

July 23, 2018 [View this email in your browser](#)



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

House Rushing Toward Recess; Senate Not So Much

With just five days left until the House begins its August recess, there is likely to be a flurry of activity this week in the House as Republican leaders try to pass a series of bills before members of Congress head out of town. The Senate, in contrast, will remain in session for one to three weeks more, as leaders attempt to move President Donald Trump's judicial nominees; while Democrats continue to push the Senate to deal with healthcare and immigration. With the departure of the House, some bills that are very important to regions may not be resolved. These include the Farm Bill and reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program.

President Initiates "Council for the American Worker"

On Thursday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order that creates the Council for the American Worker. The president indicated that he expects the Council to focus on reorganizing federal workforce development programs and generating funding for new job training initiatives, especially for apprenticeships and retraining older workers.

The initiative is timely. For the first time in decades, the nation is experiencing a jobs surplus and business and industry are scrambling to find qualified workers. Though there remain six million unemployed workers, most of them do not have the skills that employers say they need.

The administration, working with business and labor, hopes to generate four million apprenticeships and job training slots over the next five years. The initiative also will bring together representatives from business and industry, unions, and state government to examine the range of federal workforce development programs to determine if those programs can be better aligned to meet the labor demands of the private sector.

From a local perspective, the focus on putting people to work needs to be balanced with concerns that addressing duplication does not result in cutting overall funding for these critical programs. In addition, since workforce development programs operate at the local level, the proposed Council needs to include local elected or appointed officials.

NARC on the Hill

Last Friday, NARC staff joined the National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Association of Clean Water Agencies, and Barnes & Thornburg LLP in a meeting with Representative Grace Napolitano's (D-CA-35) staff members. The meeting focused on the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act discussion draft intended to codify the Environmental Protection Agency's Integrated Planning Framework for meeting clean water standards.

Senate Preparing to Tackle 4-Appropriations Bill Minibus

According to *Politico Pro*, the Senate will launch debate today on a four-bill appropriations package. It will include the House's recently passed **H.R. 6147** that addresses Financial Services-General Government and Interior-Environment (see story below), along with the Senate's **Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD)** and **Agriculture**

appropriations bills. The House has not yet passed its own T-HUD or Agriculture appropriations bills, which will leave the House with two options if this minibus does pass. The House can either vote on the Senate's package (which could fall short of the votes it needs from House Republicans) or pass their own versions of the T-HUD and Agriculture appropriations bills to start the conference committee process.

House Passes Second Minibus Appropriations Package

The House has passed its second minibus package (**H.R. 6147**) mostly along party lines, approving the \$35.3 billion Interior-Environment and the \$23.4 billion Financial Services-General Government appropriations bills. The Environmental Protection Agency would receive \$7.96 billion – a cut of \$100 million from FY 2018 levels. The Department of the Interior, which includes the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, would get about level funding at \$13 billion. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen **said**, “The bill prioritizes funding to fight and preventing devastating wildfires, fully funding the 10-year average for suppression costs... [the bill also] targets critical resources to major infrastructure that will improve the lives of Americans, boosting funding to ensure communities have access to safe drinking water, and accelerates the cleanup of Superfund sites.” The minibus also includes a policy rider to repeal the Obama-era Waters of the United States rule.

Amendment to Increase Funding for Brownfields Redevelopment Grants Passes House

Last week, Representatives Elizabeth Esty (D-CT-5) and David McKinley (R-WV-1) secured a bipartisan amendment to the House-approved **H.R. 6147** to increase funding to brownfields projects by \$7 million. The amendment would help local governments clean up brownfields sites to prepare them for more productive use under the State and Tribal Assistance Grants program. This brings the total for brownfields funding to \$160 million for FY 2019, which is \$90 million less than Congress authorized in March. Although it is unlikely that the House's Interior-Environment appropriations bill will be approved by the Senate as is, NARC is hopeful that support for increased brownfields funding will factor into conference negotiations for the final FY 2019 omnibus appropriations package.

House Passes Bill Enhancing Transparency and Coordination with Local Governments on Unfunded Mandates

The House recently passed the *Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act of 2017* (**H.R. 50**) by a vote of 230 to 168. The bill builds upon the *Unfunded Mandates Reform Act* (**P.L. 104-4**), limiting the obligation of unfunded federal mandates on states and localities. The House bill sets specific standards for federal agency consultation with state and local governments when considering a new rule or regulation; requires agencies to include these consultation activities in annual compliance statements; and allows the chair or ranking member of any congressional committee to request a “lookback” of regulations to evaluate the financial impact of federal regulations. The Senate companion bill (**S. 1523**) is still waiting to be scheduled for committee action.

