



## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### Overview

Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Friday. Wasting no time, the new administration issued an executive order on Obamacare and a memo to halt regulations, while Senators confirmed Trump's secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security. Today, congressional leaders head to the White House for the first leadership-level meeting with President Trump.

The Senate is expected to vote to confirm Representative Mike Pompeo (R-KS) to lead the Central Intelligence Agency and Secretary of State Nominee Rex W. Tillerson this week. Trump's choice for White House budget director, Representative Mick Mulvaney (R-SC), faces two hearings on Tuesday – a morning hearing by the Senate Budget Committee and an afternoon examination by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Democrats are sure to question his conservative fiscal philosophy and his acknowledged failure to pay federal payroll taxes on a former nanny. The Senate Commerce Committee will vote Tuesday on Transportation Secretary-designate Elaine Chao's nomination. With the committee's approval, the full Senate will consider Chao for confirmation. The committee will also vote Tuesday on Wilbur Ross' nomination to lead the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In a written follow-up to his confirmation hearings last week, Treasury Secretary-designate Steven T. Mnuchin told the Senate Finance Committee that he would work with Congress to determine the role of tax exempt financing vehicles (such as tax exempt municipal bonds) under the President's proposed infrastructure plan and as part of broader tax reform. Mnuchin also wrote that private activity bonds are a valuable way to incentivize private investment in America's infrastructure and will look for improvements including changing volume caps for certain types of projects. He also

promised to consider options for increasing infrastructure investments and ensuring the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

In actions today, President Trump issued an executive order to freeze federal hiring with an exemption for the military. The President also formally withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the 12-nation trade agreement originally negotiated by Barack Obama and a chief talking point of the presidential campaign.

The House will take up a bill on federal resources and abortions, the *No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017 (H.R. 7)*.

### **President's Team Eyes Major Spending Cuts**

As congressional Republicans head off for a retreat on fiscal priorities for the coming year, the President's team is reviewing the recommendations from two conservative groups that recommend broad spending cuts and the elimination of programs long targeted by Republicans. In previous statements, Trump has promised to boost defense spending, launch a \$1 trillion infrastructure program, improve care for veterans, protect Social Security and Medicare, slash taxes for all income groups, and curb federal red ink. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) **warned in a report last week** that the country is on an "unsustainable fiscal path." Soaring costs for entitlement programs, the aging population, and rising health care costs, combined with increased interest payments will push the federal debt to record levels, the GAO said.

Trump is expected to submit an outline of his fiscal 2018 budget request to Congress in late February, with a completed budget by May. The Heritage Foundation is proposing a repeal of the 2010 health care law, overhaul of Medicare with a cap on federal spending, increases in the retirement age of Social Security, and moving domestic spending to the U.S. Department of Defense. The cuts would eliminate the National Endowment of the Arts and Land and Water Conservation funds and programs at the Environmental Protection Agency. A second proposal from the Republican Study Committee on Capitol Hill would overhaul the tax system and cut more than 200 federal programs. While the House would not need Democratic votes to adopt a streamlined budget as laid out in these proposals, the Senate must garner agreement from a minimum of 60 Senators to bring spending proposals to the floor. Some previous efforts to gut key domestic programs have met moderate Republican opposition in previous sessions of Congress.

### **HUD Seeks Comments: Implementation of Various Section 8 Voucher Provisions**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published an implementation notice for several of the provisions of the *Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act*, which passed Congress and was signed into law by President Obama in July 2016. The provisions specifically impact the Housing Choice Voucher and Project-Based Voucher programs. **HUD seeks additional public input** on the proposed implementation requirements and future changes to these programs. Comments are due March 20.

### **SNAP Pilot Program**

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a **pilot program that will give participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) a way to purchase their groceries online**. The two-year trial provides low-income families in seven states with a system to have SNAP-eligible items delivered to their homes through retailers like FreshDirect, Amazon, Safeway, and ShopRite and to pay for them using federal benefits. While a number of factors could prove challenging, such as consumer habits, associated costs, and internet access, this program (if expanded nationally) could provide the more than 43 million Americans who receive SNAP assistance greater access to healthier food (*The Atlantic CityLab*, January 17). Learn more about strategies for improving access to healthy foods in Enterprise's 2014 report, *Food at Home: Affordable Housing as a Platform to Overcome Nutritional Challenges*.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Fleets for the Future Website and Best Practices**

The Fleets for the Future (F4F) project, led by NARC and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities Program, has recently released four extensive **best practices** documents on alternative fuel vehicle (AFV) procurement. The guides, which are available on the new **Fleets for**

**the Future website**, cover gaseous fuel and electric vehicle procurement, fleet transition planning for AFVs, and financing strategies for AFV procurement.

