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2016 NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

FEBRUARY 7-9\*  
WASHINGTON, DC

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*The Senate returns after the long holiday weekend. The House is not in session this week.*

### **CBO Releases Budget Predictions**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects the deficit will rise to \$544 billion this year, which is \$105 billion more than last year. The increase will raise a share of gross domestic product for the first time since the financial crisis hit in 2009. CBO also predicts that economic growth will increase over the next two years by 2.7 percent in 2016 and 2.5 percent in 2017, up from 2 percent growth in 2015.

### **House Votes to Overturn WOTUS Rule**

The House voted last week to overturn the recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Waters of the United States* (WOTUS) rule that expands federal regulatory authority over small waterways under the *Clean Water Act*. The Senate earlier passed the same resolution of disapproval, which now goes to the President's desk. He will veto it.

### **Internet Sales Taxes**

Frustrated with the lack of Congressional action on internet sales taxes, a top priority issue for state and local government groups, the National Conference of State Legislatures will move ahead with their own plan to force the issue. The initial ban against "remote sellers" originated in 1998 from the early days of the internet when online sales were rare. Now, the competition against brick and mortar stores and the loss of sales taxes to state and local governments is estimated at \$23 billion in uncollected taxes from internet sales. States will begin to institute their individual bans, hoping to bring it to the Supreme Court for a final decision. The Senate may include language for

an internet tax ban in an unrelated bill this week, although it appears there may be sufficient votes to remove the provision during debate.

### **President Obama Appoints Vilsack to Address Rural Drug Use**

The White House announced Friday that President Obama is appointing Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to lead a new interagency effort focused on addressing rural America's struggle with heroin and opioid abuse. The decision to centralize federal decision-making on drug abuse in rural areas comes as addiction to heroin and other opiates has become a crisis in many communities. The White House hopes Vilsack will use information about rural problems to develop policy solutions to combat heroin use, high suicide rates, declining physical and mental health, and heightened financial stress.

### **EPA Survey Shows \$271 Billion Needed for Nation's Wastewater Infrastructure**

EPA today released a **survey** showing that \$271 billion is needed to maintain and improve the nation's wastewater infrastructure. Highlighted infrastructure needs include secondary wastewater treatment, advanced wastewater treatment, conveyance system repair, new conveyance systems, combined sewer overflow correction, stormwater management programs, and recycled water distribution. The survey is a collaboration between EPA, states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **NACo Report: *County Economies 2015: Opportunities and Challenges***

The National Association of Counties (NACo) last week released the report: *County Economies 2015: Opportunities and Challenges*, which tracks annual changes in 2015 in four key economic performance indicators across the nation's 3,069 county economies. The performance indicators are: economic output (GDP), employment, unemployment rates, and home prices. The new analysis also explores wage dynamics between 2009 and 2014. A new in-depth analysis reveals that economic recovery accelerated over the past year, but challenges remain. 2015 was a year of strong growth; however, most county economies have not recovered to pre-recession levels on jobs and unemployment. Additionally, between 2009 and 2014, wage growth has not kept pace with productivity gains.

### **Cities Work to Combat Food Deserts**

In their new report, *Fixing Food*, the Union of Concerned Scientists highlighted five cities working to combat food deserts in local communities. Oakland, Memphis, Louisville, Baltimore, and Minneapolis are experimenting with new programs aimed at low-income communities in an effort to decrease food insecurity and increase healthy options. The programs focus on a variety of issues including local food production, healthy food distribution, and increasing consumer access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

## **MEMBER REQUESTS**

Email responses to [anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org).

### **MVRPC: Individualized Member Reports**

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) in Dayton, Ohio is thinking about providing a custom annual summary to their government members to help demonstrate the value of membership in MVRPC. MVRPC currently releases a global annual report, but they are looking for a more localized example directed to each member. Does your organization provide a summary annual report of services and funding to members? If so, please share it with us as a best practice.

### **PAG: Dispose-A-Med Program**

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) in Tucson, Arizona is working with local stakeholders to coordinate a region-wide Dispose-A-Med program. Has your COG/MPO successfully coordinated a similar effort? If so, please share information, web links, plans, documents, or best practices your organization employed to promote, implement, and quantify your efforts for the program. Additionally, PAG is interested in how your organization addressed poison control, water quality,

and partnerships with stakeholders.

## **FEATURED JOBS**

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

### **Alamo Service Connection Care Specialist**

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

### **Regional Environmental Planner**

Central Texas Council of Governments, Belton, TX

### **Director of Senior and Disability Services**

Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Central Point, OR

## **FUNDING**

*[View full list of grants!](#)*

### **ITA Announces Funding Opportunity under Market Development Cooperator Program**

*Conference Call: February 3, 2:30 - 4:00 PM ET;*

*Dial 203-280-9578, passcode 6504789*

The U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA) strengthens the competitiveness of the U.S. industry, promotes trade and investment, and ensures fair trade through the enforcement of trade laws and agreements. ITA announced the opening of a new Market Development Cooperator Program (MDCP) funding round. Approximately \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for FY 2016. The total number of awards made will depend on the amounts requested by top-scoring applicants and the availability of funds. No award will exceed \$300,000. ITA anticipates concluding six to ten cooperative agreements. ITA will hold a conference call to discuss MDCP proposal preparation, procedures, and selection process. ITA will not discuss specific proposals during this conference call. Participation is not required in order to apply or seek an eligibility determination. Call details listed above.

### **Innovations in American Government Awards and Grants**

*Applications Due: April 15*

Offered by Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, the Innovations Award is the nation's premier award for the public sector. It recognizes programs that demonstrate creative and effective government at its best. All units of government — federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial — from all policy areas are eligible to apply for recognition. The winners of the Innovations in American Government Award and the Roy and Lila Ash Award will each receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication and dissemination activities in 2017. Top finalists will also receive monetary grants.

### **\$19.5 Million Available in Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals**

*Applications Due: March 15*

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) are accepting applications for fiscal year 2016 Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) grants. The purpose of this jointly funded program is to enhance and/or expand the infrastructure and mental health and substance use treatment services of the United States. CABHI grants will increase capacity to provide critical services for:

- Individuals who experience chronic homelessness and have substance use disorders (SUDs), serious mental illness (SMI), serious emotional disturbance (SED), or co-occurring mental and substance use disorders (CODs); and/or
- Veterans who experience homelessness or chronic homelessness and have SUD, SMI, or COD; and/or

- Families who experience homelessness with one or more family members that have SUD, SMI, or COD; and/or
- Youth who experience homelessness and have SUD, SMI, SED, or COD.

## EVENTS

***View full list of events!***

### **REGISTER TODAY! 2016 National Conference of Regions**

February 7-9, 2016\* – Washington, DC

The National Conference of Regions is NARC's forum to determine key policy issues and a legislative agenda for the year ahead, targeting topics central to our members' missions and their local elected officials' focus. *\*Note: Capitol Hill Day is February 10. Please make room in your travel plans to meet with your representatives.*

## CONTACT US

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