



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

SOTU

Tomorrow at 9:00 PM ET, President Donald Trump will deliver his first *State of the Union* (SOTU) address before Congress. The president is expected to speak about his infrastructure plan and immigration proposal, including a request for broad immigration legislation that would address border security, family reunification, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), visa lotteries, and other aspects of current law that are very controversial.

The president is expected to speak about many of the themes he introduced in his speech last week in Davos, Switzerland, including: U.S. trade policy, decreased unemployment, benefits of tax reform, the on-going stock market rally, and energy independence.

The White House also indicated that the president will emphasize the need for a bipartisan approach to governing, calling on Democrats and Republicans to set aside their differences to respond to the nation's needs. It is unknown whether the president will provide specific legislative proposals or simply lay out the issues that he wants Congress to address in the second year of his presidency.

News sources like the *Hill*, *Politico*, and *Congressional Quarterly* suggest that the president's speech will have less to do with specific or even broad legislative initiatives, and more to do with reminding the American public of the past year's successes, like tax reform, economic growth, and a surging stock market.

This week's *Transportation Thursdays* and next week's *eRegions* will offer a full assessment of how the president's address could affect regions.

Upcoming Legislative Retreats

This will be a short legislative week on Capitol Hill, as Republicans head to their legislative retreat later this week. House and Senate Republicans and President Trump will travel to White Sulphur Springs, WV for a three-day meeting at The Greenbrier. Democrats will plan and hold their retreat within the next two weeks. These party retreats will provide an opportunity for both chambers to align their priorities and legislative strategy in 2018. Both parties expect the remainder of the 2018 legislative agenda to be much clearer following these policy retreats.

NDD United Letter

Last week, NARC was one of 2,000 national, state, and local organizations that **sent a letter to lawmakers**, calling on Congress to stop sequestration and #RaiseTheCaps. This NDD United group urges Congress to ensure adequate funding for non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs funded through annual appropriations, continuing the bipartisan practice of providing relief from sequestration budget cuts and opposing any new efforts to cut these programs further. In FY 2018, lawmakers should continue to find parity between defense and NDD fiscal funding policies, including a sequestration relief package.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to Testify for Senate Committee

Tomorrow, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will participate in his **first oversight hearing for the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works**. Committee members are likely to question Pruitt's aggressive deregulatory agenda. In the last year, he has rolled back nearly every major piece of the Obama administration's EPA agenda, including the *Clean Power Plan* and the *Clean Water Rule*. **Harvard University** and **Columbia Law School** produced webpages that detail each environmental regulatory rollback the Trump administration has undertaken so far.

House Subcommittee to Review 15 Broadband Infrastructure Bills

Members of the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology released several bills last week aimed at expanding broadband in rural communities. Tomorrow the subcommittee will hold a **hearing** to discuss all fifteen of them. Subcommittee Chairman Marsha Blackburn looks forward to "a bipartisan conversation on removing the barriers to buildout, supporting innovation, and strengthening the public safety benefits that come with broadband."

Mayors Skeptical of Trump Infrastructure Plan

The **outline of the federal infrastructure package proposal** is available, but city leaders are concerned about the details that remain to be seen. Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said he was "pretty skeptical" of the infrastructure package because he fears that cities will lose more money in federal grants than they receive from new infrastructure spending. The plan would require local governments to raise 80% of the costs to get a 20% match from the federal government. Because the current federal highway funding requires only a 20% federal match, the proposed change could put further economic stress on low-income urban areas and rural communities. Above all, mayors want to see cities receive federal funding directly, rather than have it funneled through states.

Secretary Perdue Announces USDA's Farm Bill and Legislative Principles for 2018

Last week, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue announced his department's priorities for 2018. **2018 Farm Bill and Legislative Priorities** presents the set of principles that the department will share with Congress for consideration as they craft the Farm Bill and other legislation that impacts U.S. agriculture. The document provides policy recommendations of each of these USDA principles: farm production and conservation; trade and foreign agricultural affairs; food, nutrition, and consumer services; marketing and regulatory programs; food safety and inspection services; research, education, and economics; rural development; natural resources and environment; and management.

