Capitol Connection E-Newsletter – December 2016

Save the Date

2017 District Days and Newly Elected Commissioners Day at the Capitol – Register Today!

Legislative Session Begins January 9: Review Your Toolkit to Get Prepared

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Save the Date

2017 District Days and Newly Elected Commissioners Day at the Capitol – Register Today!

Mark your calendars for February 22, March 1, and March 8 to partake in District Days at the Capitol. This event places state and county officials together to discuss the year’s legislative agenda. Attending is a great way to build relationships and become involved in the legislative changes that have a direct influence on county government operations.

In previous years, each district had a specific day in which to attend. However, this year is slightly different. County officials are encouraged to attend the day that best suits their schedule as there is no specific day dedicated to certain districts. Furthermore, ACCG has scheduled a day specifically for newly elected commissioners on February 9 where they have the opportunity to complete training requirements in the Lifelong Learning Academy.
Don’t miss out on this exciting chance to represent your county and engage with the ACCG policy staff, as well as key state leaders, to discuss significant issues before the General Assembly. Contact your county clerk to register today! The cost to attend is $50. More information can be found on the ACCG website. Please contact Nicole Logan at nlogan@accg.org for any questions.

**Legislative Session Begins January 9: Review Your Toolkit to Get Prepared**

In just a few weeks the legislative session will begin. Are you prepared? ACCG has provided the 2017 Legislative Toolkit that details priority issues and the 2017 Legislative Agenda. ACCG’s toolkit is designed to inform individuals about major concerns that all counties share in an effort to spark dialogue amongst communities and promote awareness of the legislative agenda ACCG will actively pursue on their behalf. Before the legislative session begins, county officials are encouraged to take time to review the toolkit and discuss these top priorities with their state legislators. County officials are also encouraged to use the toolkit as a guide throughout the session.

Questions regarding any issues outlined in the Toolkit should be directed to a member of the policy staff. Their contact information can be accessed here.

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**Publications**

**ACCG Computing County Official Salary Guide for 2017**

The Computing County Official Salaries for 2017 guide is now available. It provides directions for calculation of county official salaries that go into effect on January 1, 2017. This guidebook is published annually by ACCG to assist counties in calculating salaries of certain county officials, as well as state officials who receive supplements to their salary from the county. The procedure set forth in this guidebook has been reviewed and approved by the Constitutional Officers Association of Georgia (COAG), the Magistrate Council of Georgia and ACCG.

[Guide for Computing County Official Salaries](#)

**GSU and ACCG Publications Examine Georgia’s “Shrinking Tax Base”**

Since 2000, there has been a shift in the way consumers make purchases. Online shopping has made receiving goods and services obtainable at a lower tax rate for consumers and sellers. This new digital age has affected the sales tax revenue in Georgia by providing a sales tax exemption for online retailers.
In light of this, GSU’s Dr. Buschman and ACCG’s Revenue and Finance policy team have closely examined the need to expand current legislation to include online sales and reverse the negative impact it has on the economy. More information on the effects consumers and businesses have on tax revenue can be found here.

**NACo Releases New Study on County Mandates and Revenue Limitations**

In preparation for a new federal policy agenda, the National Association of Counties (NACo) recently released its *Doing More with Less: State Revenue Limitations and Mandates on County Finances* report, accompanied by individualized state level profiles and data in NACo’s interactive County Explorer. Building upon the foundation laid by NACo’s *Counting Money* and *The State of County Finances* studies, this analysis examines county funding sources, state revenue limits, federal and state mandates on counties, new fiscal challenges and county fiscal solutions. This report sheds light on the factors behind the slow fiscal recovery of county governments and increasing fiscal pressures on local governments. See the analysis, maps and state level profiles at [www.naco.org/StateLimits](http://www.naco.org/StateLimits).

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**State News**

**Reminder: Immigration Reports Due December 31**

The deadline to submit the annual immigration report to the Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) is December 31, 2016. This year’s report covers the reporting period of December 1, 2015 – November 30, 2016. DOAA opened the report collection system on November 1, 2016, and is currently accepting reports. There is a new change to the report based on the passage of SB 269 during the 2016 legislative session. In addition to the information previously requested, counties will also need to certify that they are in compliance with Georgia’s immigration sanctuary law. This requirement will be part of the actual immigration report.

It is critical that counties submit this annual report. DOAA will be reporting non-compliant counties to state agencies that provide state funding to local governments, so be sure to submit your report by December 31, 2016. Any technical questions about filing the report may be directed to [Immhelp@audits.ga.gov](mailto:Immhelp@audits.ga.gov). Those with questions may also visit [www.audits.ga.gov](http://www.audits.ga.gov). All questions about the legal requirements for this report should be directed to your county attorney.
Free Peach Pass for Emergency Vehicles
With the new toll lanes opening along I-75, be aware that local law-enforcement agencies, fire and rescue agencies are eligible for an "Emergency Non-Revenue Account" that allows employees travelling on official business in authorized public safety vehicles to utilize Georgia’s Express Lanes toll free.
Additional details are available.

State Tax Credit Program for Rural Healthcare
Senate bill 258 was passed during the 2016 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly. The bill allows individuals and business to make donations to Georgia’s rural hospitals in exchange for tax credits. Rural Healthcare 180 – a public-private partnership co-chaired Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, Bill Linginfelter of Regions Bank, and Sen. Dean Burke – was established to create a taskforce charged with raising awareness of the critical financial issues in which many of the state’s rural hospitals are currently facing.

Access the Rural Healthcare 180 information sheet to learn more about this initiative and what your county can do to help with Georgia’s rural healthcare crisis. More information is also available at www.ruralhealthcare180.org.

Federal Judge Halts Overtime Rule
The U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas granted a preliminary, nationwide injunction that blocked the implementation of the new overtime wage rules from taking effect on December 1.

A preliminary injunction stops implementation of the Department of Labor rules until the court can hear and rule on the underlying case. As a result of the order, it is not necessary for any employer to increase salaries or change classification of employees from salaried to hourly beginning December 1.

Whether the rule will ultimately go into effect will be determined by the courts and, potentially, the next presidential administration. ACCG will continue to monitor the litigation and keep county officials informed.
For more information, read the official [overtime rule injunction](#).

**NACo Helps Counties Urge Congress to Pass Remote Sales Tax Legislation**
The presence of online retailers has surged in recent years, impacting the ability for brick and mortar retail stores to compete for sales. NACo is urging congress to revisit the issue of collecting online sales tax regardless of the presence of a physical building. Until this legislation is passed, states and counties are losing the chance to use the uncollected sales tax on upgrading or creating public services. Although the Online Sales Simplification Act of 2015 was proposed, there has not been a strong push to move forward with a bill and address the concerns of counties.

Click [here](#) to see the full article.

**HUD Launches New Community Investment Tool**
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently unveiled the Community Assessment Reporting Tool (CART). CART, the reference and mapping tool, was created to provide a snapshot of HUD investments across a community.

Click [here](#) for more information.