



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

Overview

Both the House and Senate are in session this week. The Senate will work on an anti-opioid bill and the House will consider a bill to reauthorize FEMA assistance programs. Hearings on federal spending programs will continue this week.

The Senate will respond to the dramatic rise in prescription drug and heroin abuse with consideration of the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (S 524)* to expand efforts to curb drug abuse, increase access to medication that can reverse overdoses and establish a treatment and intervention program. The bill, sponsored by Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Rob Portman (R-OH), would also provide incentives for states to track at-risk individuals.

The House will consider the *FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015 (HR 1471)*, which aims to extend FEMA disaster programs through FY2018 and authorize funding for key local government programs. The bill would reauthorize FEMA and the National Urban Service and Rescue Response System, clarifying compensation and liability for responders. The measure includes provisions intended to reduce future losses from disasters, improve the recovery process for victims and affected communities, raise the amount of FEMA disaster relief funding provided to victims under simplified procedures, block the ability of FEMA to reclaim certain payments after three years, and allow FEMA to waive certain debts caused by FEMA errors. The legislation requires FEMA to undertake efforts to prepare for and protect the nation from earthquakes, tsunamis, and their combined effects. It also calls for a study to determine why disaster costs continue to increase. The \$947 million bill passed the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last April and is just now coming to the floor for consideration.

Cities, Counties Announce Joint Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic

With the opioid and heroin abuse crisis reaching epidemic proportions, the National League of Cities (NLC) and National Association of Counties (NACo) have joined together to address the problem. Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., with more than 47,000 lethal drug overdoses in 2014 driven largely by overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers (18,893) and deaths related to heroin (10,574). There were 259 million opioid prescriptions written in 2012, which is more than enough to give a pill bottle to every American adult.

Last week, NLC and NACo announced the creation of a joint national task force to address this crisis by enhancing awareness, facilitating peer exchanges, and identifying sound policy and partnership solutions. The task force will build upon the **White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's four-pillared plan** to reduce prescription drug abuse.

NACo Testifies on Improving Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

Last week, NACo First Vice President Bryan Desloge testified before the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management. Desloge, a commissioner in Leon County, FL, **made the case** for improving the federal government's process for evaluating and reducing the harmful impacts of federal mandates on counties and residents.

Final WIOA Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements Available

States must use the Information Collection Request (ICR) for the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plans Requirements*. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reviewed and approved this data collection (Control Number 1205-0222). These documents reflect the incorporation of public comments received from the publication of the August 6 Federal Register notice prepared by the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture.

- [Access to WIOA Unified & Combined State Plan Requirements](#)
- [Access to Supporting Statement](#)

Smart Cities Challenge to be Announced March 12

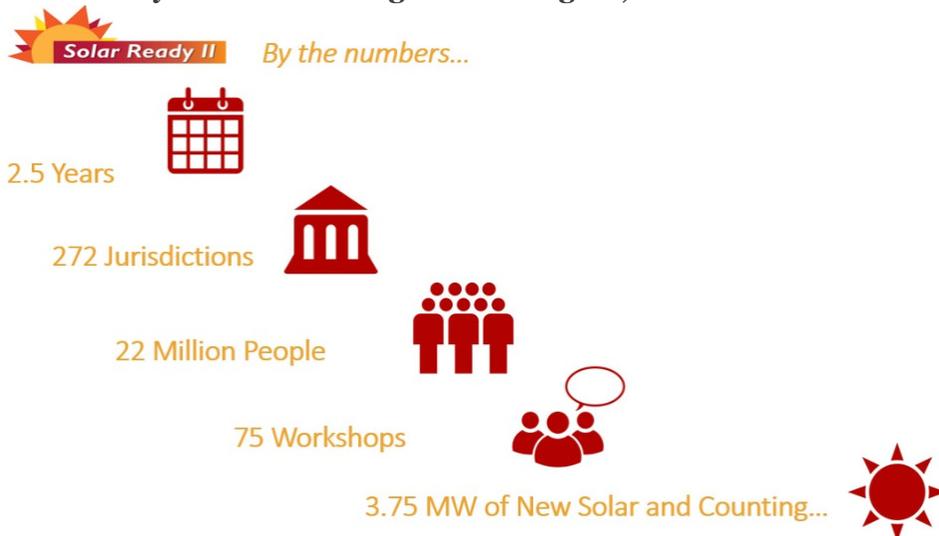
Though the U.S. Department of Transportation isn't releasing details of any of the 77 applications received for its Smart City Challenge until March 12, city officials have divulged pieces of their plans to local media outlets across the country.

