



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

Funding the Federal Government

After a ten-day recess, Congress returned to work today with largely one goal in mind: pass an omnibus appropriations bill before the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on March 23. Having made a pledge to not pass another CR this year, Congress must focus on passing an omnibus spending package to fund the government through the end of the current fiscal year, which ends September 30.

Unfortunately, there are a significant number of issues that Congress must resolve before it can adopt an omnibus appropriations bill. These include:

- Stabilizing the Affordable Care Act's federal and state insurance marketplaces;
- Reinsurance funding so that companies can recoup losses from covering the sickest individuals;
- Immigration reform;
- Funding to combat election tampering so that the federal government can respond to Russia's potential election interference in the 2018 mid-term election;
- Funding for the Internal Revenue Service, which has seen its funding cut substantially over the past few years;
- Funding for the 2020 Census, which advocates have argued is woefully underfunded; and
- Gun control.

No matter what happens on immigration and gun regulations, the road to passage of an omnibus appropriations bill will be difficult and not likely to be resolved until just before Congress breaks for Easter and Passover.

House Health Subcommittee Announces Hearing to Review Legislation Re: Opioid Crisis and Enforcement Issues

The House Subcommittee on Health is holding a hearing this Wednesday at 10:00 AM called *Combating the Opioid Crisis: Helping Communities Balance Enforcement and Patient Safety*. This will be the first of three hearings to examine the opioid crisis and possible legislative solutions. This hearing will review several bills pertaining to the *Controlled Substances Act*, including a couple bills that specifically address telemedicine.

White House Listening Session for School Shooting Survivors and Grieving Parents

A week after the deadly shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, President Trump invited teen survivors of school violence and grieving parents to the White House to tell their stories and solicit feedback on what the nation can do to confront this problem. After leaving the White House, Darrell Scott, the father of Columbine High School victim Rachel Scott, felt the president had been moved by the group's stories and pleads for action. Since last week, Trump has mentioned several new policy changes the administration is considering, including permitting some teachers and school employees to carry concealed weapons, raising the minimum purchase age for rifles and shotguns to 21, improving background checks, and working on mental health.

Last Tuesday, he **directed the U.S. Department of Justice** to propose a rule banning devices that turn legal weapons into machine guns.

FEMA Seeking Public Comment on National Mitigation Investment Strategy

Following a **National Institute of Building Sciences report** that found every federal dollar spent on hazard mitigation grants saves six dollars in future disaster costs, FEMA released its **draft National Mitigation Investment Strategy** for public comment. The draft makes a series of recommendations organized by six outcomes that, if met, will help improve the resiliency of our communities. The agency is seeking feedback from local governments and key stakeholders on their proposed outcomes and wants to hear your national mitigation investment ideas, including needs, gaps, and opportunities. Submit comments to fema-nmis@fema.dhs.gov or the **IdeaScale forum** by March 11.

OTHER NEWS

EPA Scientists Find Black Communities Disproportionately Hit by Pollution

In an **article published last week in the American Journal of Public Health**, five EPA scientists reported that minority and poorer communities are disproportionately affected by air pollution. African American communities face a 54% higher health burden compared to the overall population, non-white communities have a 28% higher health burden, and those living below the poverty level had a 35% higher health burden. The scientists cited historical racism and economic inequality as major factors for these disparities due to the location of facilities emitting harmful pollutants in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. These disparities hold true at the national, state, and county levels.

Elder Abuse: the ‘Silent Epidemic of Our Time’

Over the course of five years, elderly financial exploitation cases have outnumbered elderly neglect cases in Fairfield County, Ohio. Instances of physical abuse have been on the rise in the county as well. But the growing occurrences of elder abuse are not unique to Ohio. It has become such a prominent issue that the National Association of Attorneys General President and Kansas Attorney Derek Schmidt announced that his term would focus on fighting elder abuse, calling it the “silent epidemic of our time.” In 2015, **Truelink Financial found that older Americans lose \$36.5 billion a year** to financial exploitation.

AARP Roadmap to Livability Collection Coming Soon

AARP Livable Communities is a program that supports communities providing safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life. The program recently announced its **Roadmap to Livability Collection** – a series of six guidebooks with strategies and solutions to help cities, towns, and rural areas make their communities great for all ages. The first book, **Roadmap to Livability**, provides broad guidelines and best practices for integrating livability principles into a community. **Sign up for their newsletter** to receive updates on the release of the rest of the collection, toolkits, and best practices.