House Appoints Conference Committee for 2018 Farm Bill

The House has rejected the Senate's version of the Farm Bill, voting to send the bill to conference committee. In conference, leaders from both chambers will come together to hammer out their key differences in the bill. The House conference committee is composed of 47 members of Congress – **29 Republicans** and **18 Democrats** – including 23 members of the Agriculture Committee and 24 representatives from other House committees, including Education and Workforce, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Energy and Commerce. The Senate must now vote to go to conference and select appointees before the process can officially begin, which could happen as early as this week. The House Agriculture Committee Chairman does not expect the next step, scheduling a public meeting between all conferees to happen before the House's August recess begins.

FEMA Administrator Releases a Statement on the NFIP Reauthorization

Considering the upcoming July 31 expiration date for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), FEMA Administrator Brock Long released a statement urging Congress to work quickly to avoid a program lapse. “[If the program expires,] many individuals, families, businesses and local communities will find themselves left vulnerable to the devastating effects of flooding because the NFIP will be unable to issue new policies, renew existing policies, or increase coverage on existing

policies. There would also be serious long-term consequences regarding floodplain management and mitigation activities and grant awards, and if needed, the NFIP would be unable to borrow from the U.S. Treasury to pay claims for existing policies.” A NFIP reauthorization through January 2019 is currently attached to the Senate version of the Farm Bill, but it is possible that Congress may attach a short-term reauthorization on another bill package before the end of July.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

DVRPC Awards \$1.8 million for 23 Revitalization Projects in PA and NJ

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has awarded \$1.8 million to 23 projects across the Greater Philadelphia region through the Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) program. Financed by federal transportation funds, local governments will utilize these grants to create plans that link transportation improvements with land use and economic development strategies; enhance or improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system; and implement the goals of DVRPC’s long-range plan *Connections 2045*. DVRPC Executive Director Barry Seymour said of the program, “TCDI provides a mechanism for municipalities to take local actions to improve their communities, which in turn helps build our vision for an economically-strong and sustainable Greater Philadelphia region.”

REGIONS LEAD

Visit www.regionslead.org to read up on the latest NARC blogs. We invite members to submit blogs to the site too. Please send contributions to cameron@narc.org.

State Perspectives on Regulating Background Ozone

By Sharath Rereddy

On June 21, the Environment Subcommittee of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a hearing on State Perspectives on Regulating Background Ozone. Among those called to testify was Diane Rath, executive director of the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) in San Antonio, Texas. She provided background on the great progress the San Antonio-New Braunfels Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has made over the years in reducing ozone and explained some of the complicated factors used to calculate the region’s ozone levels.

2018 NARC Achievement Award Winners

By NARC

NARC Awards winners exemplify many qualities that a 21st-century regional council needs to be successful, including innovation, adaptability, collaboration, and hard work. Read our blog to learn more about the winning plans and programs.

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Senior Quality Assurance Analyst

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Parks and Recreation Director

City of Kinston, Kinston, NC

Clean Energy Coordinator/Planner

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston, MA

Transportation Planning Specialist

Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, Richland, WA

FUNDING

View full list of grants!

FTA Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program

Applications Due: August 6

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has announced the opportunity to apply for approximately \$366.3 million in fiscal year 2018

competitive grant funding for transit bus projects nationwide. The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program is authorized by Congress to improve the condition of bus infrastructure nationwide by funding the replacement and rehabilitation of buses and related facilities. Projects eligible for this funding opportunity include those that replace, rehabilitate, lease, or purchase buses and related equipment as well as projects to purchase, rehabilitate, construct, or lease bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance.

USDA's Rural Housing Preservation Grants

Applications Due: August 9

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Service (RHS) is soliciting applications under its Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) program. The HPG program provides qualified public agencies and nonprofit organizations grant funds to assist very low- and low-income homeowners in repairing and rehabilitating their homes in rural areas. In addition, the HPG program assists rental property owners and cooperative housing complexes in repairing and rehabilitating their units if they agree to make such units available to low- and very low-income persons.

Fiscal Year 2018 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program

Applications Due: September 17

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) **has announced** more than \$318 million in grant funding for its CRISI program. This grant program funds projects that improve intercity passenger and freight rail transportation safety, efficiency, and reliability. It also helps finance much needed critical investment to rural America, directing at least 25 percent of available funds towards rural communities. Selection preference will be given to projects with a 50 percent non-federal funding match from any combination of private, state, or local funds. The USDOT will also consider how well the project aligns with its key objectives, including supporting economic vitality; leveraging federal funding; preparing for life-cycle costs; using innovative approaches to improve safety and expedite project delivery; and holding grant recipients accountable for achieving specific, measurable outcomes.

HUD's Continuum of Care Program

Applications Due: September 18

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is making \$2.1 billion available in fiscal year 2018 for the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. The program is designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. It provides funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, states, and local governments to quickly re-house homeless individuals, families, persons fleeing domestic violence, and youth while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused by homelessness. It also strives to promote access and utilization of mainstream programs by the homeless, and to optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness.

