

# Association of Minnesota Counties

*Proudly serving counties since 1909.*

**AMC** offers a broad range of services to its members, including **education, communications, and intergovernmental relations**. AMC works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted.

AMC is governed by a **Board of Directors** composed of five officers, one representative from each of nine AMC districts, five representatives from the metropolitan district, one representative from each county with a population of 400,000 or more, National Association of Counties (NACo) representatives, and ex-officio representatives from organizations affiliated with AMC.

Each member county has eight delegates to AMC (10 delegates in counties with seven commissioners) and each county belongs to one of 10 regional districts. County delegates attend district meetings at least two times per year to refine policy positions and receive training on specific county concerns, e.g. personnel development, solid waste planning, tax policy, etc. In addition, delegates participate at the annual conference and legislative conference in the development of the platform and vote on other issues important to the Association.

AMC's five policy committees, **General Government, Human Services, Environment & Natural Resources, Public Safety and Transportation**, draft the legislative policies for approval by the full Association. Every member county is represented by a delegate on at least one of the committees. The AMC policy development process is carefully constructed to ensure that county officials are actively involved in policy development and understand the issues facing county government. AMC policy statements are developed through a democratic process aimed at reflecting the collective opinion of county commissioners in Minnesota.

**AMC aims to improve the operations of Minnesota's county governments and the services counties provide to their citizens.**

*For nearly  
100 years,  
the Association  
of Minnesota  
Counties  
has assisted the  
state's 87 counties  
in providing  
effective governance  
for  
all citizens.*

**Citizens depend on  
county government  
more today  
than ever before.**

# Membership Services

**The better informed  
you are,  
the better decisions  
you will make  
as a county leader.**

**AMC member counties enjoy a wide variety of benefits and services, from solid communications to educational programs and research, that help best serve the citizens of Minnesota.**

## Publications & Communications

To meet the information needs of counties in a variety of ways, AMC provides counties with the following publications:

**Minnesota Counties.** AMC's main communications vehicle is the *Minnesota Counties* newspaper, which is published 10 times per year. It contains in-depth articles on significant county issues, notices of upcoming AMC events; summaries of recent activities; county news; regular columns by the AMC president, executive director and staff; calendar of events; job notices and board meeting minutes.

**AMC Update.** An electronic newsletter published during the Minnesota Legislative Session, the AMC Update alerts counties to pertinent happenings in state and federal government. Policy analysts summarize complex legislation, pulling out its significance for county government.

**"FYI" Resources.** To help county officials, employees and citizens better understand what county government does, AMC produces a number of "For Your Information" bulletins. These documents provide an overview of county revenue and expenditures, county government structure, duties of a county commissioner, transportation, the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, why property taxes vary, and other topics.

**Salary Survey.** Each year, we ask counties to provide valuable data including salaries, county benefit expenses, county benefit leaves, insurance, tax capacity and number of employees, collective bargaining units and more. This information is now collected through an online survey that also includes comparable data from Minnesota's cities.

**County Directory.** The Minnesota County Directory, distributed early in the year following elections, lists important information for each of Minnesota's 87 counties: courthouse contact information and hours, board meeting schedule, county demographics, as well as contact information for commissioners and key staff.

**Web Site.** The AMC web site [www.mncounties.org](http://www.mncounties.org) is the most comprehensive and timely resource for counties and others interested in county issues and activities. It's the source for Minnesota county information, AMC events and meetings, links to resources, legislative updates, recent committee minutes and county job postings.

## Education & Conferences

AMC offers a variety of educational programs to help county commissioners and staff keep up-to-speed on issues, trends and technology.

### COUNTY GOVERNMENT 101: A CONFERENCE FOR NEWLY ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS

January 2009

Embassy Suites, St. Paul

This important, comprehensive conference is one that no newly-elected official should miss! Held every-other January in St. Paul, following county commissioner elections, this conference is specifically designed as an orientation to for newly-elected county leaders and features several interesting workshops on topics that will help make you a more effective county commissioner.

### JOINT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

April 2008

Radisson Riverfront, St. Paul

The Legislative Conference offers county commissioners and staffs the opportunity to learn more about legislative issues, refine AMC legislative policy and discuss concerns with legislators and their local government counterparts from cities, school boards and townships.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

August 2008

Rochester

The Leadership Summit provides additional training and educational opportunities for county board members. Workshop content is generally geared toward developing leadership skills, rather than being issue-oriented. Because the location moves around the state, the retreat includes area tours, which provide insight to the region's economic and cultural climate.

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

December 2008

Duluth

The AMC Annual Conference is the premier county government event in Minnesota! The conference serves as AMC's annual business meeting, when delegates vote on the legislative platform and elect new officers to the board of directors. A Vendor Fair features exhibit booths of products and services for county government. Education is a major emphasis of the conference, with thought-provoking workshops and general sessions on current hot topics, board leadership skills and technology issues. ■

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of all bills introduced  
to the Legislature  
have some sort of  
impact on counties.**

# Intergovernmental Services

**AMC serves as  
a collective voice  
for Minnesota counties  
to other levels of  
government  
and the public.**

**From overseeing development of the AMC Legislative Platform  
to working with state agencies and discussing county concerns with state legislators,  
AMC's policy analysts work year-round on often-complex issues  
that have significant ramifications on county budgets.**

## Platform Development

Every two years, AMC adopts a new legislative platform, which coincides with the biennial legislative session. This platform broadly outlines AMC's vision, as well as eight to 10 basic principles underlying any legislative positions. Under each of the basic principles are specific statements supporting policies and outlining action statements, which form the basis for AMC policy analysts', lobbying efforts during the legislative session.

