

# COUNTY NEWS



## Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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### Counties fight for SALT deduction, House GOP's top 'pay-for'

NACo and 20 partner organizations are mobilizing ahead of this week's planned release of details about a Congressional tax reform effort expected to target the state and local tax deduction (SALT). House Republicans will meet at the end of September to review the comprehensive tax reform framework developed by House Speaker Paul Ryan, House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Sen. Finance Comm. Chair Orrin Hatch, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Nat. Econ. Council Chairman Gary Cohn. Members of Americans Against Double Taxation oppose any proposal that repeals or modifies the deduction, which has been part of the federal tax code since 1913. Changes to the deduction would mean higher bills for taxpayers, even with a potential increase in the standard deduction, and consequently would reduce county and local government revenues and affect public service delivery. Eliminating the deduction would net the federal government nearly \$1.3 trillion over ten years, giving Congressional Republicans room for federal tax cuts. Of taxpayers who claim the deduction, 87 percent of have incomes below \$200,000. "The elimination of the SALT deduction would hurt our residents, especially middle-class homeowners, with a triple whammy of higher federal taxes, declines in property values and threats to essential state and local services, like K-12 schools, public safety and infrastructure improvements," NACo First Vice President Greg Cox said during a media call on the coalition's effort. ~Click for full article by Charlie Ban



Oxford County proudly hosted the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of Maine Counties on September 8, 9, and 10 at Sunday River Resort in Newry. The conference offered a good mix of association meetings, interesting educational sessions, fun activities and wonderful entertainment. The portrait above shows County Commissioners and other officials participating in the MCCA Board of Directors' meeting.

Maine Secretary of State Matt Dunlap addressed the gathering at the Friday luncheon with a recitation of examples in Maine history of how visions for progress were thwarted by unexpected events, such as the proposal for a northern Maine railway by Governor Israel Washburn that was delayed for fifty years by the civil war, and the collapse of farming that the state tried to prevent by promoting Maine farm products in the publishing in cookbooks. "In many ways, when we address huge issues, we still fall back to the cookbook model," he said. He also praised county governments for their continued excellent service to the public, and took questions about the Real ID Act, Ranked Choice Voting, archival microfilming, and remote notarization.

NACo's First Vice President Greg Cox, Supervisor of San Diego County, California spoke on Saturday, opening with a video about the benefits and advantages of NACo. He interacted with attendees as well, explaining political advocacy goals and hot topics of interest to counties across the country. Commissioner Cox took part in the entire conference, attending training sessions, sharing meals, and even enjoying disc golf with MCCA Executive Director Charles Pray. He promised to visit Maine again soon.

Among the most popular educational sessions, Deputy Steve Witham and K-9 Samson shown in the picture to the right, presented a demonstration with the help of several Sheriff's Office representatives.

The Saturday evening festivities featured the presentation of the 2016 Safe Driving Awards from the MCCA Risk Pool and plaques for retiring commissioners, as well as an honorary plaque for Penobscot County Commissioner Peter Baldacci for



his dedicated and excellent service to the MCCA as the President in 2005, 2016 and 2017. In the picture to the left, Oxford County Commissioners Tim Turner, Steven Merrill, and David Duguay pose with the Oxford plaque awarded to the Convention host. During the ceremony, many counties received Senatorial Sentiments

from Angus King for achieving the Spirit of America's Gold Distinction and helping the cause of volunteerism by honoring their county's winners of the Spirit of America Tribute for outstanding community service. The picture below shows several county representatives holding their certificate. Counties honored were: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo, Washington and York.

Oxford County will be having their local annual ceremony in an upcoming commissioner meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> in which twelve recipients will be honored.

### Spirit of America



### Oxford County Projects



In other news, Oxford is one of three Maine counties working on a courthouse expansion, the other two being Waldo and York Counties. It will be a half-million-dollar exterior rehabilitation project to the building designed in 1895, with a restoration face lift happening ahead of the big construction project. In support of the expansion project Oxford is purchasing four abutting properties. Administrator Scott Cole said the new construction will occupy the present parking lot area between the courthouse and the district court building.

While expanding in one area, efforts continue to re-build the Regional Communications Center damaged by a lightning strike earlier this year. The lightning likely hit a tower at the center, said Sheriff Gallant. The Director of the Communications Center, Jim Miclon said the single lightning strike essentially fried every computer system they had. The MCCA Risk Pool has been assisting with the loss estimated at \$200,000 completely replacing the system component by component. Oxford County is justifiably proud of their dispatch center which does the job with no local dispatching units. They serve fifty-three public safety agencies through one common system supported entirely with the tax commitment and no additional contracts.



Administrator Scott Cole hopes to entreat the public to get involved with some repairs as well. The Aldrich Brook bridge in the unorganized territories of Oxford County has a fifty-foot span that is washed out and in need of replacement. For the moment, attention is focused on another stretch of road where, for the first time, Oxford County



is preparing to stripe a five-mile segment of pavement in Albany township, running from the Waterford town line 5.5 miles over the mountain to the old Albany town hall.

### New Legislation

Oxford County is one of two Maine counties operating more than one Registry of Deeds office; Oxford East in Paris and Oxford West is in Fryeburg. The second location in Fryeburg was established in the mid-1800s through enactment of MRSA 33/702 when travel was difficult. However, in the digital age it's worth considering the cost savings of consolidating the offices to Paris. But why now? Well, it's the perfect time. Oxford West Register of Deeds Jean Watson has submitted her resignation effective December 31<sup>st</sup>, making the proposed transition far less complicated than if someone held the office. Ms. Watson says after 35 years as Register and another four years as Deputy Register she is confident in her decision to retire. Longing to be with children and grandchildren who have moved to Indiana, it's time now to follow suit and be close to family to enjoy going to dance recitals and helping with the little one's homework.

Letters from the Oxford County Commissioners requesting support for the repeal of MRSA 33/702 have been sent to Senators and Representatives to consider for the second session of the 128<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

