



# THE MUNICIPAL REPORTER

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## Taos Court Supervisor Claudette Lucero Named "Court Clerk of the Year"



Claudette Lucero, Court Clerk Supervisor for the Taos Municipal Court, has been named "Court Clerk of the Year" by the New Mexico Court Clerks Association during their Annual Professional Development Conference July 20-22 in Albuquerque. She was presented the award by New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Daniels.

The purpose of the Court Clerk of the Year award is to identify and recognize a member of the Municipal Court Clerks Association who has made an enhancement to the court clerk's own community or municipal government. The award also honors the clerk's significant contributions to the objectives of the Association, the advancement of the municipal court clerks' profession and the promotion of municipal government in New Mexico.

Ms. Lucero has been employed by the Taos Municipal Court for 21 years and has worked for Taos Municipal Judge Richard Chavez the entire time.

In his nominating letter, Taos Municipal Court Alternate Judge Jim Fambro said: "In addition to being the Taos Court Clerk Supervisor, she performs many duties that keep our court functioning on a daily basis. Claudette prepares the annual operating budget in cooperation with the Town of Taos Finance Department. Her budgets have been free of audit exceptions for almost all of her 21 years of service to the citizens of Taos."

She belongs to various community organizations including ARC Employee Committee and the Town Safety Committee. *(Photo courtesy of Carol Jarrell)*

## Residents Nationwide Benefit From NLC Prescription Program

By Marc Shapiro

*Reprinted from Nations Cities Weekly*

The NLC Prescription Discount Card Program is a member program offered by the National League of Cities in which participating cities see the value of the program in real savings to residents in just a few months.

Nationwide, more than 470 cities are currently participating in the program and have saved residents over \$6.2 million to-date on the cost of prescriptions. For those residents without health insurance or with a prescription not covered by insurance, the average savings has been more than 23% off the retail price of their prescriptions.

"This is a program that has clear benefits with the potential to save more money for the community well beyond the cost of joining NLC. And the best part? This program is free. It is free to the city; it is free to the residents," said NLC President James E. Mitchell, Jr., Councilmember, Charlotte, N.C. In many cases, a city can save its residents more in a few short months than the city's annual membership dues in NC.

Artesia, NM has saved its residents nearly \$5,000 on the cost of their prescriptions. Española and Red River also participate in the program.

Mitchell has set a goal of \$10 million in savings for the program this year. For member cities that are not currently offering the discount card, there *(Continued on page 4)*

## 2013 New Mexico Rural Economic Development Forum Seeks Host City Proposals

The Rural Alliance is seeking proposals from New Mexico communities to host the 2013 Rural Economic Development Forum. The event is tentatively scheduled for April or May 2013. Deadline for submissions is September 30, 2011

The Forum will focus on important economic development issues and training relevant to rural and frontier communities and their leaders. A Planning Committee will be formed, including members from the host community, Rural Alliance, and other economic development professionals, to finalize dates, develop the agenda, and carry out the Forum. The *Rural Economic Development Handbook of Policies and Procedures* is available at [www.nmrural.org](http://www.nmrural.org).

Those wishing to respond to this RFP should anticipate 125-250 attendees. The application will require the following Key Selection Criteria:

*(Continued on page 6)*

**Media Relations, Public Information Officer Workshops Planned for August 30 and 31**

Media Relations and Public Information Officer Training, sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Transportation, will be held August 30 and 31, 2011 at the New Mexico Broadcasters Association office at 2333 Wisconsin St, NE in Albuquerque. The training is free and lunch is provided.

Melanie J. Majors of the New Mexico Broadcasters Association and Lt. Eric Garcia of the New Mexico State Police are the instructors.

Day One is Basic Media Relations and Public Information Officer training. Participants will learn how to write a news release, write public service announcements, set up a news conference and more.

Day Two is the Spokesperson Training where participants will learn how to work with the media and participate in an interview.

Law enforcement officers will earn 14 hours of NMLEA credits.

To register online, visit [www.nmba.org/training](http://www.nmba.org/training). For more information, contact Melanie J. Majors at (505) 881-4444, 800-622-2414 e-mail [melaniemajors@nmba.org](mailto:melaniemajors@nmba.org).

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# Outsourcing the Local Library Can Lead to a Loud Backlash

By Melissa Maynard, Stateline Staff Writer

Last month, three public libraries in the Los Angeles suburb of Santa Clarita ditched the L.A. County public library system, the biggest in the nation. To save money, they turned instead to a little-known but fast-growing private competitor, the Maryland-based Library Systems and Services International (LSSI).

Hardly anyone in the general public realizes it, but LSSI, which runs 68 branch libraries in California, Kansas, Oregon, Tennessee and Texas, is now the fifth largest library system in America.

Quiet though it has been, the rise of LSSI has attracted its share of critics, not just at the local level but in the increasingly nervous network of public library systems around the country. As city budgets tighten and privatizing services becomes more politically acceptable, LSSI keeps attracting interest from cash-strapped communities searching for ways to keep their libraries in good working order without spending more than they can afford. LSSI so far has no competitors in the private sector because, according to CEO Brad King, no other company has dared to go “where angels fear to tread.”