T4A Report Discusses the Link between Health and Bicycling/Walking

Increasingly, metro areas across the country are looking at ways to strategize, develop, and implement projects that get people bicycling and walking in their regions. Transportation for America (T4A) and the American Health Planning Association captured many of these stories and best practices in their new guidebook, **Building Healthy & Prosperous Communities: How Metro Areas are Implementing More and Better Bicycling and Walking Projects**. This guidebook explores regional stories organized by eight key strategies for including health considerations in transportation plans, including 1) design guidance for bicycling and walking projects, 2) complete streets policies and programs, 3) data collection – walking and bicycle counts, 4) performance measures, 5) dedicated funding for bicycling and walking projects, 6) improving walking and bicycling connections to public transportation and essential destinations, 7) grassroots community engagement, and 8) understanding the public health impacts of transportation behaviors.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

H-GAC Hosts Parks and Natural Area Awards

Earlier this month, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) hosted their annual Parks and

Natural Areas Awards reception to highlight best practices and innovative approaches to parks planning and implementation. The program honors projects that expand natural areas and parks to improve quality of life, habitats, and water quality. The winners exhibit efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation, and serve as models for the rest of the region to replicate. H-GAC recognizes winners in four categories: projects over \$500,000, projects under \$500,000, planning process, and policy tools. Congratulations to all the winners!

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Planner I

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Destin, FL

Executive Director

Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts, Frankfort, KY

Principal Planner

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Stateline, NV

Senior Transportation Analyst

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Program Manager, Transportation Funding

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

AoA's National Eldercare Locator Program

Applications Due: April 9

The Administration on Aging (AoA) will hold a competition for a new cooperative agreement to continue operation of the National Eldercare Locator. The Eldercare Locator will be available to people in 56 states and territories to provide information and referrals nationwide. The Locator is a call center with live information specialists helping older adults and their caregivers link to the aging network of trustworthy national, state, tribal and community-based organizations. This new program announcement seeks to advance the Locator to better serve current and future older adults and those who care for them.

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)

Applications Due: June 21

The purpose of the CRISI Program is to assist in funding capital projects that improve passenger and freight rail transportation safety, efficiency, and reliability. Programs eligible for funding under this grant program include deployment of railroad safety technology, capital projects, highway-rail grade cross improvement projects, regional rail and corridor service development plans and environmental analyses, and any project necessary to enhance multimodal connections or facilitate service integration between rail service and other modes. Eligible applicants include states, a group of states, an interstate compact, a public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more states, and a political subdivision of a state.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Special Districts: The Year that Was and What's to Come

February 27, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

There are more than 38,000 special district government agencies across the U.S. – that's nearly half of all local government entities in the nation – and until now there has been no dedicated forum for sharing ideas, building relationships, and solving common problems. In 2017, the Special Districts Program was created to recognize and support these special districts that oversee everything from water and power to airports and transit. Join this Government Technology webinar to hear what they learned at their summits, through their awards program, and by

hearing the stories of top innovators in this space. By attending the webinar, you will also be the first to receive the *Special Districts Publication* that details trends, innovations, and lessons learned from agencies across the country.

The Economic Case for Municipal Broadband: An ICF Broadband Agendas Webinar

March 1, 11:00-12:00 PM ET

When cities and counties decide to invest in broadband networks, they face the same business-case challenge as private-sector carriers. The city or county has usually arrived at this point precisely because the private sector does not see an attractive case for investment, so how is government going to do what business cannot? Government's advantage as a network builder is not anti-competitive behavior: it is that government and the community gain economic benefits from the network that a private-sector company cannot tap. Join the next Broadband Agendas webinar from ICF to learn the difference between the business case and the economic case for broadband, and how communities turn it to their advantage.

One Water for America Policy Framework Webinar 5: Redefine Affordability for the 21st Century

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

Utilities across the country grapple with affordability concerns for their customers. The heart of the issue is ensuring that everyone has access to affordable water and sewer service, while also generating sufficient utility revenues to cover rising costs, deal with our aging infrastructure, and protect public health. While water service is generally affordable for most Americans, the lowest 20 percent of earners pay almost one-fifth of their monthly household income on water. Utilities in rural areas and cities with declining populations struggle to keep water affordable while funding infrastructure needs to protect public health and comply with regulations. Water rates need to reflect the needs of the entire community, from the utility to the customer.

National Partners' Response to the Opioid Epidemic and Infectious Diseases: Part 2- Health Policy Perspectives

March 8, 3:00-4:30 PM ET

Fighting the opioid epidemic is a national priority at the highest levels of the administration and President Trump has declared it a public health emergency. Panelists will describe the use of existing federal guidance, policies, and resources that support their efforts – at the local, state, and national levels – to respond to the opioid epidemic and its infectious disease consequences. This session will include a discussion on the impact of the opioid epidemic on infectious diseases, burdens and challenges, innovative steps taken to address the intertwined problems, and opportunities to further strengthen these efforts with federal and nonfederal partners.

CONTACT US

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