January is transition time in New Mexico and time to say a fond farewell to our county members who left office with the close of 2010. The New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) recognizes the personal and family sacrifices that are made in public service, and we honor the work that these individuals have done to advance New Mexico and improve the quality of life for its citizens.

On December 31st, NMAC President Mary Ann Sedillo completed her term as Grant County Commissioner. She will pass the President’s gavel to President Elect Sarah Merklein at the 2011 Legislative Conference. During her Presidency, Ms. Sedillo focused her efforts on an extensive outreach initiative. She visited with county officials and staff to solicit their input on what NMAC services they found particularly beneficial and what other services they need. She also established a number of interdiscipinary committees to identify solutions for county rights-of-way, GIS/E911 coordination and detention reform. President Sedillo has admirably served the citizens of New Mexico for more than 30 years and we wish her well in all of her future endeavors.

Although it is sad to say goodbye to departing friends and colleagues, NMAC is excited to welcome 108 newly-elected county officials who began their terms on January 1st. These county leaders include 53 commissioners, 20 probate judges, 18 assessors, 15 sheriffs, one clerk and one treasurer. On January 17th and 18th, NMAC will offer training for these new officials at the Better Informed Public Officials Conference. The courses are designed to educate incoming members on the roles and responsibilities of their offices. The conference will also provide a great opportunity for members to network with their peers and develop relationships that will assist them over the next four years. We want to make sure they have the very best resources available.

Counties are not the only form of government in the process of transition. As the New Year ball dropped, Governor Susana Martinez was sworn into office and became New Mexico’s first elected female governor. She is also the first Hispanic state chief executive in the country. Governor Martinez was formerly the Doña Ana County District Attorney for New Mexico’s 3rd Judicial District, which encompasses Doña Ana County. NMAC looks forward to a great working relationship with the incoming administration and will be contacting the newly-appointed cabinets secretaries over the next few months to share a county perspective on legislation, rules and regulations.

As the 2011 Legislative Session begins, newly-elected and veteran leaders must join together to address the serious issues facing New Mexico. The state’s budget shortfall and its potential impacts to local governments will be a priority. Throughout the 60-day session, NMAC staff will work collaboratively with our county members and affiliate experts to protect and advance county interests.

NMAC congratulates and welcomes all of these new-elected leaders. NMAC is here to serve as a resource for you. Please contact us at 505.983.2101 if you have any questions. We also encourage you to visit our new website at www.nmcounties.org. Your success is our success!
**NM ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES LEADERSHIP**

**A Message from the President**

Dear County Members,

I am pleased to take over as the President of the New Mexico Association of Counties. I have some very big shoes to fill. Grant County Commissioner Mary Ann Sedillo did a great job as President and kept her promise of increasing communication between NMAC and counties.

Mary Ann met with many counties around the state and I plan to pick up where she left off. She left me a “To Do” list of suggestions that county personnel gave her as she traveled around the state. I plan to visit the remaining counties she was unable to visit. As the NMAC President and on behalf of the NMAC Board of Directors, we are interested in what you, our members, have to say. We want to know what we are doing that you find beneficial and what else we can do to help you and your county.

I would like to thank all of the board members who left office at the end of 2010. I also look forward to working with the eleven new board members who will join us for their first meeting on January 19th at the Legislative Conference. I know the NMAC staff and current board members look forward to working with you and being of assistance as you take on the responsibility of representing your county on the NMAC Board of Directors.

I wish everyone a safe trip to Santa Fe for our Board meeting and Better Informed Public Officials and Legislative Conference. See you there.

Sincerely,

Sarah Merklein

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**Executive Director’s Report**

Dear Board and County Members,

NMAC closed out 2010 with both a sense of loss for the eleven Board members whose terms ended on December 31st and a great feeling of accomplishment for all that we have done. As we say goodbye, we eagerly welcome the new Board members who will join us in January and help us move New Mexico’s counties forward.

This election cycle we moved the Better Informed Public Officials Conference (BIPO) from November to January and combined it with the Legislative Conference. The BIPO and NMAC Legislative Conferences will be held in Santa Fe, January 17-20, 2011. We look forward to working with all the newly elected officials from across the state.

