



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

EXECUTIVE NOTE

Dear NARC Members,

Today, NARC launches a redesign of all of our member newsletters, starting with *eRegions*. The new design is more streamlined, and we have made it easier to read across all device platforms. We have also attempted to shorten the stories – please note that any blue lettering is a hyperlink (including blue-shaded headlines). No more “click here!” We hope you find this new format more user-friendly. Please tell us what you think!

Thanks,
Joanna Turner

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session

DHS Shutdown Temporarily Diverted

A shutdown of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was avoided late last Friday when Congress approved seven days of funding for the agency. Congress came within minutes of missing the midnight deadline for funding DHS, as the House completed voting after 10 PM to approve the one-week continuing resolution in a 357-60 vote. Earlier on Friday evening, the Senate passed the one-week funding bill by voice vote. Earlier on Friday, the House failed to pass legislation that would have funded DHS for three weeks in a 203-224 vote. Democrats in the House want to vote on the Senate's “clean” DHS bill, which provides funding for DHS through September, with no restrictions on implementing the President's immigration actions, which would be considered separately. So far, House leadership has refused to bring the “clean” bill to the floor.

Van Hollen Introduces Cap-and-Trade Bill

On February 24, Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) proposed the *Healthy Climate and Family Security Act of 2015 (HR 5721)*. The bill would create a ‘carbon cap and dividend’ system, meaning 100 percent of the funds generated from auctioning off carbon permits would be passed on equally to every U.S. resident with a social security number. This bill treats U.S. skies as public commons, requiring companies to pay for their carbon emissions. The bill aims to gradually reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80 percent of 2005 levels, by the year 2050. Congressman Van Hollen estimates individuals could receive a dividend of as much as \$1,000, and families of four up to \$4,000, every year.

FCC Advances Net Neutrality; Local Broadband

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted 3-2 last week to allow cities to deploy municipal broadband networks. The FCC reviewed petitions from Chattanooga, TN, and Wilson, NC, which argued that **government-run Internet service** would be faster and cheaper than private alternatives. In the same meeting, the FCC approved the *Open Internet Order*, with **provisions** to further net neutrality.

Under the rule, broadband will be regulated as a utility under Title II of the *Telecommunications Act*. Through this decision, FCC aims to prevent providers from blocking content, throttling, or prioritizing content (preventing so-called “fast lanes”). The final rule will be enforced 60 days after official publication in the Federal Register, which will happen shortly. The rule will be challenged in court, and legislation preventing enforcement is also likely.

FCC Broadband Progress Report

FCC issued a report on broadband deployment in the U.S., with information specific to broadband access in rural and tribal communities. The report highlights the role of broadband in healthcare, provides maps showing rural broadband deployment, and includes state and county-level broadband access data.

Improved HR Tool for Employers and Employees

Today, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) rolled out a number of improvements to its **CareerOneStop Business Center site**, including new videos and tutorials to help businesses train and retain employees. Employers can send staff to the **CareerOneStop for employees** for information on learning new skills and certifications.

New USDA Rural Development Website

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new website that offers information by topic, such as Rural Opportunities and a Rural Development blog.

HUD's Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress

This U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) report finds that while worst-case housing needs decreased between 2011 and 2013, down to 7.7 million from 8.5 million in 2011, the overall level remains high across demographic groups, household types, and regions. The majority of worst-case housing needs are caused by severe cost burden, where renters must pay more than half of their income for rent.

OTHER NEWS

Protecting Municipal Bonds

Municipal bonds play a critical role in local infrastructure, jobs, and everyday life. The National Association of Counties launched a new page and a Legislative Alert today, underscoring the impact that changing the tax-exempt status of muni bonds will have on local governments.

Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America

William Frey of the Brookings Institution highlights the "bottom up" demographic change that is occurring in the U.S. as today's youth are considerably more racially diverse than previous generations. An **interactive map** reveals racial composition of different age groups at the county and metropolitan area scales.

