



2015 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

FEBRUARY 8-10, 2015
WASHINGTON, DC

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Dear NARC Members,

DC is bustling and Congress is back in full swing. For regions, the next big item on the Congressional agenda is determining how to fund the U.S. Department of Homeland Security by February 27, when current spending expires.

Remember to reserve your room for the 2015 National Conference of Regions (NCR) by Friday, January 16 to get NARC's discounted room rate. NCR is your opportunity to engage with NARC to determine which issues we should focus on during the 114th Congress.

Lastly, NARC has new internship opportunities available. Do you know any students in the Washington region who are looking to build their resume? They can apply through our website [HERE!](#)

Thanks,
Joanna Turner

PROGRAM UPDATE

Obama's America's College Promise Proposal Aims to Make Community College Free: President Obama announced *America's College Promise*, a proposed program that aims to provide 75 percent of tuition for students who attend community college at least half-time and maintain a 2.5 grade point average. Under the plan, states would provide the remaining 25 percent of tuition cost. The White House estimates that as many as 9 million students would be eligible for the program, with an average savings of \$3,800 per student. More details on the program will be announced by the President during The State of the Union address, scheduled for January 20, and in the President's Budget, which will be released February 2.

EPA Announces Simultaneous Release for all Final Rules Governing Power Plants: Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would release final rules on its *Clean Power Plan for Existing Power Plants* along with its final rule on *Carbon Pollution Standards for New, Modified, and Reconstructed Power Plants* simultaneously in mid-summer 2015, later than the previously established deadline of June 1. EPA also plans to begin a new rulemaking process to meet Clean Power Plan goals for public review and comment at that time. Click [HERE](#) for a complete timeline of dates related to EPA's greenhouse gas rules.

NACO's Economic Tracker for Counties: Today, the National Association of Counties (NACo) released the [County Economic Tracker 2014: Progress through Adversity](#), a study assessing recovery patterns across the nation's 3,069 county economies by analyzing annual changes in four indicators — economic output (GDP), employment, unemployment, and home prices. It also explores 2012-2013 wage dynamics, adjusted for local cost of living and inflation. Click [HERE](#) for the analysis, accompanying interactive map, and individualized economic performance profiles for each of the 3,069 county economies.

POLICY UPDATE

Senate Passes TRIA: Last week, the U.S. Senate passed the *Terrorism Risk Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2015* (TRIA, [HR 26](#)), in a 93-4 vote. Last week, the House passed HR 26, under suspension of the rules, by a vote of 416-5. The compromise legislation would extend TRIA through 2020 and gradually increases the damage threshold for federal assistance from the current \$100 million to \$200 million by 2020. In addition, the legislation also provides insurance protection for nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological attacks, in addition to other types of terrorist attacks. The President is expected to sign the legislation.

Senate Energy Committee Advances Keystone XL Legislation: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved legislation that would approve the Keystone XL pipeline project ([S. 1](#)), in a 19-3 vote last week. If the Senate votes to move forward with floor consideration, an open amendment process would govern the bill's consideration, which could delay a final vote. Through a [statement of administration policy](#), the White House indicated that President Obama would veto the Keystone legislation. Currently, it does not appear that there are enough votes to override a veto. The U.S. House of Representatives approved its version of the Keystone bill ([HR 3](#)) in a 266 – 153 vote on Friday. HR 3 would bypass the U.S. State Department review process and immediately approve the project.

DHS Appropriations Bill Filed: On Friday, House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) filed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act*. The draft legislation provides \$39.7 billion in discretionary funds for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its component agencies, which have been operating under a continuing resolution that expires at the end of February 2015. The bill includes \$1.5 billion for state and local grant programs, which is equal to the FY 2014 enacted level. The bill is scheduled for floor consideration this week. The House will aim to stop the President's [executive actions on immigration](#) through the amendment process on the floor. Click [HERE](#) for the bill text, and [HERE](#) for an explanatory statement.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants still open!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of events still open!

WEBINAR: Climate/Weather Risk Tools – Learning from the Gulf Coast

January 22, 2:00–3:30 PM

Over the past five years, the U.S. Department of Transportation has been conducting a groundbreaking climate change vulnerability assessment pilot in Mobile, Alabama. Commonly known as Phase 2 of the Gulf Coast Study, this project's mission was to develop methods, resources, and tools that will assist transportation agencies with conducting climate change vulnerability assessments and evaluating facility-level adaptation options. NARC staff got a sneak preview of this new assessment tool, and it is definitely worth checking out. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: Proposed Rule on Bridge and Pavement Condition

January 22, 2:00-4:00 PM

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will hold a free webinar to provide information on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding bridge and pavement condition. For more information on this NPRM, please see the related article. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: EDC-3's Regional Models of Cooperation

January 27, 1:00–2:30 PM

Issues like air pollution and traffic congestion do not stop at State Department of Transportation (State DOT) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries, but planning often does. Planning in jurisdictional silos can interfere with essential coordination of regional transportation planning solutions, which can lead to project delays, process inconsistencies, and reduced system reliability. An enhanced process for effective communication used by State DOTs, MPOs, and transit authorities can result in improved collaboration. Using regional models of cooperation requires thinking beyond traditional borders and brings together many entities to support common goals on transportation planning topics such as congestion management, safety, freight, livability and commerce. The presentation and discussion will be followed by a question and answer session through the chat pod and over the phone. Click [HERE](#) to register.

NARC CONFERENCE: NARC's 2015 National Conference of Regions

February 8-10, 2015 – Washington, DC

Registration is open for the National Conference of Regions. This conference is a forum for locally-elected officials and their Regional Councils to explore federal policy issues, and discuss NARC's legislative priorities for the 114th Congress. Click [HERE](#) for the conference webpage.