F4F seeks to achieve nationwide economies of scale for AFVs through aggregated procurement initiatives. Following the kickoff of the five regional procurements led by the regional council team members, a national procurement initiative will be spearheaded by the Mid-America Regional Council with support from NARC and several Clean Cities from around the country. The F4F national procurement will include a public and private fleet component with a national bid process and promotion of national AFV contracts. Visit the new website to learn more the program and download the best practices guides.

## **REGION SPOTLIGHT**

### **Smart Belt Coalition**

Last week Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan announced that they have formed the Smart Belt Coalition to work together on self-driving and connected vehicles. The coalition will work on a strategic plan focusing on applying these technologies in work zones and testing them with commercial freight. The states hope to implement the plan, which may lead to developing similar regulations in the future. Members of the coalition include the transportation departments and transportation research entities in each state and their universities.

## **FEATURED JOBS**

***View full list of jobs!***

### **Economic Development Specialist**

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

### **Quality Assurance Reviewer**

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

### **Transportation Planner**

Wasatch Front Regional Council, Salt Lake City, UT

## **FUNDING**

***View full list of grants!***

### **FY 2017 NOAA Coastal Resilience Grants Program**

Proposals Due: March 15

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Resilience Grants Program is intended to build resilience by reducing the risk to coastal communities, economies, and ecosystems from extreme weather events and climate-related hazards. Projects that build resilience include activities that protect life and property, safeguard people and infrastructure, strengthen the economy, and/or conserve and restore coastal and marine resources.

NOAA has identified \$15,000,000 to support projects in a new funding round, and anticipates that typical awards will range from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000. The NOAA Coastal Resilience Grants Program will support two categories of activities:

- **Strengthening Coastal Communities:** activities that improve capacity of multiple coastal jurisdictions (states, counties, municipalities, territories and tribes) to prepare and plan for, absorb impacts of, recover from, and/or adapt to extreme weather events and climate-related hazards; or
- **Habitat Restoration:** activities that restore habitat to strengthen the resilience of coastal ecosystems and decrease the vulnerability of coastal communities to extreme weather events and climate-related hazards.

Proposals focused on improving capacity of multiple coastal jurisdictions should identify and describe how the project will address: the vulnerability, issue(s) or problem limiting the resilience of coastal jurisdictions to be addressed; the proposed project's expected outcomes and the actions to be undertaken; and how the proposed actions will enhance resilience within the jurisdictions

expected to benefit from the project.

## **New Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects Grants for Health and Function**

Closing Date: March 20

Two new grant opportunities from the **National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research** (NIDILRR) at ACL have been announced under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program for the health and function domain. The purpose of the DRRP program is to plan and conduct research, demonstration projects, training, and related activities to develop methods, procedures, and rehabilitation technology that maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities. These DRRP grants are for advancing health and function of people with disabilities:

- **DRRP Health and Function: Research**

Applicants must propose a research project that is aimed at improving health and function outcomes of individuals with disabilities. A grantee must identify hypotheses or research questions and perform an intensive, systematic study toward producing new or full scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject or problem studied.

- **DRRP Health and Function: Development**

Applicants must propose a development project that is aimed at improving the health and function of individuals with disabilities. A grantee must use knowledge and understanding gained from research to create materials, devices, systems, or methods beneficial to the target population, including design and development of prototypes and processes.

To stay current on NIDILRR grant opportunities, visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and search: NIDILRR or 93.433.

## **EVENTS**

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

### **Moving Toward Carbon-Free Transportation in the U.S.: What Now?**

January 31, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

America must move toward a zero-carbon transportation system by mid-century if we are to do our share to prevent the worst impacts of global warming. The new year brings a wealth of opportunities for progress – from new models of electric cars and buses to renewed local activism for transit and active transportation – as well as new challenges and obstacles. Join Frontier Group for a review of the data and insights gleaned from two 2016 reports on decarbonizing transport – A New Way Forward and 50 Steps Toward Carbon-Free Transportation – and for a discussion of what comes next.

### **Eco-Logical Community of Practice Webinar: How to Approach Your Transportation Environmental Needs Eco-Logically!**

January 31, 1:30 – 3:00 PM ET

How do you mitigate for wetlands impacts when there aren't any banks available? How do you evaluate a planning area to identify important resources to avoid impacting and those you want to conserve? And, how can you work with agencies to make decisions to locate a wildlife crossing while not delaying your project? Join this webinar to learn about three different approaches to solving agency environmental needs for transportation programs "Eco-Logically" from: South Carolina DOT, North Central Texas Council of Governments, and California DOT.

### **Updated Draft Agenda! 2017 National Conference of Regions**

*February 12-15 – Washington Court Hotel, 525 New Jersey Ave NW 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. Additional information will be available soon. Capitol Hill Day is the final day of the conference, February 15, 2017.

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