilling the Promise of Open Government; The Economy's Effect on Counties, Their Non-Profit Partners and the Community; Let THEM Tell You Where to Cut; Let Me See Your Body Talk; and Counties Partnering with the Federal Government for Veteran's Services.

"It was a very productive and informative conference," Smith said. "The great value of participating in NACo's conferences is interacting with my fellow county officials from across the country, lending our county's voice to national policies affecting us at home, and hearing directly from administration officials and national experts."

Economic recovery was the primary focus of the conference. It included three concurrent sessions on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The sessions addressed a variety of issues important to counties in these tough economic times, including employment, infrastructure and development. Counties also learned how to best use Recovery Act funds to their advantage, highlighted programs that are helping to improve services in their communities and other ways to improve service delivery with declining

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revenues.

NACo President Don Stapley, supervisor, Maricopa County, Ariz., said that choices counties make now will impact the economy and county budgets for years to come.

“It is crucial to use stimulus funds in ways that will best benefit America’s counties long-term,” said Stapley, who completed his year leading the association. “It is important not only to fix short-term problems, but also to invest in our future to create prosperity and save taxpayer money.”

Another major topic of the conference was NACo’s ongoing Restore the Partnership campaign, which aims to restore the federal-county partnership. This year, the campaign focused on fighting unfunded mandates and preemption of local governing authority, and implementation of the Recovery Act.

The 2009-2010 NACo officers were installed on Tuesday, July 28: President Valerie Brown, Supervisor, Sonoma County, Calif.; President-elect Teresa Altemus, Supervisor, Gloucester County, Va.; First Vice President B. Glen Whitley, County Judge, Tarrant County, Texas, and Second Vice President Lenny Eliason, Commissioner, Athens County, Ohio. Stapley moved to serve as Immediate Past President.

Delegates heard presentations from several nationally renowned speakers, including Jon Meacham, the editor of *Newsweek* magazine; Tamara Erickson, a nationally-renowned motivational speaker and award-winning author; Gil Kerlikowske, chief of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood; U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius (via videotape); Deputy Housing and Urban Development Administrator Ron Sims. (See recap of remarks below and at www.naco.org)

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org

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**National Association of Counties
74th Annual Conference and Exposition
Nashville/Davidson County, Tennessee**

Summary of Special Guest Speakers

Ray LaHood, U.S. Secretary of Transportation

LaHood said the Obama Administration understands that city and county governments have only a modest say in how U.S. DOT funds are spent. "We want to change that," LaHood said, by directly funding metro regions, which now receive their money via state pass-through.

LaHood also spoke of the Obama Administration's desire to substantially overhaul how transportation funding is awarded. He said funding should be determined less by the mode of transportation and more by community priorities for their growth and needs.

"For many years, federal transportation spending has mainly been driven by rigid formulas and divided by modes of transportation. We need to turn this around, so that our priorities, and the outcomes people care about, drive our investments."

Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

Sebelius, speaking via pre-recorded videotape, said Congress and the administration are working hard to reform health care. Status quo in our nation's health delivery system is unsustainable, she said. She said health-related spending consumes 30 percent more of state and local government than it did 20 years ago. "Inaction is not an option," she said.

Ron Sims, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Housing and Urban Development

Ron Sims, deputy secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said NACo has a seat at the White House's public policy table. "We want your input," said the former King County, Wash. county executive. "We want your aspirations put on the table. We want your candor as to what the relationship should be between NACo and the federal government, NACo and the White House. You will be invited to the table. We wish you to dine with us."

He also said the administration wants NACo to "continue to lead as (it) always has," and for member counties to help federal agencies to work effectively with them.

Tamara Erickson, author and workforce expert

The changing workforce now includes four generations of employees sharing the same workplace, a fact that is bound to create some friction as workers seek to understand each other, said Tamara Erickson, an award-winning author and expert on organizations and the changing workforce. As members of the Baby Boom generation continue to work well into retirement age, Erickson said it is important to understand the differences the generations bring to work relationships.

The topic of her July 26 opening session keynote was *Avoiding the Workforce Crisis: How to Beat the Coming Shortage of Skills and Talent*. She said the growth in the size of the workforce in the U.S. is slowing dramatically, with not as many people looking for jobs after the recession is over. Over the past 30 years the number of Baby Boomers entering the workforce has remained in the double digits, but Erickson said the numbers are beginning to decline in the United States and around the world.

“Looking from 2010 forward, we are going to fall down into the lower single digits,” she said. “Just three or four percentage points of growth in the workplace going forward. As the economy begins to grow, to the extent that organizations depend on talent to fuel that growth, there are going to be a lot fewer people to choose from.”

Jon Meacham, Newsweek Editor

Jon Meacham, editor of *Newsweek*, wore his other hat for much of his talk to conference attendees: that of author of *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*. A native Tennessean, Meacham said there is much to be learned from his fellow Volunteer that is applicable to today’s political climate — even from Jackson’s mistakes and volatility.

He said studying “flawed figures” like Jackson can make contemporary Americans “more attuned to the failings of our time.” Jackson was motivated by the shortcomings in his life, including his loss of the presidency to John Quincy Adams in 1824, after having won a plurality of popular and electoral votes, Meacham said. The loss would drive his championing of popular democracy.

One lesson from Jackson’s time has an unlikely parallel in the way the Obama administration continues to reach out to supporters via the Web and social networking. Jackson understood that his supporters didn’t just want to vote for him, “they wanted to be characters in an ongoing drama.” To that end, Jackson created a direct channel to the people — his own newspaper. This would be the 21st century equivalent of President Bush founding Fox News or President Obama creating NPR, Meacham said.

Gil Kerlikowske, Obama “Drug Czar”

Kerlikowske, director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, addressed members of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Policy Committee. America, Kerlikowske told committee members, will see a sharp decline in health care costs if treatment for addiction is made widely available. “Treatment for addiction is half the cost of incarceration,” he said. “If we get people the help they need early on, then health care costs would go down when they aren’t incarcerated.”

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