NMAC has completely revamped its website and is ready to launch it this year on January 17th. The staff, especially Cynthia Stephenson and Yolanda Archuleta, has worked extremely hard over the last several months to complete the total redesign of our web presence. We encourage you to take a peek at: [www.nmcounties.org](http://www.nmcounties.org).

In closing, this calendar year we celebrate 75 years of New Mexico’s counties working together. Although NMAC was not formally incorporated until 1968, the counties in New Mexico began meeting in 1936 to work on issues of mutual concern. We look forward to continuing the tradition of working with all 33 counties, to be a resource for elected and professional staff, and to provide the best service possible.

Sincerely,

Paul Gutierrez

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**President**

Sarah Merklein

**Executive Director**

Paul Gutierrez
We’ve Got a Leak

In the last newsletter, I discussed the consequences of losses and claims and introduced a successful safety program called Behavior-Based Safety (BBS). BBS focuses on and cultivates safety conscious employee behavior by reinforcing positive behavior and correcting unacceptable behavior.

The key components of BBS are 1) observe and 2) reinforce or correct. The supervisor observes employee behavior and reinforces ANY positive behavior or corrects unacceptable behavior. Observations provide direct, measurable information on employees’ safe work practices. If the supervisor makes someone feel good about performing a behavior, it will likely RECUR.

Supervisors are responsible for providing and should be accountable for achieving safe services. This responsibility implies that supervisors will correct UNSAFE behavior. To accomplish this, supervisors should conduct observations frequently and commend or correct employee behavior.

Examples

If you observe employees wearing a seat belt, immediately reinforce the positive behavior by commending the employees for wearing their seat belt.

If you see employees following a work rule or policy, immediately recognize them.

If you observe employees failing to use protective equipment, stop them and correct their behavior.

To Effectively Observe Behavior

1. Observe workers frequently at various times
2. Observe workers for a few minutes at each observation
3. Know what safe behavior you are looking for
4. Immediately follow-up on observations (Reinforcement or Corrective Action)

Base rules for Behavior-Based Safety

1. Reinforce frequently and in public, correct in private
2. Reinforce ONLY acceptable behavior
3. Correct unacceptable behavior immediately; it reinforces the desired behavior
4. Reinforce immediately, never wait
5. Be specific about the safe behavior
6. Be sincere
The Insurance Pools’ Underwriting Process

Have you ever wondered how the New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) sets the annual insurance pool contributions for its members? I would guess not, unless you are a member of the insurance pool boards, a risk manager or an insurance geek! Few people know or understand the insurance world and how rates are set. Fortunately, NMAC has an experienced risk management staff and knowledgeable pool board members who understand the insurance world and county government.

Every December the Multi-Line Pool Board of Directors meets to approve the Multi-Line and Law Enforcement annual pool contributions. The Workers’ Compensation Board approves the workers’ compensation contributions during its April meeting. However, months prior to the meetings the risk management team, along with the pools’ insurance broker, begin a frenzy of activity to get us to this point. We call this frenzy of activity the “underwriting process.” What you may not know is how complicated the process can be, and that it actually takes place all year long.

The first quarter of each year we begin the underwriting process by conducting payroll audits, and in June we appraise county properties. Payroll and property values are two key exposures used in the underwriting process. In addition, we collect other exposures data beginning in August through a web-based software program called EXIGIS. Each member of the pools logs into this program and completes various exposure schedules to provide us with information on automobiles, mobile equipment, and the number of deputies and detention officers, just to name a few. We send all exposure data to our broker who in turn goes out to market each year to renew the excess and reinsurance policies, or to place new policies for the pools. The insurance pools are self insured up to a certain amount and every year we purchase excess insurance coverage above the self-insured retention levels. Therefore, the collection and accuracy of the exposure data is critical because excess insurance carriers use the data to set rates.