RESTORE Act Direct Component - Construction and Real Property Acquisition Activities

Applications Due: September 28

Under the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act)*, the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund) was established in the Treasury of the United States. Eighty percent of the civil penalties paid after July 6, 2012, under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act in connection with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will be deposited into the Trust Fund, invested, and dispersed. This notice is only for applications for eligible construction and real property acquisition activities, including projects with or without a non-federal share for another federally-funded project. Trust Fund amounts are available to carry out the following eligible activities described in the *RESTORE Act* (activities 1-7 must be carried out in the Gulf Coast region):

1. Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
2. Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources.
3. Implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring.

4. Workforce development and job creation.
5. Improvements to or on state parks located in coastal areas affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.
6. Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure.
7. Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure.
8. Planning assistance.
9. Administrative costs.
10. Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region, including recreational fishing.
11. Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast region.

Strategic Economic and Community Development

Applications Due: September 30

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Rural Development Strategic Economic and Community Development (SECD) is a Farm Bill provision that allows USDA to give priority for projects that support the implementation of regional economic development plans through the following four USDA Rural Development programs: Community Facilities Loans, Grants, and Loan Guarantees; Water and Waste Disposal Program Loans, Grants, and Loan Guarantees; Business & Industry Program Loan Guarantees; and Rural Business Development Grants. To be eligible for SECD, a project must: be eligible for the underlying program; be carried out solely in a rural area; and support a multi-jurisdictional strategic economic community development plan. To apply for SECD priority points, applicants must submit **Form RD 1980-88** by the application deadline of the program(s) you are applying for or September 30, 2018, whichever comes first.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Leveraging Nutrition Programs in Disasters Webinar

July 24, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

This Food Research and Action webinar is designed to inform advocates, organizations, and state agencies about how to leverage nutrition programs before, during, and after a natural disaster. Participants will hear from experts about best practices and lessons learned from the 2017 hurricanes and the California wildfires. Attendees will also learn about the most efficient ways to utilize effective communication strategies as well as the roll out of the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) and benefit replacement techniques to support low-income communities in the wake of disasters.

Open Source: Paving the Way for a Changing Workforce

July 24, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

A skills gap exists even among younger-generation IT workers. Agencies are scrambling to find personnel with expertise in cloud service management, cybersecurity, systems architecture, and legacy technologies. At the same time, many workers are preparing to retire and will leave behind a wealth of knowledge, while younger IT professionals struggle to gain the knowledge they need to take their agencies into the future. The good news is, open source technology offers an opportunity to meet today's workforce challenges while laying a foundation for ongoing modernization and innovation. Join *Government Technology* as they examine how open source is helping state and local agencies bridge knowledge and skills gaps and act as a recruiting magnet for the best and brightest workers.

Exploring USDA's Funding Programs for Economic Development and Infrastructure Projects

July 26, 12:00-1:30 PM ET

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Rural Development has a multitude of grants, loans, and loan guarantee programs for economic development and infrastructure in rural communities. During this FUNDIT webinar, USDA Office of Rural Development staff will discuss how you can finance your rural projects utilizing these programs.

A Small to Mid-Size Take on Smart Cities

July 26, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

How can smart city technology impact safety and quality of life for small to mid-size

communities? Hear from city leaders from Cary, NC and Opelika, AL discuss how they use Cisco's Kinetic for Cities platform to improve mobility for residents, deter crime, and cut energy and maintenance expenses. This *Government Technology* and Center for Digital Government webinar will offer a real-world look at how small to mid-size smart city projects work and what they can do for your citizens and community.

How to Select a Router for First Responder Applications

July 26, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Agencies across the U.S. are preparing for the nation's first cellular broadband network dedicated to public safety. With this new technology, first responder vehicles, traffic control, and transit systems can now utilize purpose-built onboard cellular mobile access routers as network gateways that securely bridge local subnets to agency systems. Agencies looking to purchase these routers will need to understand how to evaluate them for reliability, ruggedness, and security, along with ensuring forward compatibility as new public safety applications emerge. Is your organization ready to take advantage of mission-critical cellular networking capabilities? Join this Telit to learn what factors you need to consider when selecting a router for your first responder applications.

Opportunity Zones: Understanding the Potential of the New Community Development Tax Incentive

July 26, 3:00-4:00 PM ET

Join this free Connecting Communities® webinar to learn about the new Opportunity Zones tax incentive, which aims to drive long-term equity capital to distressed communities by providing tax benefits on investments in Opportunity Funds. Speakers will provide details on how the tax incentive is expected to work and highlight emerging national and local strategies to engage residents around how these funds are deployed in their communities. Participation is free, but preregistration is required.

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