OTHER NEWS

Member Forums Now Available on NARC's Website

NARC is pleased to announce the launch of the beta version of our member forum platform. NARC members will now be able to use our forums to discuss regional planning issues and initiatives, share resources, collaborate on programs and projects, and more. Create a topic and join the discussion today! To register, visit www.narc.org/forums/register or follow the link on the top right of NARC's homepage. For more information on how to register, log in, and start using the forums, see our "[how to](#)" guide.

Solar Ready II Team Meeting in Washington, DC



Last week, nine regional councils on the Solar Ready II team and representatives from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Meister Consultants Group convened in Washington, D.C. at NARC and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' offices for a final all team meeting. The Solar Ready II project, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative Rooftop Solar Challenge II, began in October 2013 and will conclude next month. During the meeting, attendees discussed the outcomes and accomplishments, and strategized ways to keep the momentum going after the project ends. Over the last 30 months, the regional councils have become valuable solar resources to their member local governments. These are unique

opportunities for local governments to receive tailored guidance on solar best practices, which otherwise would not occur if it was not for the regional council's newly formed role and presence as a solar advocate in the community. Together, the Solar Ready II team has increased over 270 local governments' understanding of the current solar market in the area and explained the steps they can take to improve their current solar processes and policies. More information about the Solar Ready II team's work and accomplishments can be found at www.narc.org/solarready.

How Libraries are Bridging the Digital Divide

The *ULC Leadership Brief: Building Connected Communities* focuses on how libraries are bridging the digital divide through free and open access to current and emerging technology and related resources. Libraries build digital literacy skills and improve the quality of life in communities and this publication demonstrates how public library technology is used for education, innovation, workforce development/entrepreneurship purposes, and health/wellness. Included in the *Brief* are examples from leading libraries. This critical role is highlighted by quotes from government leaders' recognizing the many contributions our libraries make.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

TMACOG President

Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, Toledo, OH

Transportation Planner

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Kelso, WA

Principal Planner – Project Manager

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Newark, NJ

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

FY2015 SAFER Application Period Open

Deadline: March 25, 5:00 PM ET

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) application period is open. SAFER intends to improve or restore local fire departments' staffing and deployment capabilities so they may more effectively and safely respond to emergencies. With enhanced or restored staffing levels, recipients should experience a reduction in response times and an increase in the number of trained personnel assembled at the incident scene. The SAFER program is comprised of two activities, the Hiring Activity and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. The objective of the Hiring Activity is to award grants directly to volunteer, combination, and career fire departments to help increase the number of frontline firefighters and to rehire firefighters who were laid-off due to the economy. The objective of the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity is to create a more favorable working environment for volunteer firefighters.

HUD Housing Counseling Grants

Deadline: April 4

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced \$40 million in funding to support hundreds of housing counseling organizations across the country that assist families, including those buying their first home, struggling to locate affordable rental housing or seeking to avoid foreclosure. It is estimated HUD's housing counseling grants and the additional funding they leverage will reach more than 1.5 million households through a network of approximately 300 national, regional and local organizations. See HUD's [new funding announcement](#).

TIGER Discretionary Grants

Deadline: April 29

Transportation Secretary Foxx announced the eighth round of the TIGER discretionary grant program, worth \$500 million. These grants fund surface transportation projects on a competitive basis that have a significant impact on the nation, metro area, or region.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

NARC WEBINAR! America's Model Energy Code Webinar

March 2, 2:00 PM ET

We had great turn out for the first webinar so we're repeating it for those that couldn't make it. The International Code Council is updating America's Model Energy Code and this is your chance to weigh in. Local officials play a pivotal role in ensuring that energy codes remain efficient, saving governments and constituents money. NARC is working with six other national organizations on new building energy codes and NARC's role in the project is to inform regional councils and their member local governments about the upcoming November 2016 vote on the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code. This webinar will discuss what regional councils' member jurisdictions MUST do to be eligible to cast their votes. To participate, you must register to vote by March 18th, so tune in to learn more about this initiative and how your region can get involved. Further details at www.narc.org/energy-codes.

The 2017 Budget: Impacts on Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) and the House and Senate Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucuses are hosting a briefing on the energy efficiency and renewable energy provisions of the President's budget request for FY2017. Speakers from the DOE, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and the Congressional Research Service will give an overview of the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's (EERE) budget request, explain the EERE Office budget priorities, and provide context on how these priorities and trends compare to prior years. The event is free, but you must **RSVP**.

CONTACT US

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