Loss experience is another critical part of the underwriting process and at the end of the third quarter for Multi-Line and at the end of the first quarter for Workers’ Compensation we send loss run reports, exposure data, and pool budgets to our actuary. The actuary crunches the numbers based on losses and exposures and provides us with recommended annual contributions and the amount of money we need to set aside to pay projected claims. The Multi-Line and Workers’ Compensation Board of Directors have established underwriting subcommittees to review the actuarial studies and to set recommended contribution options. The committees also review excess and reinsurance options and make recommendations to the full boards. And finally, the last step of the underwriting process is to present the underwriting committees’ recommended contribution options to the full board of directors at the December Multi-Line meeting and April Worker’s Compensation meeting for a final vote.
By Yolanda Archuletta

New NMAC Website Launches January 17th

We are proud and excited to announce the January 17th launch of the new NMAC website. Our new site provides information at your fingertips. The members-only features will make printing documents completely unnecessary. With only your e-mail address and a password, the entire contents of our Biennial Membership Directory is available to you. The directory login page doubles as the conference registration site. Once you login, you need only to select which directory to review and a search option.

The site includes up-to-date information under “Hot Topics” and “What’s New?” We hope these features will be an asset to you as you look for updates on legislative matters and county issues. If you have suggestions, we’d love to hear them.

Online resources are also available, allowing you to link to our partners and sustaining members with the click of a mouse. Prominently featured are lists of all of our county members with their courthouses, so our website visitors can easily find key county information.

Our newly-elected officials will receive a demonstration of the site at the BIPO Luncheon on January 17th and our 2011 Legislative Conference attendees will be introduced to some of the highlights of the site later in the week.

We believe you’ll be pleased that there is so much for not only you, our members, but for those who want to know more about NMAC and New Mexico’s counties. Visit us soon at www.nmcounnties.org to see it for yourself.

By Grace Philips

Celebrating Counties

County Achievements

Chaves and Curry First Counties to Apply for Detention Accreditation

The race is on to see which New Mexico county will be the first to achieve detention facility accreditation under the new Professional Adult Detention Standards for New Mexico detention facilities.

On December 28, 2010, Chaves and Curry became the first New Mexico counties to apply for detention accreditation under the New Mexico Local Government Accreditation Program. The path to accreditation was established when the Professional Adult Detention Standards Council approved its standards for New Mexico detention facilities earlier in the year. Counties must comply with all 208 standards in order to achieve accreditation. Successful counties will receive a 5% reduction for the detention portion of the law enforcement contribution through the New Mexico County Insurance Authority for the year following accreditation.

The goals in establishing this program are to elevate the level of professionalism and competency in county detention facilities and to reduce both the number and severity of lawsuits from New Mexico detention operations. The standards are rigorous and cover areas such as security operations, physical plant, medical/mental health care, and inmate programs. They are tailored to New Mexico law and operations. R.L. Stockard, Local Government Accreditation Manager of the New Mexico Municipal League and New Mexico Association of Counties, says that compliance with the standards “…will greatly improve detention operations in New Mexico. Chaves and Curry counties are to be commended for stepping up to the challenge and pursuing excellence.”

NACO Training Opportunities

NACo offers its members various educational and training opportunities to support county officials in their efforts to manage rapid change and prepare counties for new responsibilities.

Communities Working Together for Lasting Solutions:
Increasing Civic Understanding
Wednesday, February 02, 2011
2:00 PM - 3:15 PM Eastern Time

Increasing the understanding of what county government does and how community members benefit from county services is the first step in building a trusting relationship within your county. This session builds on President Glen Whiteley’s initiative, “County Government Works.”

Communities Working Together for Lasting Solutions:
Increasing Public Participation
Wednesday, February 09, 2011
2:00 PM - 3:15 PM Eastern Time

How communities work together to make decisions matter. Engaged community members become more supportive and positive about leadership decisions that affect their lives when they’re part of productive interactions that are open and civil.

Communities Working Together for Lasting Solutions:
Building Effective Leadership
Wednesday, February 16, 2011
2:00 PM - 3:15 PM Eastern Time

Effective county leadership reflects the demographic, economic, social and political changes in your community. To respond successfully to these changes, your community leadership needs to represent everyone. Explore ways you can diversify your leadership base, as you prepare new leaders for future responsibilities.

For more information on any of these NACo training opportunities, please visit http://www.naco.org and click under Conferences and Events for the Webinars and Seminars link.
2011 Legislative Conference Registration Now Open

Online registration is now open for NACo’s 2011 Legislative Conference, March 5-9. The NACo Legislative Conference is held on an annual basis in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit the NACo website at www.naco.org.

