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Franklin County to host Major National Convention of County Commissioners and Officials in 2017

Attracting elected leaders and officials from the more than 3,000 counties across the nation to learn how good government partnerships have led to growth and economic rebound in Central Ohio, the Franklin County Commissioners will host the 2017 Annual Conference of the National Association of Counties (NACo).

Franklin County was named the host city today by NACo, the Washington-based national association that represents county governments.

As many as 3,000 elected and appointed county officials, exhibitors, presenters and guests are expected to participate in the five-day conference in the Summer of 2017 - which is expected to generate more than 9,000 hotel room nights at area hotels and have a total economic impact of nearly \$8 million in Central Ohio, according to Experience Columbus.

"We have a great story to tell here in Franklin County, and we can't wait to showcase our region's successful public-private partnerships, our job-creation investments, and our ever-improving quality of life to county leaders from across the nation and vendors from around the world," said County Commissioner President Paula Brooks, whose work on NACo's International Economic Development Task Force is expected to draw additional international representatives. "Landing major conventions such as NACo - and attracting the dollars they bring - is the reason Franklin County has invested in our local tourism and hotel industry."

"At the national level, NACo serves as a champion on Capitol Hill to bring the needs and practicality of local counties to the forefront of our nation's policy debates. Having this major convention here in Columbus will allow us to show how decisions in Washington have a real and lasting impact in Franklin County," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "Just as important is the positive impact this convention will have on area hotels, restaurants and our tourism industry."

"As a preview, Franklin County will play host next summer to members of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus, which represents the nation's 100 largest urban counties," added Commissioner John O'Grady, who noted that the nation's urban counties represent about 130 million people - nearly one in every two Americans. "This smaller conference next year will showcase Franklin County's success in growing jobs, stretching tight financial resources, and welcoming visitors to the nation's top-ranked baseball park, zoo, library, and science center."

To land this national convention, the Franklin County Commissioners worked closely with Experience Columbus, which highlighted Columbus' expanded hotel and convention space with the new Downtown Columbus Hilton -- which was partially financed by the County.

"National meetings like NACO don't just find their way to Columbus. We are grateful to the Franklin County Commissioners for their leadership in this effort," said Paul Astleford, President and CEO of

Experience Columbus. “This is a prime example of how our public and private sector leaders can play a role in attracting the national meeting market here to Columbus through our new ‘Make it Columbus’ initiative.”

Also helpful in Franklin County’s winning bid were Athens County Commissioner and 2011 NACo President Lenny Eliason and Larry Long, Executive Director of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

Each year, the NACo Annual Conferences provide an opportunity for county officials from across the nation to strategize on policies affecting counties and share ideas and best practices on economic growth, arts and culture, energy policy, health and human services, transportation, and justice issues.

The event also typically draws nationally-recognized presenters, national media attention, and international vendors.

Over the next four years, staff with the Franklin County Commissioners will be working with NACo to plan the details of the 2017 conference, including opportunities for visiting officials to tour some of the region’s major attractions - including those owned or supported by the County such as Huntington Park, Nationwide Arena, the Scioto Mile and downtown Columbus Commons, and the former Cooper Stadium - which is being privately redeveloped into a state of the art automotive center with ties to NASCAR.

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