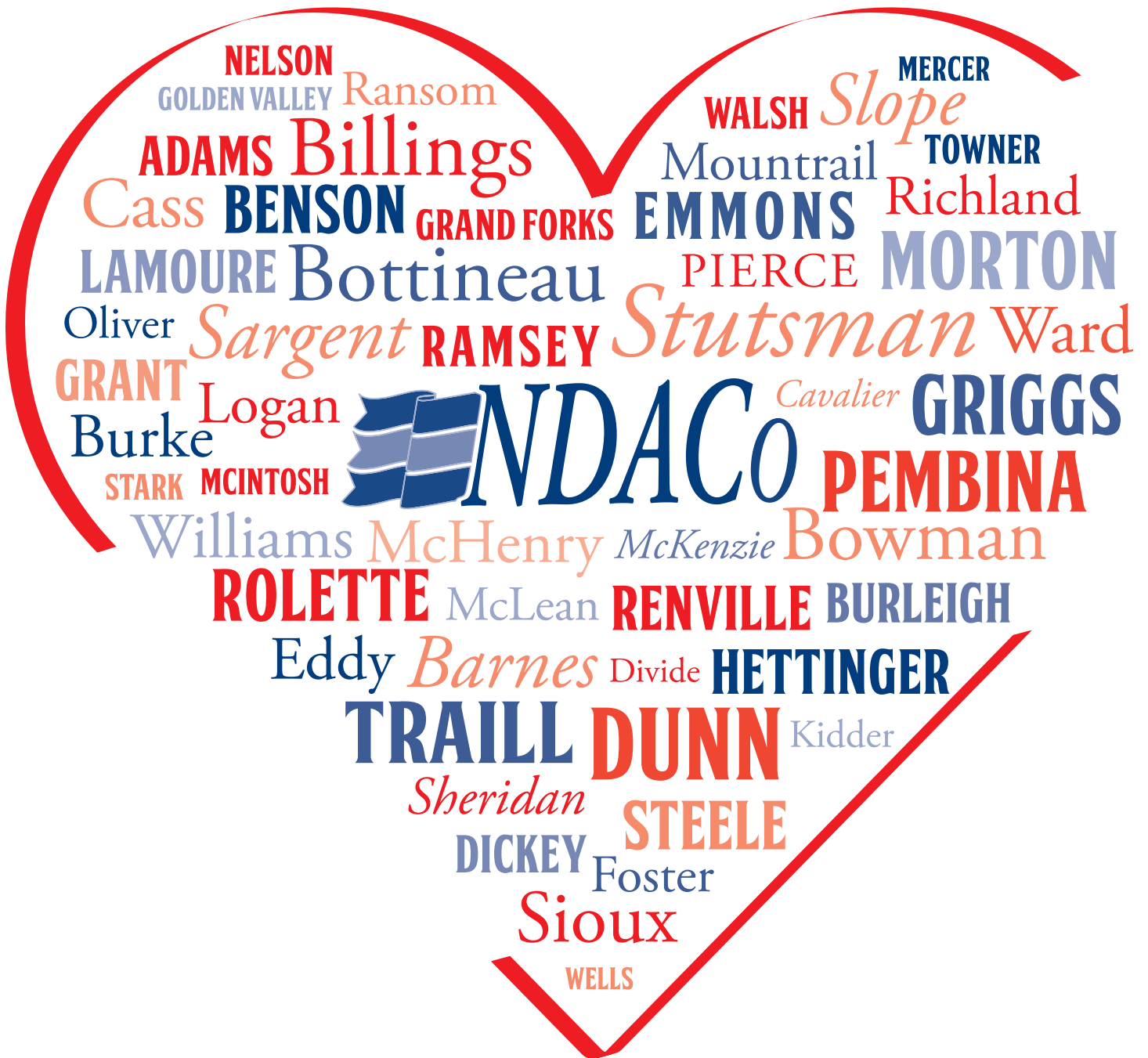


2021



# ANNUAL REPORT



ND COUNTIES - AT THE *Heart* OF IT.