National Association of Counties Approves Budget and Legislative Priorities

The NACo Board of Directors approved a $20 million budget for 2011, key legislative priorities for next year and a strategic plan that guides programs for future years at its meeting Dec. 3–4 in Tarrant County, Texas. The key legislative priorities are:

- Promote county fiscal relief and save jobs
- Save jobs by repealing the 3 percent tax withholding requirement passed by Congress
- Support job creation by enacting aviation and surface transportation program reauthorizations
- Support county health priorities
- Support job creation by making rural development a priority within the farm bill reauthorization
- Oppose job-killing unfunded mandates and preemptions

The National Association of Counties’ (NACo) President Glen Whitley issued the following statement to counties regarding the April 2011 celebration of National County Government Month: “I am pleased to announce on this Veterans Day that the April 2011 theme for National County Government Month (NCGM) is Serving Our Veterans, Armed Forces and Their Families.

“Since 1991, NACo has encouraged counties to actively promote county government services and programs. Formerly National County Government Week, the designation was expanded to a full month to offer counties more opportunities to participate. Counties aren’t expected to hold public awareness activities throughout the month, but can schedule activities any time during the month.

“As county officials, we know that America’s counties provide essential programs and services to communities, but unfortunately many Americans do not. National County Government Month in conjunction with my County Government Works presidential initiative are terrific opportunities to educate the public and our partners in state and federal government about the responsibilities counties have and the programs and services counties provide.

“Counties are encouraged to link this year’s theme – Serving Our Veterans, Armed Forces and Their Families – to as many National County Government Month activities as possible. Popular events include holding public tours of county facilities; talking to students, community organizations and business leaders about county programs and services; holding essay and art contests; and sponsoring County Family Day events on the Courthouse grounds. You can hold media events, write newspaper columns, or be a guest on local radio and TV shows to discuss new county programs or highlight existing ones.

“This year’s National County Government Month theme is important and timely as more veterans, military service members and their families are turning to their county government for services. In addition to my County Government Works initiative, I created the “Veterans and Military Service Task Force” to engage NACo members to develop and highlight best practices and policies to promote innovative programs, services and benefits.

“To assist counties, a booklet will be available from NACo in early 2011 which will provide ideas for the variety of ways counties can celebrate National County Government Month. Many of these ideas and more are already available in the County Government Works section of the NACo website.

“I know you are proud of your county’s programs and services and the men and women who deliver them. Start planning today to celebrate National County Government Month and participate in my County Government Works initiative.”

For more information about NCGM, County Government Works, or the Veterans and Military Service Task Force, visit www.naco.org.
**Potholes Can Be Deadly**

John Fisher drove home toward South Carolina along a stretch of Interstate 20 covered with ruts, bumps and crumbling concrete. Just ahead of the family, Crystal Dick was driving her 1995 Toyota Camry. The pothole in front of Crystal Dick had been fixed at least once already and now the repair was breaking down, too. A pocket of jagged, brittle bits of concrete covered nearly half of the right lane. Crystal’s Camry hit the hole, kicking a chunk of concrete into the air as the Fishers’ Ford pickup hurtled forward at 70 mph. The concrete struck the windshield directly in front of John Fisher’s wife, Jo Maureen.

No one knows exactly how big the fragment was, but it blew a hole the size of a football through the windshield. It struck Jo Maureen in the head, sailed between her preschoolers in their safety seats in back, hit the rear window and shattered it too, flying out of the truck’s cab never to be found. The state troopers decided no one was at fault. Jo Maureen Fisher died the next day.

Don’t let something as innocent looking as a pothole turn into a killer. If you are out on the road and you see something that needs repair or needs to be checked, please report it to the correct department and to your supervisor. Do not think that since it is not your department’s responsibility you don’t need to report it. Every county employee needs to be the eyes and ears of the County. Your call could save someone’s life.

**NEW MEXICO CONNECTION**

2nd Annual Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Summit

The US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, NM State Forestry Division, and New Mexico Association of Counties will be hosting the 2nd Annual Wildland Urban Interface Summit at the Ruidoso Convention Center, March 23rd and 24th, 2011.

