

REPORT ON NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, 2019

By MCCA's NACo Representative, Commissioner Peter Baldacci

March 2, to March 6, 2019

The annual Legislative Conference of NACO in Washington, D.C. was held at the Washington Hilton.

I arrived on Saturday, March 2nd & departed on March 6th.

On Saturday, after registration I attended a session on the “Disaster Recovery Reform Act” as part of the Justice & Public Safety Comm. The presenters were the Asst. Administrator of FEMA and their Chief Counsel. They informed us that FEMA is putting more dollars into flood insurance mitigation programs. Also, the Act limits FEMA’s audit review of their projects to 3 years from the end of the project. There have been problems with FEMA auditing counties 10+ years after a project and requiring repayment for errors discovered.

Later the committee heard from Homeland Security and the DEA about sharing information and intelligence among local and state authorities. Brian Villenella of the DEA informed us of the worldwide activities of DEA. They pursue illegal activities around the globe. He also spoke about drug cartel activity in the U.S. In New England he stated that cartels are operating in 2 cities, Boston and New Haven. The most dangerous drug they are dealing with is Fentanyl, the cause of most deaths in this country. DEA has outlawed Fentanyl but it is temporary until 2020, and will require congressional approval to continue.

Our committee unanimously passed a resolution urging states to reform bail to replace money bail with non-financial conditions and only detain the most serious cases. A Federal Court has recently ruled that money bail can violate the Equal Protection clause of the Constitution.

Sunday I attended the Membership Committee, I serve as a vice-chair. It was announced that 2400 counties are now members of NACo. The highest number in its history. There was a report on the “High Performance Leadership Academy”. Every NACo county can choose a candidate for the program and NACo will pay \$1000 toward the cost, leaving a balance of \$495 for the county. The counties that have participated have given positive

reviews. They have sent department heads, commissioners, and HR and finance people to the program.

There is also a Cyber Security Training program for county IT people now available.

Monday I attended a meeting of the Northeast Region Caucus to discuss issues that affect our region. Many of the counties expressed a need for an infrastructure bill to assist with roads, bridges and airports in our region.

Later we heard from the Sec. of Labor, Alexander Acosta, who spoke about the Workforce Training programs that his department oversees. The Sec. of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue spoke about the Farm bill. Kelly Ann Conway spoke about the administrations efforts to hear from local officials. She said that the President met with county officials from all 50 states in the last 2 years and they are open to hearing from local officials about the challenges they are facing.

On Tuesday, Charlie Pray and I met with our new congressman, Jared Golden. We discussed a bill in Congress to allow arrestees to retain their Medicaid and Medicare prior to conviction. There is strong support in Congress for this policy to finally be repealed. We also discussed retaining funding for the PILT program and resolution of the issue of Waters of the U.S. policies that have been burdensome to many in rural areas. We also stopped by Sen. King's office and spoke with his staff about these issues.

Charlie and I attended a session at the Capital on bail reform and the effort to have mentally ill individuals treated outside of jail instead of relying only on the jail's resources. The speakers included Commissioners, the sheriff from Suffolk County, NY, and Congressman Paul Tonko from New York. They discussed the impact of the opioid epidemic on county jails. Congressman Tonko has sponsored a bill, H.R. 1329, with bipartisan support, to amend the Social Security Act to allow Medicaid services to inmates beginning 30 days prior to release from a public institution. This would be a great help to our jails by getting an inmate into treatment prior to release and decrease the chances of reoffending.