# State of the Counties



**Terry Traynor**  
Executive Director

While not yet “normal,” 2021 has certainly been less unusual than 2020 – thank goodness. The “Covid-Legislature,” in some ways, expanded our members’ ability to interact with legislative committees; but it reduced some of the opportunities to meet directly with lawmakers to get a point across.

The federal response to COVID has also shown us how important our National Association of Counties is to all counties.

State associations, working almost daily with the National Association of Counties, demonstrated what can get done by counties when we work together. The CARES Act, the ARP Act, and now the bipartisan infrastructure bill, all have a huge “county stamp” on them.

It is truly a pleasure, and feeling of pride, to work for

members that have the credibility that you all have – and see it demonstrated by state and federal results.

As this will be my final annual report, I want to thank all of the staff that work tirelessly to support this association. I think you all know how strong an organization NDACo has become. I am confident that an active membership, with the highly skilled staff, will ensure a very bright future. A future for all of North Dakota, because counties are indeed the heart of it.

## County Employer Group



For the purpose of “worker’s comp,” all county employees are covered together – rather than in 53 separate employers – saving money, time and administration.

This model, called the County Employer Group (CEG) has been modeled in other states due to its success here. CEG saves money and lives in three important ways:

### 1. Safety Training to prevent workplace injuries

Over the past year, CEG trained over **7,000** employees on safety topics, ranging from the general - like lifting safely - to the highly specialized - like bloodborne pathogens.



County employees in **27 counties** received over **10,000 hours** of safety training. While the pandemic prevented person-to-person training efforts, CEG more than made up for it, offering nearly **4,800** computer-based safety training courses - **800** more than in 2020.

### 2. Risk Management

Fifty-six risk managers assist CEG with compliance issues such as investigations, inspections, reporting and injury prevention, among other duties, resulting in discounts of up to **17%** in worker’s comp premiums.

### 3. Transitional Work Program

CEG handled **306** claims in 2020 - a **23% decrease** from 2019 - largely a result of COVID reducing the number of hours the workforce was on the job. We’re proud that CEG’s indemnity claim (lost time) is **less than half** of the average cost of other North Dakota employers, according to ND Workforce

Safety and Insurance.

# Human Resources Service

The HR Collaborative for Local Government continues to be an important element in NDACo's HR effort.

Six virtual HR Hot Topic sessions were offered throughout the summer and over 200 local government officials/employees participated. The Collaborative continues to work with local government partners, including NDACo and ILG, in providing HR training to its members.

The online HR Reference Guide for Local Governments was updated in 2020. This resource is a great tool for government officials to understand many facets of human resources for government.

You can find this resource, along with many others, at [www.HRNDGOV.org](http://www.HRNDGOV.org). If you are new to local government or would like to stay connected on HR updates and guideline changes, please join the email group, which has over 400 subscribers. Go to the HR Collaborative website and click on JOIN NOW.

The **HR Collaborative** has a number of resources to use in assisting counties with their HR needs and questions, including the online **HR Reference Guide** and **HR Checklist**.

# Institute of Local Government



The Institute of Local Government (ILG) soared through this past year hosting widespread training webinars. As COVID-19 continued to impact counties, ILG geared up and conducted all NDACo Annual Conference workshops via webinars weeks before and during conference.

Subject matter is dominantly member driven and ILG strives to bring you the best content. We continue to partner with local and state agencies to bring you optimum presenters, experience and knowledge. The online library of recorded webinars offers a variety of training opportunities and keeps expanding. In the last 12 months, ILG has sent out nearly 1,000 recordings.

In 2021, ILG will honor over 90 hour-level award recipients – more than double the 2020 number!

