



Dear Members,

As you know, we have been working with the NARC staff to engage members in helping to develop the program agenda for the Annual Conference. **This survey** includes topics generated out of the brain storming session at the Executive Directors Conference. Please take five minutes to give us your preferences so we can prioritize and structure the agenda. We would appreciate if you could complete the survey by Friday, February 2.

Thank you.

Harry Barley and Grace Gallucci

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### Overview

Congress is up against a funding deadline once again. Congress needs to adopt an omnibus spending bill by this Friday, February 8, to fund the government for the remainder of the year. Of course, they could pass their fifth short-term continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government running at current funding levels.

But significant problems remain. It appears as if little progress has been made on raising the funding caps, which limits government spending for defense and non-defense discretionary programs. Congressional Republicans and the White House demand that the cap on defense discretionary spending be raised, while Democrats refuse to raise the cap for defense spending unless the non-defense discretionary program cap is also raised by the same amount. Agreement on disaster relief funds remain elusive, and agreement on immigration issues, including the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) youth, seems impossible.

Republicans and Democrats have made it clear that they do not want a government shutdown, but without ways of addressing the caps, disaster relief, and immigration, a long-term funding bill seems intangible. However, passing another short-term spending bill may not be as easy as it sounds. Members of the conservative Freedom Caucus have grown increasingly frustrated with multiple short-term CRs, and they may make demands about immigration or military spending in exchange for their support on another stopgap bill. On the other side of the aisle, progressive Democrats are saying they will not waiver on DACA and that a solution must be in the next spending bill – whether short- or long-term.

Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Chris Coons (D-DE) plan to introduce a very narrow bill today that provides a path to citizenship for immigrants brought illegally to the U.S. as children, to break the congressional logjam over immigration policy. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the proposal would offer a path to citizenship for two million “dreamers” who have lived in the U.S. since December 31, 2014.

A Washington trade publication, *CQ Roll Call*, reports that a fracas within the House Intelligence Committee over the so-called *Nunes Memo* on the Federal Bureau of Investigation now jeopardizes any bi-partisan legislation, including funding bills. Without a bipartisan solution, especially in the Senate, it is highly unlikely that a long-term funding bill will pass.

### **Democrats Head to Legislative Retreat**

Following the Republican’s legislative retreat last week, House Democrats will head to Cambridge, Maryland on Wednesday to talk about their legislative plan for 2018. Their schedule could be complicated by the February 8 federal government funding deadline. Democratic leaders have already agreed that their party members would stay in town until a CR is passed by both chambers.

### **White House Seeks Major Cut to Clean Energy Research**

According to draft FY 2019 federal budget documents obtained by *The Washington Post*, the Trump administration is preparing to ask Congress for a 72% cut to the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. Although the legislative branch will likely not accept this drastic cut, it remains a starting point for budget negotiations and a statement of the Trump administration’s policy priorities. In addition to substantial budget cuts, the document also suggests a reduction in staff for DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable in 2019, from 680 to 450. Areas that could receive significant cuts in spending include: National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) research; state energy grants; electric car technologies and fuel-efficient vehicles; and research into geothermal, hydro, and wind power.

### **Federal Government Set to Borrow Nearly \$1 Trillion this Year**

The U.S. Treasury is expecting to borrow \$955 billion this fiscal year. That amount is nearly twice what the federal government borrowed in FY 2017 and the highest amount of borrowing in six years. The high borrowing rate under the first year of the Trump administration has only added to complicated discussions in Congress over whether to spend more funds on infrastructure, the military, disaster relief, and domestic programs. Additionally, investors are growing concerned that more borrowing could lead to increased inflation and higher interest rates on U.S. government bonds.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Recent Amtrak Crashes Bring New Safety Concerns**

Amtrak has been dealing with a series of high-profile crashes involving passenger trains since late 2017, with two accidents happening within the past week. Three deaths and dozens of injuries suffered from these crashes have raised serious concerns about rail safety nationwide. Critics have called for the organization to change its approach to safety and to take bold action considering the recent accidents. Railroad advocates have pointed out that trains remain far safer than vehicles, which killed 37,000 Americans last year. However, advocates such as the Rail Passenger Association recognize that these accidents remain an issue and have been pressing Congress to boost safety funding.

### **USACE Seeks Public Comment on New Draft Section 408 Policy Document**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is seeking public review and comments for their new draft Section 408 policy document. The Section 408 policy sets forth the process USACE uses to review requests by public and private entities to alter a USACE Civil Works project. Examples of Section 408 activities include reviewing road or utility crossing of levees and channels, dredging to widen/deepen channels and harbors, and levee raises. USACE will host two identical webinars on February 7 and February 8 to provide an overview of the draft and key changes. Public comments, which are due by March 7, can be submitted on the [regulations.gov website](https://www.regulations.gov) or via email to [HQ-Section408@usace.army.mil](mailto:HQ-Section408@usace.army.mil) with the subject line: EC 1165-2-220 Comments.

### **Free Registration: NACo's 2018 Farm Bill Summit**

NACo will host their first 2018 Farm Bill Summit from April 5-7 in Palm Beach County, Florida. The event will highlight the need for a comprehensive and long-term Farm Bill that helps provide critical services to urban and rural counties alike. All attendees of the summit will learn how the legislation touches every facet of American life, including conservation, trade, jobs, infrastructure, research, nutrition, disaster assistance, and how we can advocate for its continued support by Congress. The summit will feature educational tours, workshops, and panel discussions.