Indeed, there’s something for them to fear. LSSI has received consistently icy receptions in most of the places where it has come in and taken over. Every community has its share of library users who believe that a library system is a core function of local government, regardless of what the budget situation is. Some are turning to state lawmakers to pass legislation that would make library privatization more difficult.

Stockton, California, ultimately decided to continue running the Stockton-San Joaquin Public Library as a public entity earlier this year because of stiff local opposition to the concept of privatizing it. LSSI had promised to spend at least \$800,000 more each year on books and materials while improving customer service and expanding operating hours by “as much as 47 percent” — a tempting offer for a library with few attractive options. But local residents either didn’t believe that or didn’t see it as sufficient incentive to take the library out of public control.

Some communities have tried going private and then changed their mind. The city of Fargo, North Dakota, signed up with LSSI but was dissatisfied and eventually reverted back to public-sector management. But it’s probably fair to say that most of the privatizations have gradually won public acceptance, especially when libraries have lengthened hours and expanded services and collections under LSSI management.

## Challenge to Unions

The American Library Association has had an official policy statement in opposition to library privatization on its books since 2001, but ramped up its involvement in the issue this year. Many in the profession were rankled by a quote in a 2010 newspaper article from LSSI co-founder Frank Pezzanite: “A lot of libraries are atrocious. Their policies are all about job security. That’s why the profession is nervous about us. You can go to a library for 35 years and

never have to do anything and then have your retirement. We’re not running our company that way. You come to us, you’re going to have to work.”

LSSI has a track record of re-hiring staff from the libraries that it takes over, and claims to offer industry-competitive wages. But union protections and defined-benefit pension plans usually disappear, with a company-matched 401(k) plan in its place.

An ALA report released in June urges communities to thoroughly vet privatization proposals and provides a checklist for doing so. “We get reports all the time of companies calling up city leaders and saying ‘we can save your library,’” says Patricia Tumulty, chair of the ALA’s task force on privatization. “Well, how? Are we actually looking at the same hours of service? There’s a different standard of transparency and accountability between a public library and a private organization.”

In many cases, public library systems that get taken over by LSSI are in truly bad shape. Jackson County, Oregon, had had all 15 library branches shuttered for six months because of budget cuts until the contract to manage them was awarded to LSSI in 2007.

But Santa Clarita is a different story. The libraries there weren’t in imminent danger of dramatic cuts to services and programs. There, LSSI convinced the local government that money was being wasted on overhead that could go to expanding the collections. So the three county libraries reopened to the public on July 1 under LSSI management. Centralizing and automating administrative and back-office functions can free up library staff to focus on interacting with library patrons, King says.

*(Continued on page 5)*

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**NLC Prescription Program . . . continued from page 1**

is no cost to participate and the program is easy to implement. The role of the city is to promote the program through the local media and the city web site or city newsletter and to make the prescription discount cards available at locations throughout the city to those residents who might benefit from the program.

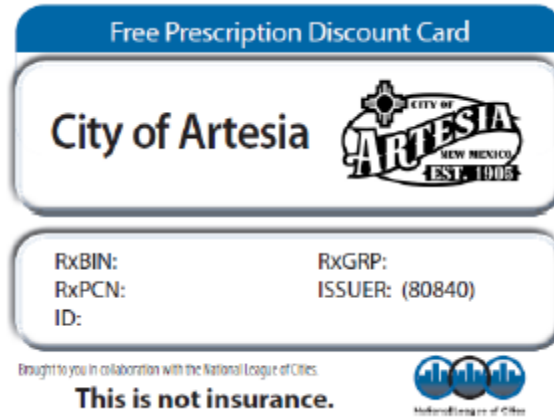
NLC provides the city with customized prescription discount cards with the city name and logo as well as sample press releases, a sample page for the city web site and other start-up resources. The discount card includes a toll-free customer support line to for residents to call with questions about the program. Each month, participating cities also receive a report from NLC with aggregate data on the use of the discount card, including the total and average savings to residents..

For residents, there is no enrollment form, no membership fee and no restrictions or limits on the frequency of use. The discount card is accepted at more than 60,000 pharmacies, including all major pharmacy chains and most local independent pharmacies. Participating pharmacies in

any city can be identified here: [www.caremark.com/nlc](http://www.caremark.com/nlc).

Dothan, Ala. (population 57,737) was one of the most recent cities to bring this cost-saving program to residents. At a press conference announcing the program last month, Mayor Mike Schmitz said, "It's truly an exciting day for us to unveil the City of Dothan Prescription Discount Card Program. This is an idea that was presented at a NLC meeting, and we thought it was an excellent idea to look into." Mayor Schmitz was joined at the press conference by city commissioners Amos Newsome, James Reading and John Craig "These are tough times and a 23-percent discount on prescription drugs adds up," Schmitz added. "All they (citizens) have to do is get the card, go to a participating pharmacy, and, hopefully, save some money. That's it in a nutshell. It's a simple idea." In the first week, 40 residents benefited from the program and saved on their prescription costs.

