

February 19, 2019 [View this email in your browser](#)



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

The NARC Policy Conference is a Wrap!

Thank you to everyone who joined us last week for our National Conference of Regions. We had an action-packed four days with a slate of great speakers and informative sessions. We heard from Secretary Ben Carson about his priorities for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the importance of regions to deliver federal programs to local communities. Representative Katie Hill (D-CA) highlighted the importance of federal investment to support housing and community development, specifically pointing to the CDBG and HOME programs. Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY) spoke about his goal to bring together legislators on both sides of the aisle to pass critical energy and environment-related legislation.

We covered a wide range of legislative topics during our conference, including the *Older Americans Act*, workforce investment, Opportunity Zones, broadband expansion, water and wastewater infrastructure, housing, and regional food systems. PowerPoint presentations made during these sessions will soon be made available on our recently-revitalized website.

There is exciting work ahead. The appropriations process for fiscal year 2020 has kicked off, Older Americans Act and Economic Development Administration (EDA) reauthorizations discussions are being held, the "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) public comment period is now open, and much more. Stay tuned to eRegions as these efforts develop for the latest news and opportunities to provide input on these critical issues.

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

The House and Senate are on recess.

Trump Signs Border Deal Avoiding Shutdown, Declares National Emergency

Last Friday, the president signed a **seven-bill spending package** that will provide funding for all the remaining federal agencies for the rest of fiscal year (FY) 2019. The deal provides \$1.375 billion for fencing along the southern border – a compromise reached by House and Senate negotiators to avoid another partial federal shutdown. President Trump also signed a **national emergency declaration** to shift \$7 billion in federal resources to construct a physical barrier on the southern border. California and 15 other states filed a **lawsuit** in the Ninth Circuit on grounds of “flagrant disregard of fundamental separation of powers principles.”

Supreme Court to Decide Whether 2020 Census Will Include Citizenship Question

The Supreme Court has agreed to decide on whether the Trump Administration can add a question which asks, “Is this person a citizen of the United States?” to the 2020 census. The administration is in legal battles with dozens of cities, states, and groups that feel the question could depress participation by noncitizens and lead to an undercount of immigrants and communities of color. The court is set to hear the case in April.

Top FEMA Official Resigns

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Brock Long has resigned from his post. In his official statement, he stated he worked on more than 220 declared disasters during his tenure, and that he is resigning to spend more time with family. Peter Gaynor, who is the current FEMA deputy administrator, will lead the agency until a new administrator is confirmed. President Trump has already nominated Jeffrey Byrd, FEMA's associate administrator for response and recovery, to be the agency's next top official.

WOTUS Rule Comment Period is Now Open

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Army are now accepting public comment on the proposed revised definition of "Waters of the United States." The redefinition would potentially alter the geographic reach of EPA regulation under the *Clean Water Act*. The public comment period will close on April 15, 2019.

Republican Backlash Against Trump EPA Pick Fueled by 'Biofuel Reset'

Some Republican senators have threatened to withhold support for Andrew Wheeler in his confirmation as permanent EPA head over his opinions on biofuels, specifically his view that the EPA's targeted range for annual ethanol consumption is too low. This issue has raised concerns among oil-state senators who have stated that their confirmation decisions will rest upon this issue.

Critics Say EPA Action Plan on Toxic 'Forever Chemicals' Falls Short

Last Thursday, the EPA released its plan to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals, which have been linked to a range of health concerns. The plan includes beginning the process of setting drinking water limits for two PFAS compounds, issuing groundwater contamination guidance, requiring more PFAS testing in public water systems, and undertaking further research. Several environmental groups and state agencies have criticized both the scope and the timeframe of the plan as too limited, considering the serious nature of PFAS risks.

OTHER NEWS

American Broadband Initiative Milestones Report

The **American Broadband Initiative**, a federal interagency working group comprised of more than 25 agencies, has released their first **milestones report**. The report addresses strategies the federal government can implement to increase access to affordable and reliable broadband connectivity as well as methods for growing private-sector investment. It provides recommendations for streamlining and maximizing federal funding in order to lower costs and close America's digital divide.

Frequent Shutdown Threats Prompt State and Local Safeguards

In the wake of the longest government shutdown in US history, state and local officials are creating permanent safeguards to ensure their communities can deliver crucial services without federal dollars. Salt Lake City just approved a measure that would provide federal workers with an interest free loan in the case of another government shutdown, as cities continue to turn to creative measures to ensure that federal workers and programs are protected. The threat of repeated shutdowns places a burden on cities and local communities to enact preventive measures that stabilize federally funded programs.

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Director, Planning

Posted: 2/19/2019

Palm Beach County Planning Division, West Palm Beach, FL

Director, Information Technology

Posted: 2/13/2019

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington, DC

Transportation Planner

Posted: 2/13/2019

Capitol Region Council of Governments, Hartford, CT

Principal II Transportation Planner/Engineer

Posted: 2/13/2019

Capitol Region Council of Governments, Hartford, CT

Tribal and Regional Transportation Planning Manager

Posted: 2/1/2019

Washington State Department of Transportation, Olympia, WA

FUNDING*[View full list of grants!](#)***Reeve Foundation Quality of Life Grants**

Applications Due: March 19

Pioneered by the late Dana Reeve, the Quality of Life Grants Program recognizes projects and initiatives that foster community engagement, inclusion, and involvement, while promoting health and wellness for individuals living with paralysis and their families. The Quality of Life Grants Program funds a wide array of programs that are organized in three key thematic areas: Actively Achieving, Bridging Barriers, or Caring and Coping. The program has a tiered approach (each with their own maximum grant award amount) to better reflect and respond to the priority needs of the community of people living with paralysis and their families.

Rural Business Development Grants

Applications Due: March 29

This program is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than \$1 million in gross revenue. Programmatic activities are separated into enterprise or opportunity type grant activities. Generally, grants range from \$10,000 to \$500,000. There is no cost sharing requirement.

EVENTS*[View full list of events!](#)***Measuring the Digital Divide: Review of Recent Surveys and Data**

February 20, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the U.S. Census Bureau will present information on two large-scale consumer studies focused on computer and Internet use in America. The speakers will highlight the latest data from the surveys about who's online, who's not, how and where people access and use the Internet, what concerns they have, and more. Experts will show you how to access the data yourself, point you to open data resources, and answer questions.

Reinventing the Customer Experience

February 28, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Special districts are often the face of our communities, delivering essential services, including water and power, operating airports and seaports, and managing transit systems and parks. The experience of their customers – or the citizens they serve – is critical to their success. As user expectations around digital services and interactions evolve, special districts must rethink the experiences they provide. Leaders from special districts throughout the country, including the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, are joining Government Technology to discuss how they are reinventing the customer experience to satisfy user demands, attract and retain talent, and continuously deliver value.

Making Solar and Electrification Policies Mutually Beneficial: What Innovative Communities Are Doing Today

March 5, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Many local governments are pursuing policies that support more solar and more transportation and building electrification, but relatively few have figured out how to make the policies mutually beneficial. Some communities have begun to figure out that using low-cost solar power can make electrification more cost effective and using electrified services wisely can make solar installations

more valuable. This National League of Cities webinar provides several case studies that demonstrate what some local governments are doing now to collaborate with their utilities on programs that produce complementary benefits for solar and electrification policies.

CONTACT US

Copyright © 2019 National Association of Regional Councils, All rights reserved.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)