The first WUI Summit was held in January 2010 at the Sevilleta Research Station just north of Socorro, NM. There were approximately 95 participants from federal, state, county agencies and local community members. Workshop sessions included topics such as FireWise USA, Making a Plan, After the Fire, Wildfire Insurance and WUI Codes, Community Success Stories and panel discussions on firefighter perspectives and agency resources.

This year’s WUI Summit will be the week before Wildfire Awareness Week so mark your calendars and we look forward to seeing you in Ruidoso.

For more information contact: Joy Esparsen at (505) 820-8111 or jesparsen@nmcounties.org.

Applications online at [www.nmcounties.org](http://www.nmcounties.org)
NMAC Prepares for the 2011 Legislative Session

As the 2011 legislative session approaches on January 18, NMAC has been working hard to communicate and collaborate with several of its important partners.

Presentations were made on property tax solutions and rights of way fees to the interim Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee, and on extension of the existing 911 surcharge and rights of way fees to the Science, Technology, and Telecommunication Committee, in October and November.

The Executive Boards of NMAC and the New Mexico Municipal League held their annual joint meeting in Santa Fe on November 19, to review and support each other’s priority issues. For a list of those issues, log onto the NMAC (www.nmcounties.org) and NMML (www.nmml.org) websites.

The Association and the League will join forces in the 2011 session on two particular concerns: 1) a request to the Legislature to continue the existing statutory provisions that hold local governments harmless from the removal of gross receipts taxes from food and medicine in 2004; and 2) a proposal to extend the existing 911 surcharge to prepaid wireless and voice-over internet protocol customers. The latter proposal was endorsed by the Public Regulatory Commission on November 30.

The Annual County Lobbyist Breakfast was held on December 10. This event brings together lobbyists for individual counties and the NMAC lobbying team, to share their individual and collective legislative “wish lists.”

NMAC Workers’ Compensation Department Welcomes New Staff

We have two new staff members in the department. Travis P. Cook joined us on December 13, 2010, as an adjuster and Margie Abualkhail joined us on November 22, 2010, as a claims technician. The department is comprised of one senior adjuster, Thomas Bredenberg, who handles the most severe claims; two adjusters, Steve Chappell and Travis Cook, who handle the moderate injury claims; one adjuster, Clea Lewis, who handles basic medical only claims; and two technicians, Ms. Lewis and Margie Abualkhail, who are responsible for claim set-up, mail, telephone calls and email.

Unresolved claims that proceed to a formal trial before the WCA adjudication process are assigned to an elite group of legal counsel. Benefits are provided for reasonable and necessary medical treatment and lost time for on-the-job work related accidents resulting in injury. The Workers’ Compensation Department provides claim handling for 31 member counties. The Department focuses on providing exceptional customer service to member counties and injured workers to achieve equitable and efficient claim resolutions.

May peace, joy and hope be with you throughout the New Year.
New Money for New Mexico Teen Courts

The State of New Mexico will soon have a new source of funding for one of the fastest growing components of juvenile justice in the last twenty years—teen courts. New Mexico has over 20 teen courts, where youth guilty of misdemeanors are sentenced by a jury of their peers, often with teens acting as lawyers and judge as well. The sentences often involve community service, a commitment to serve on a set number of teen court juries, and classes addressing topics like driving while intoxicated and shoplifting.

Teen courts closely monitor compliance with sentencing, and youth who do not follow through are referred back to the traditional judicial system.

Teen courts free up other courts’ resources, provide an opportunity for youth to see the legal system from both sides, and help youth focus on restitution to the communities affected by their mistakes.

Most teen courts are supported by a wide network of community partners and volunteers, but they do require funding for staff, training, and other routine expenses. The recession has put a dent in funding from governments and donations for many teen courts. In 2009, the New Mexico Legislature passed legislation to collect a $1 fee on traffic citations to create a Juvenile Adjudication Fund for teen courts. The New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) is working to create a framework to distribute the money through municipalities and counties. Under a rule now being developed, municipalities and counties would serve as fiscal agents for the funds, and would apply to DFA for the funding on behalf of their local teen courts. The funds could be used to support a range of activities and expenses of local teen courts. Funds would be available starting in July 2011.

DFA plans on having a public meeting to discuss the rule and funding in the coming weeks, and is happy to provide a draft rule to any members. NMAC staff are also reviewing the draft, and generally support the program as a way to expand the tools available to address juvenile offenders.