In addition to webinars, ILG continues to offer training with member conventions and on site by request. Also, with our valuable partnership with the HR Collaborative for Local Government, ILG continues to offer HR training relevant to counties. ILG trainings are listed on the NDACo website at [www.ndaco.org/ilg](http://www.ndaco.org/ilg).

Over the past 12 months, ILG has reached more than 6,500 county officials with more than 55 training sessions!

Webinars are the perfect professional development solution in the face of COVID.



# Juvenile Justice Services

To assist counties with at-risk youth, the Division of Juvenile Services (a division of the ND Dept. of Corrections) contracts with NDACo to employ our state's Juvenile Justice Specialist. This position is federally mandated by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. NDACo staff work with state and local officials on best practices and policies, administer federal funding and coordinate the activities of the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group provided funding to support a study of the state's juvenile justice system, which was conducted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG). CSG's findings and recommendations were incorporated into a bill draft (House Bill 1035) introduced during the 2021 Legislative Session. Passed with unanimous support, the bill will assist the state in aligning its various systems serving juveniles with policies and practices shown to improve outcomes for youth, helping them to become productive members of their communities.

In preparation for the implementation of House Bill 1035, three planning committees were created with the passage of another legislative bill (House Bill 1427). The planning committees will address:

1. Alternatives to juvenile detention
2. Youth, formerly known as status offenders and reclassified as Children in Need of Services, being referred to the Human Service Zones; and
3. Increasing community-based services.

## Legislative Services

The 2021 Legislative Session was unlike any in history. While the pandemic challenged the technology and creativity of our state, that challenge was met without a single day's delay in proceedings; and in the end, it could be argued that citizens had even greater access to the process and to their representatives. Over 800 bills were considered, with nearly 500 of those having a potential impact on counties. Your legislative team worked tirelessly, aside many county officials, to look out for county interests. **Among the highlights:**

### Infrastructure

- \$60 million of Legacy Fund interest to flow to Highway Distribution Fund
- \$100 million of state funding for discretionary road grants
- Capital projects levy approved for use on roads
- County borrowing authority for roads expanded
- Local road study funded

### Elections

- Secured additional time to process absentee ballots
- Educated lawmakers on election processes
- Kept local government apolitical
- Defeated many restrictive measures

### Property Tax Bills

- Clarified road levy requirements
- Added county flexibility in selling property

- Disabled veterans exemption expanded/funded
- Defeated 13 bills to limit local government authority

### Criminal Justice

- Juvenile court laws updated
- DOCR to pay for state inmates in county jails
- Increase of Sheriff's service fees
- Expanded SIRN reimbursement
- Defeated bill to repeal seatbelt laws

### NDPERS Retirement

- Avoided state stranding counties in pension fund
- Changed sweeping pension overhaul into a study
- NDPERS Health Plan extended with miniscule premium increase

## Member Services

The NDACo Strategic Plan updated in 2019 emphasized the need for proactive programming and outreach to our members. As much as the COVID pandemic tried to keep us from direct contact, we still found ways to reach out to serve our members, including:

### County Tours

Our longtime tradition of Presidents Tours was expanded to include more counties and to schedule

more time at each county. This meant more trips, so we doubled from two to four per year. While 2020 got off to a good start with a southwestern counties tour, the pandemic shut things down until such time as the tours could be resumed safely, which began again in the summer of 2021.

### Onboarding

When new county officials are elected or appointed to office, NDACo welcomes them with a letter and

packet of information on resources and programs NDACo offers that can help them in their new jobs. This welcome is followed up by one or more phone calls from staff and board members.

### Conferences and Trainings

Among the most valued services NDACo offers is professional development, which occurs through meetings and conferences and through regular webinars conducted by the Institute of Local Government. COVID brought challenges to this important function. Our response to COVID was to protect the health and safety of our members and follow the state's guidelines, which resulted in using an online-only approach to both our Annual Conference and County Officials Academy, then went to a hybrid of in-person and online attendance for the Legislative Wrap-up.