Supreme Court to Rule on Internet Sales Tax Collection

The Supreme Court recently decided to review whether states will require out-of-state retailers to collect sales tax. The 1992 Supreme Court case of *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota* established that states cannot require retailers with no in-state physical location to collect a sales tax. Now, South Dakota is asking the Supreme Court to overturn the *Quill* decision in their case ***South Dakota v. Wayfair***. With the rise of internet sales, state and local governments miss out on a large share of taxes from purchases made in their own communities. State and local advocacy groups filed an

amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to hear this brief, including NLC, NACo, USCM, ICMA, and NCSL. If the court hears the case during the current term, we may hear a decision by the end of June 2018.

OTHER NEWS

EPA Seeks Comments on Ozone Designations for 2015 NAAQS

Comments Due: February 5

Earlier this month, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a **notice in the federal register** accepting public comments on the proposed attainment and nonattainment regulations for the 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone. The proposed rule lowers the NAAQS for ozone from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb. EPA invites the public to review and provide input on intended designations. They request that comments include assumptions, technical data, specific examples to address concerns, and suggested alternatives.

Opportunity Zones Program Created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

Established by the tax reform legislation passed at the end of 2017, the Opportunity Zones Program will encourage long-term investment in low-income urban and rural communities nationwide. Investors will receive a tax incentive to reinvest unrealized capital gains into these designated zones for a minimum of five years. By late March, state governors must submit their recommendations for Opportunity Zone designations. Enterprise released a **policy brief** with an overview of program details and what we can expect to see in its implementation, and a **map** that identifies which Census tracts could be designated as Opportunity Zones.

Menino Survey of Mayors Report

The 2017 Menino Survey of Mayors, carried out by the Boston University Initiative on Cities, delves into ways U.S. mayors are tackling local and global urban issues while confronting federal and state funding gaps. Mayors offer insights on the following topics: housing affordability; housing reform; climate change; relationships with higher levels of government; mitigating federal fiscal shortfalls; city-to-city networks; and data and policy evaluation. The survey also shares how mayors are rallying individually and as a collective to bring change to the issues affecting localities. Read the survey's **key findings** and **full report** for more information.

Mayors of 14 Major Cities, CEOs Want More Federal Money for Affordable Housing and Homeless Services

A coalition of mayors and CEOs is launching an effort called *Mayors & CEOs for U.S. Housing Investment* to tackle affordable housing issues and homelessness. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, one of 14 mayors in the coalition, said, "Too many cities across the country are facing an unprecedented housing crisis. We are here to call on leaders in Washington to develop new revenue streams and incentives that communities need to build and preserve the affordable housing that all of our communities deserve." Together, the coalition has called on the federal government to enact four policy changes:

- Maximize funding for existing federal programs that work, like Section 8 Housing Vouchers, Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Grants, and Community Development Block Grants.
- Issue new, competitive HUD-Housing Innovation, Investment, and Reform Opportunities grants modeled after the U.S. Department of Transportation's successful TIGER grants, designed for local communities to reward innovative thinking and collaborative, cross-sector projects to combat homelessness and affordable housing problems.
- Build on the successful HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing model through HUD-Partnerships Accelerating Supportive Services, which would pair HUD vouchers with Health and Human Services programs to help families and individuals experiencing homelessness who have mental health issues and other barriers to assistance.
- Create a Housing Stabilization Fund – a pool of funds within HUD that can provide one-time, short-term emergency housing assistance to households below 80% of average median income.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Public Health: Addressing the Public Health Needs of Your Region

Help NARC learn more about your efforts to create healthy communities. Is your regional council involved in addressing the public health needs of your region and its cities and towns? Are you looking at public health and the built environment? Some examples from your region may include: looking at ways to reduce the number of traffic deaths, creating accident-free bike lanes, ensuring access to affordable and appropriate housing, and improving your community's water and air quality, to name just a few. If your regional council is addressing these or other public health needs within your region, please send the name of your project, a brief description, funding sources, and contact details to Neil Bomberg (neil@narc.org).