## **REGION SPOTLIGHT**

### **SEMCOG Launches 50th Anniversary with Detroit Historical Museum Exhibit**

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is celebrating 50 years of service to their region with an interactive exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum. The exhibit, *50 Years | 1 Region*, highlights its wonderful past work and exciting projects ahead. While visiting the exhibit, visitors can write a post card sharing their hopes for the region, take a “selfie” as part of the regional team, and quiz themselves on what makes Southeast Michigan unique. The exhibit will be open until April 8. Keep up the great work, SEMCOG!

## **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](mailto:neil@narc.org)).

## **REGIONS LEAD**

Visit [www.regionslead.org](http://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](mailto: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!***

### **Data Scientist**

Spokane Regional Transportation Council, Spokane, WA

**Finance Director**

Sacramento Council of Governments, Sacramento, CA

**Transportation Planner**

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

**MPO Transportation Planner**

Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization, Bloomington, IN

**Deputy Director**

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments, Albany, OR

**Director of Community Development**

Metropolitan Council, St. Paul, MN

**Community and Economic Development Specialist**

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments, Albany, OR

**Transportation Planner**

Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization, Sarasota, FL

## FUNDING

*View full list of grants!*

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Resilient Communities 2018**

Pre-Proposal Due: February 15

Full Proposal (by invitation only) Due: May 10

Through improvements to natural features and enhanced community capacity, the Resilient Communities program will help communities prepare for future impacts associated with sea level rise, sustain appropriate water quantity and quality, and enhance forest conservation. By taking advantage of natural features like wetlands, resilient shorelines, urban tree canopies, natural forests, and healthy upstream watersheds, communities can accrue quality of life benefits today, enhance fish and wildlife resources, and help prepare for foreseeable resilience challenges. The program places special emphasis on inclusion and helping traditionally underserved, low- and moderate-income communities build capacity for resilience planning and investments in "greener" infrastructure. The program will invest in these two focus areas: 1) adaptation through regional conservation projects, and 2) community capacity building and demonstration projects.

**Citizens' Institute on Rural Design Workshops**

Applications Due: February 16

The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD), a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, has issued a request for proposals inviting communities to apply for design assistance. The CIRD program provides rural communities with populations of 50,000 or less the opportunity to address challenges related to economic vitality and quality of life by employing design solutions. CIRD convenes two-day workshops with design professionals, local leaders, community organizations, and residents to create a plan for tackling issues around three topic areas – multimodal transportation, healthy living by design, and main street revitalization. Selected rural communities will receive \$10,000 cash stipend for planning and hosting a two-day community design workshop and follow up activities (\$10,000 cash or in-kind match by host communities is required).

**Appalachian Regional Commission's Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization**

Applications Due: May 1

POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) is a congressionally funded initiative that targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. The POWER Initiative supports efforts to create a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities by cultivating economic diversity, enhancing job training and re-employment

opportunities, creating jobs in existing or new industries, and attracting new sources of investment. POWER investments will focus on four areas: building a competitive workforce, enhancing access to and use of broadband services, fostering entrepreneurial activities, and developing industry clusters in communities.

## EVENTS

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

### **One Water for America Policy Framework Webinar 3: Sustain Adequate Funding for Water Infrastructure Management**

February 7, 1:00-2:00 PM ET

Capital needs are growing all the time to meet the challenges of water system development and renewal, regulatory compliance, lead service line removal, and climate change adaptation. Those needs are compounded by the rising costs of day-to-day utility operations. Over the last 40 years, the federal government has reduced its share of capital spending on water infrastructure from 63 percent to just nine percent. A resurgence in federal funding for water is unlikely, so our focus must be on fully representing the cost of water management, improving the cost-effectiveness of water services, and continuing to educate the public on our infrastructure needs. Join us for part three of a seven-part series diving into each of the Seven Big Ideas in the One Water for America Policy Framework.

### **Urban Institute's Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) Network Launch**

February 8, 11:00-12:00 PM ET

HOST focuses on designing and testing effective two-generation strategies to promote the well-being and stability of families who live in subsidized housing. The HOST research team uses various evaluation methods – formative, outcome, participatory, and research demonstration – to produce insights and approaches of value to policymakers, agency executives, resident leaders, developers, and human services providers. The webinar will launch the HOST Network and highlight resources available on the new HOST Initiative website, where the HOST research team will share lessons from their research and offer guidance and technical assistance on housing as a platform for services. In addition, the webinar will present on financing services in public and mixed-income housing.

### **Your Map to the Money: Tips and Tools to Access VW Settlement Funds**

February 15, 12:00-1:00 PM ET

The Volkswagen Settlement will provide \$2.925 billion in incentive funding for clean transportation projects across the United States. While the settlement has created a wealth of opportunity, fleets and OEMs face the daunting challenge of tracking 70+ state-specific funding programs, sifting through the legal jargon in 633 densely packed pages in the three partial consent decrees, and reviewing 101 dockets filed in United States District Court since 2016. In this Advanced Clean Transportation News webinar, participants will:

- Get tips on how to submit a competitive grant application from a team with a 93% success rate and >\$420 million in funding won for clients;
- Learn strategies from one of the nation's largest electric bus and truck OEMs on the strategic approach to monitoring and engaging state beneficiaries; and
- Gain insight and the political perspective to see how state legislatures are advancing clean transportation programs.

## CONTACT US

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