### MAMAs

Our Member Association Management Agreements were particularly important in the past year. The

most visible and essential ways counties were "At the heart of it" included public health, law enforcement, and the historic election conducted through mail and drop-boxes by our county auditors. These associations are all supported by MAMAs with NDACo, and we are proud of our role in supporting them during this challenging year.

Keep in touch with us through:

**Website** – [www.ndaco.org](http://www.ndaco.org)

**Facebook** – [facebook.com/ndcounties](https://facebook.com/ndcounties)

**Twitter** – [@ndcounties](https://twitter.com/ndcounties)

**YouTube** – [youtube.com/ndcounties](https://youtube.com/ndcounties)

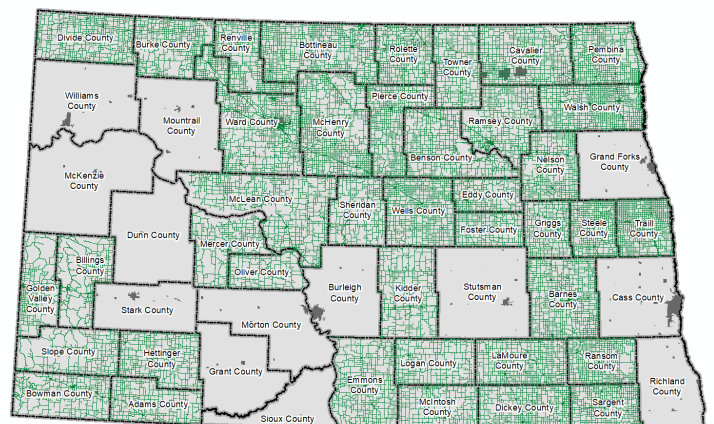


## Next Generation 9-1-1

North Dakota Association of Counties, as administrator of the Next Generation 9-1-1 joint powers agreement, signed an agreement with Dakota Carrier Network (DCN) and its members companies to upgrade technology used to exchange 9-1-1 calls between originating service providers (OSPs) and the state's 9-1-1 system. The agreement transitions us to the next part of our IP network, increasing the reliability of 9-1-1 call delivery to the state's public safety answering points (PSAPs). 9-1-1 calls from an OSP to the state's 9-1-1 system will be handled using a digital connection as opposed to an analogue connection that has been used for the last four decades. The initiative is funded, in part, by a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration together with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Mapping to support the NG9-1-1 transition has now been completed in **40 of the 53** counties, an **increase of seven** from last year, with active projects underway in nine of the remaining 13 counties. The end result will be a statewide address map that serves as the foundation for Next Generation 9-1-1 services, and for improving efficiencies in other areas of county government.

Increases in available bandwidth for the 9-1-1 system are also being deployed across the state. With changes from DS1 technology to Ethernet technology, the program will be better positioned to carry media-rich interactions between 9-1-1 call takers and 9-1-1 callers.



# NRG Technology Services

NRG was created by NDACo to support all North Dakota counties with their IT needs. NRG's owners are all North Dakota counties.

NRG works directly with the state's IT department, NDIT, on issues that affect all counties, meeting with them to discuss the latest issues every six weeks.

NRG's President sits on the Criminal Justice Information Sharing Board and the State's Cybersecurity Collaboration Committee. As resources become available, NRG purchases government bonds to help support local governments with financing their projects.

All Human Service Zones should now be using Microsoft 365, provided through DHS and NDIT, for email. Northern Prairie Zone is currently piloting a document migration project and hopes to complete it soon. The end goal is to increase collaboration and efficiency of all human service zones with each other and internally.

The tagline *Stress-Free IT* means their customers let them worry about managing their ever-changing and complex IT infrastructures.

