

NACO National Association of Counties

CountyNews

The Voice of America's Counties

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

VOL. 39, NO. 20 ■ OCTOBER 29, 2007

SCHIP struggle continues

By PAUL V. BEDDOE
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The House voted 265-142 Oct. 25 to pass a new version of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as SCHIP. Democratic leaders made changes to the bill after failing to attract enough Republican votes a week earlier to override President Bush's veto.

See SCHIP page 5

QuickTakes

Top Pumpkin Producing States 2006

(in millions of pounds)

Illinois	491
Ohio	134
Pennsylvania	117
California	115
Michigan	85

Source:
National Agricultural Statistics Services



Photo Credit: Patricia Walsh/U.S. Census Bureau

Floyd County is the champion pumpkin producer in Texas. This year's bumper crop is expected to exceed 1 million pounds. That's a whole lot of pies.

Senate passes Labor-HHS bill

By MARILINA SANZ
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

By a veto-proof majority of 75-19, the Senate passed the largest of the domestic spending bills, the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill (H.R. 304), Oct. 23.

While the Senate skirted one of the veto threats by removing language expanding stem cell research, the \$606 billion bill could still face a veto because it increases discretionary spending by \$5.4 billion — \$9.6 billion above the president's request.

The bill now goes to conference with the House, which passed a version in July that is nearly \$2 billion higher than the Senate bill. The House vote was 276-140, one shy of the two-thirds needed to override a veto.

Congressional leaders hope to send the bill to the president as soon as possible. The government is operating on a short-term continuing resolution that expires in mid-November.

See LABOR page 2

House OKs delay for compliance with costly withholding mandate

By ALYSOUN McLAUGHLIN
ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Due to a full-court press from county, city, state officials and private sector groups, a majority in the House of Representatives has now cosponsored H.R. 1023, a bill that would repeal Section 511 of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act (TIPRA).

Repeal of this burdensome tax provision, a key legislative priority for NACO, moved one step closer Oct. 10 when a bill passed the House that includes a one-year delay in the deadline for counties to comply.

A \$7 billion shell game

Section 511, quietly inserted as a revenue raiser after the act had passed both the House and Senate last year, would impose an unfunded mandate on counties and create such significant compliance headaches that the Treasury Department has publicly struggled to write rules for implementation.

It would require counties that spend more than \$100 million per year on goods and services, as well as every state and the federal government, to withhold federal income taxes on vendor payments beginning Jan. 1, 2011.

There is no minimum transaction amount; even a county employee who purchases a \$10 screwdriver at a hardware store using a county procurement card would be required to pay the retailer \$9.70 and send the remaining 30 cents to the Internal Revenue Service.

The county would have to issue the hardware store a 1099 or similar documentation at the end of every year.

Section 511 of TIPRA also imposes a significant costs burden on vendors, many of whom have

See TIPRA page 3

INSIDE »



Cuyahoga County, Ohio treasurer battles sub-prime lenders, foreclosures » Page 6

Finance officers challenge government accounting standards board » Page 4

9-1-1 coloring book author takes inspiration from Blaine County, Mont. commissioner » Page 5

Free radon kits contest now open for application » Page 7

Friendship sparks creative way to educate youth on 9-1-1

By **MATTHEW FELLOWS**
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Break out your box of Crayolas, because it's time to learn about safety. Using a long-time friendship as inspiration, Pinellas County, Fla. Public Education Coordinator Lori Buck features Blaine County, Mont. Commissioner Vic Miller in her latest project, a coloring book informing children that "Emergencies happen and they are not fun. You must learn when to call 9-1-1."

This book teaches children how to call for help from a cell phone, what types of situations are appropriate and inappropriate for dialing 911, and that law enforcement agents and emergency workers are friendly and there to help.

Buck thought to use Miller when she imagined what he was like as a kid — "The coloring book features illustrations of Vic as I perceived him as a child—slightly mischievous and kind of klutzy," she told the Montana Association of Counties' *MACo News*. She added, "He has a youthful exuberance and curious quality to him that has made him a lifetime friend and someone who

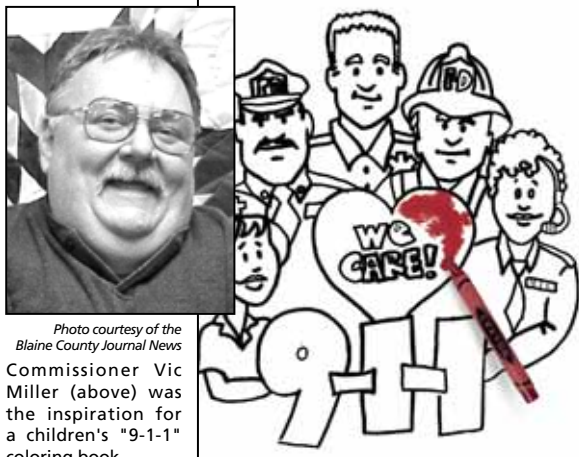


Photo courtesy of the Blaine County Journal News
Commissioner Vic Miller (above) was the inspiration for a children's "9-1-1" coloring book.

deeply cares about community education."

With its cute, quirky drawings informing children that when in serious trouble, "in the end, all you have to do is call 9-1-1-Send," the book educates children and sends a positive message to parents as well.

