



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Dear NARC Members,

President Obama will deliver his penultimate State of the Union address at 9:00 PM tonight. Since the White House unveiled many of the President's new proposals over the course of the last couple of weeks, much of what will be revealed tonight will not be a surprise. Expected announcements include legislation to overhaul the tax code, along with plans to expand broadband Internet access, offer free community college tuition, and provide guaranteed paid sick and family leave, all under the theme of "middle-class economics." We also expect the President to continue the discussion on the *Build America Investment Initiative*, which might lead to comments on infrastructure in general and transportation specifically (that's our hope, anyway). NARC will provide a summary of the State of the Union address tomorrow through our website.

Today, NARC is releasing our summary of the Office of Management Budget's [Super Circular](#), a rule that streamlines eight Federal regulations (including OMB Circulars A-110, A-122, and A-133) into a single, comprehensive policy guide. You can find that memorandum [HERE](#). My compliments to Mia Colson, NARC's Grants Manager, for her work on this. I hope that you find it as helpful as I did!

Thanks,
Joanna Turner

PROGRAM UPDATE

Increasing Investment in U.S. Roads, Ports, and Drinking Water Systems Through Innovative Financing:

Building a 21st-century infrastructure is a critical component of the Administration's efforts to accelerate economic growth, expand opportunity, create jobs, and improve the competitiveness of the American economy. As part of this effort, President Obama launched the [Build America Investment Initiative](#) in July 2014. Last week, the Administration announced new steps that federal agencies are taking to bring private sector capital and expertise—to improve roads, bridges, and broadband networks. First, the Administration launched a new Water Finance Center at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and highlighted the progress of the *Rural Opportunity Investment Initiative* at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Administration also announced a new set of infrastructure tax proposals that will level the playing field for projects that combine public and private investment so that local and state governments can more easily work with the private sector to advance the public interest. Click [HERE](#) for the fact sheet.

EPA Launches Finance Center to Improve Community Water Infrastructure and Resiliency: On Friday, EPA launched the Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center to help communities improve their wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater systems, particularly through innovative financing and by building resilience to climate change. The Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center will:

- Explore innovative financial tools, public-private partnerships, and non-traditional finance concepts to better leverage federal funding programs. The Center will build on the State Revolving Loan Fund and other programs of EPA and its federal partners.
- Explore ways to increase financing of climate-resilient water infrastructure projects that integrate water efficiency, energy efficiency, water reuse, and green infrastructure.
- Support communities to develop sustainable sources of funding, particularly for stormwater activities.
- Build upon existing work to support small community water systems to build technical, managerial and financial capacities through collaboration with USDA.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

EPA Report: *Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters*: EPA's Office of Research and Development released its final report, *Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters*. The report summarizes current scientific understanding about the connectivity of streams and wetlands to downstream waters. EPA conducted a review of more than 1,200 peer-reviewed and published documents on scientific evidence regarding the effects that streams, non-tidal wetlands, and open-waters have on larger downstream waters such as rivers, lakes, estuaries, and oceans. The report concludes that streams, wetlands, and other open-waters influence the integrity of downstream waters through both structural and functional connections. This report is meant to inform policy and regulatory decisions, including the Clean Water Rule (*Waters of the U.S.*) being developed jointly by EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Click [HERE](#) for the report.

GAO Publishes Report on Surface Transportation Performance Measures in MAP-21: On Friday, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) published the results of a review on the implementation of the MAP-21 surface transportation performance measures. Click [HERE](#) for the final report, entitled *Surface Transportation: DOT Is Progressing toward a Performance-Based Approach, but States and Grantees Report Potential Implementation Challenges*.

POLICYUPDATE

Congress is in session.

Senate Finance Committee Announces Tax Reform Working Groups: Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) announced the creation of five bipartisan working groups to help develop a comprehensive tax reform plan for the 114th Congress. The working groups will develop recommendations on: the individual income tax; business income tax; savings and investment; international tax; and community development and infrastructure. Each group will be co-chaired by one Republican and one Democrat. The goal is to combine all five working group recommendations into one final comprehensive tax reform report completed by the end of May. The report recommendations will serve as the foundation for the development of bipartisan legislation this year. Click [HERE](#) for the press release.