For more information on the Juvenile Adjudication Fund and rule, contact: Rebecca Leppala, Program Manager at DFA at rebeccaj.leppala@state.nm.us or (505) 827-4958.

For more information about teen courts, contact: David Garcia, President of the NM Teen Court Assoc. and Executive Director of Lea County Teen Court, Inc. at davidg@valornet.com or (575) 393-7743.

Thank You for Your Support

We want to thank all of our sustaining members. You make our association stronger by giving us the means to serve our county members better. We value our partnership and hope we maintain our relationship for years to come.

We invite all of our readers to learn more about our Sustaining Business Membership Program at our new NMAC website at the same address, www.nmcounties.org. We have new interactive features for our members with our online membership directory. You will recognize the login page from the conference registrations of the last year, but what many have failed to see are the menu options to look up other members. It is a members-only feature. So, join today!
Santa Fe – An early Christmas for two New Mexico counties and one city; the NMRC announces a total of $929,460 in grants and technical assistance to create turn-key recycling centers in Torrance County, Otero County and the City of Deming. Each entity will receive $309,820 to build regional recycling centers in the “hub and spoke” approach, identified as the preferable method of introducing the needed infrastructure in New Mexico.

The projects, funded from a Department of Energy grant received by the NMRC as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, will support the development of recycling infrastructure with a “hub” processing facility and collection equipment for “spoke” communities within rural/underserved areas of New Mexico.

The “hub and spoke” model is a solid waste management system, where a centralized processing facility (hub) provides services to several regionally appropriate collection programs (spokes). This system is designed to minimize capital and operating expenses, while maximizing financial, environmental and societal benefits of recycling.

The three awardees will receive funding for a simple building, equipment to process recyclables, and community drop-off portable recycling collection equipment, as well as technical assistance provided by NMRC. Grantees have agreed to provide long-term operational and financial commitment to ensure project sustainability. Each funded community will process and market (at a minimum) the following recyclable materials: corrugated cardboard, aluminum and tin cans, mixed paper, and #1 and #2 plastic bottles.

“NMRC is thrilled to further develop Deming, Otero County and Torrance County’s ability to collect, process and market recyclables for their respective regions and help to overcome recycling challenges associated with low population densities,” noted English Bird, NMRC’s Executive Director. “The funded hubs will provide a gateway for small, rural communities to process materials for marketing, while increasing their resource conservation and helping to retain and create jobs.” NMRC’s overall project will employ the following programs to meet the proposed objectives: 1) launch of a statewide recycled materials marketing cooperative, 2) strategic placement of recycling equipment infrastructure using the “hub and spoke” model, and 3) education and assistance to targeted communities regarding the structure of solid waste rates (known as Pay-As-You-Throw) as a tool to incentivize source reduction and waste diversion activities.

Local Contacts: Joy Ansley, Torrance County Manager, 505-246-4752; Lawrence Brookey, City of Deming Asst Director of Public Works, 575-546-8848; Sharon Hill, Otero County Commission Liaison, 575-439-2602.
### January 2011
- **17-18**: BIPO Sessions & County College (Santa Fe)
- **18**: EC & BOD Meetings (Santa Fe)
- **19**: Multi-Line Membership Meeting (Santa Fe)
- **19-20**: Midwinter Legislative Conference (Santa Fe)

### February 2011
- **18**: Executive Committee Meeting (Santa Fe)
- **19**: NMAC Board of Directors Meeting (Santa Fe)

### March 2011
- **5-9**: NACo Legislative Conference (Washington, DC)

### April 2011
- **8**: Executive Committee Meeting (Santa Fe)
- **19**: LEDAC Meeting (Santa Fe)
- **20**: Multi-Line Board Meeting (Santa Fe)
- **21**: Workers’ Comp Board Meeting (Santa Fe)

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### 2011 Legislative Session

**Important Dates**
- **December 15 – January 14**: Legislation may be prefilled
- **January 18**: Opening day (noon)
- **February 17**: Deadline for introduction
- **March 19**: Session ends (noon)
- **April 8**: Legislation not acted upon by governor is pocket vetoed
- **June 17**: Effective date of legislation not a general appropriation bill or a bill carrying an emergency clause or other specified date