Work continues with NDIT on the Network Security Project, Phase 2. NDIT has upgraded hardware in most areas capable of handling 1 gig bandwidth bursts and continually increases internal security controls. Network segmentation in the form of DMZs (demilitarized zones) to further increase network security are being created for HVAC systems, security cameras, guest Wi-Fi, etc. on an as-needed basis.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, workflow has changed. While some facilities have gone back to on-site work, the demand for remote work will continue. NRG is prepared to meet these changing needs.

Such needs include remote collaboration and security, further addressed with NDIT in the form of changing licenses and features offered.

## Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor

The Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) is a joint effort between NDACo and the ND Department of Transportation (NDDOT).

NDDOT funds the position through federal government grants, while NDACo provides the facilities and the equipment for the TSRP program.

In 2020, TSRP trainers Aaron Birst and Kristi Venhuizen were involved in providing over **120 hours** of training to more than **1,000** law enforcement officers and prosecutors. As much of the training is by necessity hands on, this represents more training hours but fewer trainees reached, an unfortunate but expected outcome of the pandemic.

## Vision Zero Outreach Program

NDACo continues to work with the ND Department of Transportation in the Vision Zero Outreach Program.

The program grew in 2021 with the addition of three regional Outreach Coordinators who have been hard at work developing and maintaining partnerships, proving resources, and coordinating outreach activities to support communities to work toward zero motor vehicle crash fatalities and serious injuries. They have all met with county commissioners in the counties they serve.

The mission of Vision Zero relies on personal responsibility to obey traffic safety laws and is implemented through various strategies, including:

1. Widespread public education/outreach
2. Infrastructure/road safety improvements
3. High visibility enforcement of existing laws
4. Technology advancements
5. Working with the legislature to ensure state laws represent best practices in traffic safety

The strategy of Vision Zero is simple: to eliminate motor vehicle crash fatalities and serious injuries on North Dakota roadways.

**VISION ZERO**  
Zero fatalities. Zero excuses.

## Financials

# 2021 Board of Directors

## Executive Committee



**Stanley Dick**  
President  
Region 3  
Cavalier County  
Commissioner



**Carrie Krause**  
1st Vice President  
Wells County  
Recorder



**Steve Lee**  
2nd Vice President  
Region 7  
McLean County  
Commissioner



**Jayme Tenneson**  
3rd Vice President  
Nelson/Griggs County  
State's Attorney



**Kevin Fieldsend**  
Past President  
Ramsey County  
Highway Superintendent

## Board of Directors



**Beau Anderson**  
Region 1  
Williams County  
Commissioner



**Darbie Berger**  
ND Treasurers  
Association  
Mercer County  
Treasurer



**Lynn Brackel**  
Region 8  
Bowman County  
Commissioner



**Becky Hagel**  
Region 6  
Foster County  
Commissioner



**Lori Hanson**  
ND County Tax  
Directors Association  
Mountrail County  
Tax Director



**Kim Jacobson**  
ND Human Service  
Zone Director  
Association  
Agassiz Valley Human  
Service Zone Director



**Chad Kaiser**  
ND Sheriffs  
& Deputies  
Association  
Stutsman County  
Sheriff



**Wanda Knutson**  
ND County Clerks  
of District Court  
Association  
Mercer County Clerk  
of District Court



**Sharon Lipsh**  
ND Association  
of County Engineers  
Walsh County  
Highway Superintendent



**Maynard Loibl**  
Region 4  
Nelson County  
Commissioner



**Val McCloud**  
ND County Auditors  
Association  
Rolette County  
Auditor



**Trudy Ruland**  
Region 2  
Mountrail County  
Commissioner



**Mary Scherling**  
Region 5  
Cass County  
Commissioner

## Ex Officio Members



**Perry Turner**  
ND County  
Commissioners  
Association President  
McIntosh County  
Commissioner



**Daryl Dukart**  
NACo Board  
Representative  
Dunn County  
Commissioner



**Marcia Lamb**  
NACo Board  
Representative  
Billings County  
Auditor | Treasurer