Miller said, "It truly is a great educational piece in that it is written in such a way that parents or

adults must actually interact with the children. For that reason, it is truly a great piece of work." He was flattered at being featured in the book, telling *The Great Falls Tribune*, "I think it's wonderful. I hope we'll get some of them in Montana so kids can color my head here."

The coloring book is Buck's first accomplishment with children's books, but not her first collaboration

with Miller, whom she first met while Miller was a student at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md. over a decade ago.

"He's the perfect public servant," Buck said of Miller, "and focused on what's good for the community. I wish there were more people out there like him."

Buck has collaborated with Miller on nearly every one of her writing projects, including several public communication guides and more than 150 articles. "He is a good resource and a helpful writer, and it's not often that one can create such a strong professional

relationship," Buck said.

The inspiration to use Miller for the coloring book came from a desire of Buck to say thanks for being such a good public servant. "It's a funny way to give credit [to Miller] for being there for both me and my community by providing excellent guidance..."

Written by Buck and Carrie Mahoney and intended for children aged seven and younger, the book is available through Buck at 727/464-3858 or ed911@aol.com. You can also view and download a copy of the coloring book online at: www.pinellascounty.org/911/ColorForms.htm.

Changes in SCHIP don't persuade Republican opponents to change votes

SCHIP from page 1

They added provisions designed to limit enrollment to children from families earning below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, to prevent enrolling illegal immigrant children, to create incentives for states to enroll children in Medicaid and to discourage families from dropping private insurance in favor of SCHIP.

The changes were not enough to win over any additional Republican votes. The Senate is expected to take up the measure by the end of next week, but the White House has again promised a veto.

With the short-term continuing resolution, which extended SCHIP past the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year, expiring in mid-November some observers are speculating that a longer-term extension may be in the cards, putting political pressure on Republicans closer to the upcoming elections.

In its first effort to pass SCHIP legislation, the House fell 13 votes short of the two-thirds majority needed to override the president's

veto. The Oct. 18 vote was 273-156.

Two-hundred and twenty-nine Democrats and 44 Republicans voted to override the veto, while two Democrats and 154 Republicans voted to sustain it. Six Democrats who had voted against the bill, initially, changed their minds and voted to override.

None of the Republicans targeted by SCHIP advocates with a hard-hitting advertising campaign voted to override the veto.

The bill would have added \$35 billion to the program over the next five years to a total of \$60 billion, enough to cover 10 million uninsured children. The increased funding levels would have been paid for by an increase in the federal cigarette tax to \$1 per pack.

NACo supports legislation to reauthorize SCHIP that would increase annual funding levels, provide maximum flexibility to states and counties in expanding coverage to needy populations, and assure that no state receives less than it currently does under the current formula.

NACo supports credentialing county GIS professionals

By **PEDRO FLORES**
GIS OUTREACH DIRECTOR

NACo has joined an effort by the GIS Certification Institute (GISCI) to formally credential GIS professionals.

In a letter of support to the GISCI, Randy Johnson, chair, NACo GIS Committee and Hennepin County, Minn. commissioner, wrote: "We believe that your work strengthens the various professions within the GIS industry by promoting a strict adherence to a sensible code of ethics, defining minimal cognitive standards for GIS professionals, and encouraging long term professional development."

Counties have long hired GIS professionals and have invested for years in training staff in GIS technology, but in recent years, there has been a virtual boom in the industry — not just among all levels of government, but also in the private and educational sectors.

Scott Grams, GISCI executive director, said "as a result, employers are having a more difficult time discerning between an applicant

with an extensive background in GIS and those with only a basic understanding."

GISCI certified the first group of GIS professionals in October 2003. Since then, the institute has certified more than 1,700 GIS professionals, 20 percent of whom work in county governments.

The GISCI program is a voluntary portfolio-based system that does not require an examination, as it is very difficult to design a single GIS examination that can fairly evaluate the variety of skills needed for the various specialties.

The GISCI portfolio system ensures that its methods capture and endorse the skills necessary for GIS practice by demanding competency in education, professional experience and contributions to the profession.

There is also a temporary grandfathering provision built in for candidates whose experience predates many existing GIS jobs; it expires in January 2009. Eligible candidates for this provision are judged on their experience only, and their credential will not differ

from a standard certification.

In addition to having to demonstrate competency, certification requires adherence to a code of ethics that helps GIS professionals make appropriate and ethical choices by outlining specific rules of conduct. The rules of conduct list specific behaviors and actions that are prohibited and provide a basis for evaluating work from an ethical point of view.

For county staff interested to learn more about becoming a certified GIS professional, the full description of the program and application requirements may be found at www.gisci.org.

"Having a reputable certification body helps to better identify the professionals with the necessary breadth of education and experience," Grams said. "GIS practitioners who have the requisite experience, education and contributions can look to GISCI certification as another level of credibility."

"Ultimately, applicants, not certifications, get the jobs, but being a certified GIS professional shows an employer that GIS is central to one's professional expertise."

County News invites

Letters to the Editor

Do you have a compliment, complaint or different point of view? ...
LET US KNOW.

Please include a phone number with your letter. Mail, fax or e-mail to: County News, NACo, 25 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001; 202/393-2630; cnews@naco.org.