Transportation System Resiliency

NARC has been asked to participate in a roundtable discussion focused on "Resiliency, Reliability, and Energy Infrastructure Planning." Help NARC share your stories. How are you upgrading and preparing infrastructure (i.e. repairing/building more resilient roads, preparing for transportation fuel shortages, investing in alternative fuels, etc.)? What policies and programs are you implementing to support robust infrastructure investment, planning, and response (i.e. upgrading emergency plans, etc.)? Please send all relevant stories to Leslie Wollack (leslie@narc.org) by February 2.

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 anna@narc.org.

Will Electric Vehicles Have Their Year in 2018?

By Sarah Reed

Alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) became mainstays in the news in 2017, with several big stories focusing predominantly on electric vehicles (EVs). This, combined with several other factors, could mean a big year in 2018 for EVs and a real shift towards an electric, autonomous, and connected vehicle future.

The National Association of Regional Councils' 2017 Wrap-Up

By NARC Staff

Highlighting the innovative initiatives that regional councils are carrying out today and exploring where they can be leaders in their communities drove many of NARC's activities in 2017.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

RFQ: Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative Planning Study Projects

Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Cleveland, OH

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

Administration for Community Living's Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects Grants: Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Applications Due: April 2

The purpose of the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) are 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. Applicants must propose a development project that is aimed at improving the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. In carrying out a development project under this program, 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.

Surdna Foundation Grants

Deadline: Rolling

The Surdna Foundation seeks to foster sustainable communities in the United States - communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments,

strong local economies, and thriving cultures. They seek to dismantle the structural barriers that limit opportunity for many, helping to create communities that are prosperous, culturally enriching, and sustainable. The foundation makes grants to nonprofit organizations for both project and general support through one of their three program areas: sustainable environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. **Letters of inquiry** are accepted on a rolling basis and are reviewed within 90 days. After review, the staff will determine whether you will be invited to submit a full proposal, which will be reviewed by their board of directors in March, July, or December.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Protecting State & Local Governments from Critical Cyber Threats

February 6, 11:00-12:30 PM ET

State, county, and municipal governments are particularly vulnerable to security breaches and cyberattacks, which rank among the top risks facing governmental entities. This government-focused webinar aims to help you make sense of the bewildering landscape of top cyber threats. BKD's cybersecurity advisors will explain the motivations and tactics of hackers; how their methods have evolved over time; and how they successfully prey on human behavior, complexity, and social tendencies. Backed by this understanding, you will learn best practices that can help protect your organization through a smart blend of controls, technologies, and cultural changes.

Telling Your Community Story: Strengthening Economies through Place Branding

February 7, 2:00-3:15 PM ET

Many smaller and rural communities across the country that have historically been reliant on one economic industry are pursuing innovative economic diversification and community revitalization strategies. NACo will explore this topic to help traditionally coal-reliant communities build stronger, more resilient local and regional economies. Join this educational webinar for a deep dive into the value of place and community branding as a powerful tool in stimulating both economic development and community pride and identity. Attendees will hear from community branding subject-matter experts, in addition to local and regional implementation examples of place branding and digital storytelling, including social media and community videos.

Opportunity Zones Program: An Early Overview of Program Details and What Lies Ahead

February 7, 2:00-2:30 PM ET

Last month, the Opportunity Zones Program was enacted as part of tax reform to provide private investors certain tax benefits on long-term investments made in rural and low-income urban communities throughout the nation. In this 30-minute webinar, Enterprise staff will:

- Provide an overview of the Opportunity Zones Program, details on implementation, as well as what states and advocates should consider in the coming months as Opportunity Zones are designated.
- Demonstrate Enterprise's new mapping tools created to identify which census tracts are eligible for Opportunity Zone designation. Forthcoming state maps will incorporate data and insights from **Opportunity360** to help inform strategic decision-making.

Rapid Response: Budget Analysis

February 13, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

President Trump will send his fiscal 2019 budget request to Capitol Hill on Monday, February 12. The new request will land in the middle of prolonged, politicized negotiations to finish appropriations for fiscal year 2018 – and the government is operating on stop-gap funding until a deal is reached. With far reaching consequences across industries and agencies, Bloomberg Government experts will break down the president's budget request the following day, February 13, with charts and figures for the major agencies, laying out the starting point for the year's debate about government spending.

CONTACT US

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