NLC member cities not participating in the program can sign up on the NLC website at [www.nlc.org/prescriptioncard](http://www.nlc.org/prescriptioncard) and join the effort to reach the goal of \$10 million in savings to residents this year. For more information on the NLC Prescription Discount Card Program, contact Marc Shapiro at NLC, (202) 626-3019 or [shapiro@nlc.org](mailto:shapiro@nlc.org).




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**Legislative Action**

Santa Clarita resident Michael Wilkerson wasn't impressed on his first library visit after the change in management. "They don't seem to know what they're doing," Wilkerson says. "They were very scripted, 'Oh look, you want a library card? We have six different colors.'" Wilkerson is worried that the community feel of the library will disappear. He expects the company to cut corners on services and programs in order to make a profit and was outraged that the city council acted on the deal without more analysis or active pursuit of community input.

Local uproar over the move and the way that it was handled by the city council is fast-tracking a bill in the California Assembly that would make it harder for other cities to take the same tack. The legislation as originally conceived would have required a public vote before libraries could go private.


Now, a milder version lays out a series of due-diligence steps a community must take before outsourcing library services, including detailed financial analysis and increased public notice. The Assembly passed the bill in June and a Senate floor vote is expected in August. "All of the things that LSSI or another company promises to the public for cost savings should have proof," the bill's author, Assemblyman Das Williams, said in a heated hearing of the Senate Governance & Finance Committee on July 6. "And it should be proof that is presented to the public in a public meeting with adequate notice. That's what I view as the core of this bill."

The League of California Cities doesn't consider this approach a step forward. The League argues that the bill effectively would take the outsourcing option off the table for many communities, forcing them to resort to branch closures and shortened hours of operation. "The practical impact of this bill is to simply ban a city from contracting out library services," said Kyra Ross, legislative representative at the League of California Cities.

The legislation also is being pushed aggressively by the Service Employees International Union, which represents many public library workers. In a union online video campaign, a claymation "Privatization Beast" wearing a tie tramples through a nameless downtown and gobbles up a library while a narrator warns of the potential impact: "Libraries, though tiny and defenseless, are plentiful. Enzymes in the behemoth's esophagus immediately begin to break down the library, forcing it to charge a fee for services that were formerly free, such as patent research... and books."

Brad King of LSSI says such claims are groundless. "That's the most maddening thing that we deal with," he complains. "We've never charged a fee to the public for a service at all, ever."

—Contact Melissa Maynard at [mmaynard@stateline.org](mailto:mmaynard@stateline.org)



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*Rural Economic Development Forum* . . . continued from page 1

1. A point of contact to respond to questions regarding the proposal.
2. A letter of guarantee of no less than \$1,000 cash and an additional \$4,000 in cash or in-kind services, such as waiving of room & equipment rental or technical assistance from the sponsoring entity.
3. A letter of commitment providing the name of a person from the community who will serve on the Fundraising Committee.
4. A letter of commitment indicating that a local person will chair the Logistics Committee.
5. A complete description of meeting space, including a room that will accommodate no less than 250 attendees, four breakout rooms that will accommodate a minimum of 25 attendees and a description of banquet facilities and service. A floor plan of the proposed host facility should be included if available.
6. Information regarding lodging, including the number of rooms available and the cost.
7. Letters of support from appropriate organizations such as the EDO, City, County, CVB or Chamber, showing their support and how they would participate in the event (volunteering, waiving of fees, cash sponsorship).
8. High speed Internet availability at both the meeting facility and lodging venues.
9. Menu choices and prices for the following meals:
  - a. Breakfast
  - b. Lunch
  - c. Banquet
  - d. Refreshments
10. The number and type of meals to be served will be finalized with the agenda.
11. Local recreation and amenities (golf, galleries, etc.)
12. Letter of commitment to host a reception and booth promoting the 2013 Forum at the 2012 Rural Forum in Las Vegas.

Respondents should consider all of the information provided in the proposal to be a firm commitment should the community be chosen to host the 2013 Forum.

Please submit your proposal to the Site Selection Committee (listed below) no later than September 30, 2011. Only electronic proposals will be accepted.

For additional information or questions on this RFP, please contact the following Site Selection Committee members:  
Elizabeth Davis, [Elizabeth.davis@state.nm.us](mailto:Elizabeth.davis@state.nm.us) ; Jim Covell: [CibolaJ@aol.com](mailto:CibolaJ@aol.com); or Gene Hendrick: [gene@clovisedc.com](mailto:gene@clovisedc.com)

The New Mexico Rural Alliance is a state-wide non-profit organization whose mission is to provide training and education to community leaders in order to improve rural economic vitality. This mission is accomplished through sponsoring and developing educational events such as the Rural Forum.

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