The AMC platform encompasses virtually all areas of county concerns, including financing of human services programs, administration of jails, county board authority, funding for health and long term care services, economic development, affordable housing, agriculture policy, solid waste management, transportation financing, the county/state fiscal relationship and many other areas.

Development of the platform is based largely on the recommendations of our five AMC Policy Committees, which meet at least four times during the year to refine policies related to their respective areas: **General Government, Human Services, Environment & Natural Resources, Public Safety and Transportation.** More than 130 delegates serve on these committees. Each member county is represented by at least one delegate on one of the four policy committees, with committee assignments determined by each of 10 AMC districts. Each district selects delegates to serve on each policy committee. The committees often make use of subcommittees to delve into specific topics and provide the larger committee with background and recommendations.

County officials and staff have additional input into the platform during district meetings, which occur at least two times per year. During fall district meetings, counties receive copies of the draft platform and are invited to submit resolutions and amendments to the platform. Both the draft platform and any proposed resolutions are voted on during the AMC Annual Meeting, which takes place during the AMC Annual Conference in early December.

While the platform forms the groundwork for the policy analysts during the legislative session, it is important to note that the platform is always a "work in progress." Policy committee members throughout the following year consider changes, with our March Legislative Conference providing an opportunity for the full delegate assembly to revise the platform.

## Activities at the Legislature

More than 80 percent of all bills introduced to the Minnesota State Legislature have some sort of impact on counties; consequently, the legislative session proves to be an intense few months for AMC policy analysts. They work proactively to incorporate county concerns into legislation and reactively as they respond to proposed bills that would positively or negatively affect county government. The analysts attend House and Senate committees, talk with legislators and their staffs, and correspond regularly with other local government entities.

Policy analysts spend a good deal of time in communicating with counties, via the AMC DAILY, web site, and one-on-one. Because the county message is often best heard when delivered by commissioners in legislators' own areas, counties are often called upon to contact their own legislators to share their concerns directly.

## Working with State Agencies & Other Entities

Counties don't operate in a vacuum, and neither does AMC. Staff, committees and volunteer leaders meet often with state agencies and other local government entities on joint areas of concern. AMC is active on many intergovernmental organizations, where we work closely with representatives of state departments such as Human Services and Corrections. State officials are often invited to speak before AMC Policy Committees as delegates struggle with policies or gather background information. AMC works closely with other local government associations, such as the League of Minnesota Cities, since changes in legislation and/or policy often also affects them.

## Other Activities

AMC policy analysts also perform association management and related work for several county affiliate or staff organizations such as the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties. Policy analysts also manage special projects, such as completion of a statewide land use map. ■



**“Minnesota counties have begun a quiet but powerful revolution that will revitalize government of the people, for the people, by the people.”**

*Paul F. Wilson, Olmsted County Commissioner*

In 2003, the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) accepted the challenge to discover and promote opportunities for dynamic change through the creation of the Minnesota County **FUTURES** Project.

**FUTURES** is about changing the way county officials look at the business of county government; opening minds to the importance of envisioning opportunities to renew and realign the delivery of county services. This seemingly simple concept is ground-breaking and county officials displayed their courage in forging ahead and accepting the challenge head-on.

**FUTURES** is not just about reducing or eliminating redundant services, nor is it about believing that answers can be found through never-ending discussion.

**FUTURES** is about acceptance of the non-sustainability of the current government business model and taking actions that allow county government to restore and reinvigorate a respect-filled and mutually productive state-local government partnership beneficial to communities and the people who live there.

**FUTURES** embraces a Jeffersonian vision that sees local governments as a laboratory for democracy; the level of government most able to meet the needs of the citizen.

**FUTURES** provides a place, space and time for a broad sector of county government leaders and staff to discuss how counties can inspire service delivery systems that are continuously improving, effective, efficient and sustainable.

**FUTURES** is a culture of leadership excellence where counties and other community institutions—both public and private—come together, set aside parochial interests and strive to meet the needs of their communities.

**FUTURES** is infused into existing AMC conferences and meetings including the AMC Leadership Summit, Annual Conference, Legislative Conference, District and Policy Committee meetings focusing on the development of leadership skills for county elected officials and staff.

**FUTURES** is the AMC Leadership Cohort Program that is providing intensive leadership training in 15 counties for more than 100 county staffers. The program develops skills that assist in successfully addressing county and community issues.

**FUTURES** is the Joint Local Government Legislative Conference that brings more than 800 state, city, town, school, and county officials together to discuss and identify critical state and community issues.

**FUTURES** is the Minnesota County Handbook that identifies and provides county best practices for the delivery of county services.

**FUTURES** is the ongoing work of committees and work groups to seek, identify and explore new opportunities for state and local partnerships.

**FUTURES** is the cultivation of a culture of change that explores opportunities to realign and redesign local service delivery systems.

**FUTURES** is a dedicated set of county officials who see their leadership role as being custodians of today and navigators of the future.

**FUTURES** is about setting goals to:

- Create a culture that fosters positive change in county government and communities.
- Nurture partnerships among local governments and local government associations to promote effective, efficient service delivery systems for Minnesota communities.
- Enhance relationships between counties and state agencies to improve service delivery and program outcomes.



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