State Treasurers Association Leaders Letter on Muni Bond Tax Status: Tennessee State Treasurer David Lillard and Washington State Treasurer James McIntire, President and Vice President respectively of the National Association of State Treasurers, sent a letter to Senate Finance and House Ways and Means leadership "urging Congressional Finance leaders to maintain the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds." See a copy of the letter [HERE](#). NOTE: The status of muni bonds will be covered during NARC's National Conference of Regions this February.

Net Neutrality Legislation Unveiled in Both Chambers: Last Friday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee released legislation to reinstate the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) 2010 net neutrality rules, and include wireless networks in those rules. The legislation also prohibits the FCC from reclassifying broadband as a utility, or to use its authority to regulate broadband. The legislation comes before the FCC acts next month on the reclassification of broadband as a Title II service, which President Obama requested last year. Both committees will hold hearings on the legislation this week. Click [HERE](#) for the press release, and [HERE](#) for the legislation.

Congress Extends Terrorism Risk Insurance Program: The new Congress passed a six-year extension of the *Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2015* (TRIA) with broad, bipartisan support. Terrorism risk insurance enables local governments to continue to provide critical services to residents in the event of an attack by protecting against loss or liability that could affect a municipality's personnel, property, and finances. TRIA's public-private risk sharing mechanism ensures that risk insurance coverage remains available and affordable to local governments. Click [HERE](#) for the bill text and other information.

REGIONS360

ETCOG Wins National Excellence in Transportation Award: The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) won the National Excellence in Transportation Award for the marketing and communications videos they produced for EasTexConnects. The primary purpose of EasTexConnects is to increase transportation choices as a way to improve quality of life in East Texas, and the videos showcase public transportation options available to all citizens throughout the East Texas Region. You can view the winning videos [HERE](#).

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

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

2015 Serving Those Who Serve Others Grant

Submission deadline: February 25

For more than a decade, iCoHere has been helping nonprofit organizations and government agencies advance their missions through multi-day virtual conferences. 2014 grant recipients were able to produce successful, educational programs and significantly broadened their market reach. This year's grant will provide two nonprofit service organizations with pro-bono virtual conferences. In a collaborative process with iCoHere, selected organizations will develop content, generate publicity, and market these multi-day events. iCoHere will provide the design and technology. Click [HERE](#) to apply.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

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

White House's Big Block of Cheese Day on Social Media

January 21, All Day

The White House is hosting a virtual open house. In 1837, President Andrew Jackson hosted an open house for thousands of citizens and administration staff, featuring a 1,400-pound block of cheese. Join administration officials after the State of the Union for an online, all-day open house. Log on to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr, and ask questions using the hashtag #AskTheWH. More details [HERE](#).

How to Host a Health Care Outreach and Enrollment Event

January 22, 1 PM ET

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Partnership Center and the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) have updated webinars on the health care law for faith and community organizations. The webinar will share tips for hosting successful enrollment events, show you key websites, and answer your questions. Please send any questions to ACA101@hhs.gov before 10 am on January 22. To Join By Phone Only: Dial: +1 (702) 489-0001, Access Code: 479-552-017. For those joining by phone only, the Pin Number is the # key. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Funding Your Healthy Food Project with USDA Resources

January 22, 2:00 PM ET

This webinar will introduce several USDA programs and provide examples of how USDA funding is being tapped to improve access to healthy foods and support local food system development in low-income urban communities, including how small and mid-size farmers can produce and market food in an economically sustainable manner. To follow this conversation on Twitter, follow [@AccessFood](#). Click [HERE](#) to register.

Tools for Social Change: The National Equity Atlas

January 28, 1:00 PM ET

Rising diversity is a tremendous asset—if all can access the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Prioritizing grantmaking on strategies that promote equity, or fair and just inclusion, is necessary to build an equitable economy. *The National Equity Atlas*, developed by PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California, is a first-of-its-kind data and policy tool for those working to build an economy that is equitable, resilient, and prosperous-in regions, states, and nationwide. This webinar will describe the equity framework, take you on a tour of the Atlas, and share examples of how foundations can employ equity data and policy strategies to foster inclusive growth. Learn how to share this tool with your grantees to strengthen their work and advance your own equity agenda. Click [HERE](#) to register.

NARC CONFERENCE: NARC's 2015 National Conference of Regions

February 8-10, 2015 – Washington, DC

Join your colleagues and register for the National Conference of Regions today! 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.