Sea Levels in NE U.S. Have Risen Two Inches in Two Years

On February 24, a study published in the journal *Nature Communications* found that sea levels from New York to Newfoundland rose about four inches in 2009 and 2010 due to changing ocean circulation. The University of Arizona and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-led team of scientists are the first to report a link between sea level rise and the slowdown in a major current in the North Atlantic Ocean called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), due in part to a reversal of the North Atlantic Oscillation, an atmospheric climate pattern that regularly reverses. Most climate change models predict AMOC will continue to weaken, potentially leading to more sea level rise.

Floatovoltaics

Floatovoltaics are floating solar panels. Read more about them in NARC's latest blog.

Offer Solar Support in Your Region

Since 2012, SolarOPs has held nearly 30 regional solar workshops, assisting regions across the country to bolster their solar development. These regional solar workshops are designed to provide actionable information on overcoming local-level barriers to solar, addressing soft costs, and implementing a successful local solar program in regions. Workshops are customized to fit the unique needs of each region and feature presentations from local speakers highlighting local efforts to develop solar energy. Currently, over 900 local governments, planners, and community members have attended the workshops. NARC is looking forward to continuing to provide support to regions and local governments interested in bolstering solar development through these workshops. To request a workshop in your community, email Mia Colson at mia@narc.org.

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Infrastructure

John Oliver talks infrastructure!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DVRPC Turns 50!

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) celebrates 50 years of planning for the Greater Philadelphia region this year.

DVRPC CMAQ Case Study

In a recent case study of best practices, the Federal Highway Administration recognized DVRPC for innovatively implementing the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program. To reduce PM2.5 emissions, DVRPC's CMAQ program instituted a transparent stakeholder engagement process that resulted in awarding more than 25 percent of the available funds (\$2.9 million) to retrofits of SEPTA and CSX diesel locomotives and Gloucester Marine Terminal diesel truck engines. The total emissions reductions from these projects are estimated at 258 kilograms (kg) per day.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Email responses to anna@narc.org

Engaging and Training Elected Officials

Mike McKeever, Chief Executive Officer of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), is looking for information from NARC members that administer regional elected official engagement programs. SACOG's Board of Directors is interested in learning about regional collaborative activities, which create interactive engagement between various levels of local governance including cities, counties, special districts, school districts, park districts, water districts, and air districts.

Specifically, SACOG would like to know:

- What methods does your Council of Governments use to engage City Council Members and County Supervisors who are NOT already on your Boards of Directors? Of those methods, which were most effective? And on what issues?
- Do you have regional programs that include public agency partners beyond your members' local governments (special districts, school districts, park districts, air districts and other sub-regional districts)? What collaborative approaches have resulted from their interactions?
- Do you partner with economic development and/or business organizations? How are the partnership roles & responsibilities defined? What have been some of the most successful outcomes of those partnerships?
- Which outreach strategies have been most effective in drawing active participation from a representative group of regional leaders? Which have not been so effective?

FEATURED JOBS

Transportation Planner

Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Dayton, OH

Executive Director

Miami-Dade MPO, Miami, FL

FUNDING

[View list of grants still open!](#)

Native Asset Building Grants

Deadline: March 25

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is offering grants through the Native Asset Building Initiative to nonprofits in Native American communities. Grantees will provide an array of additional supports and services to enable low-income individuals and families to become economically self-sufficient for the long term. Additional services offered to participants may include financial literacy education, credit counseling, coaching on money management and consumer issues, business support, home ownership support services, etc.

Disability Incentives through Social Security

Deadline: March 30

The Social Security Administration is offering grants to nonprofit and public agencies to disseminate information about work incentives programs.

Assets for Independence Program

Deadline: April 20

HHS is offering grants to nonprofits and public entities through the *Assets for Independence* program. The program supports innovative asset-building projects that enable low-income people to improve their economic status and become self-sufficient.

Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Deadline: April 24

HHS is offering grants to nonprofits through the Community Economic Development Healthy Food Financing Initiative Projects program. The program seeks to fund projects that will address food deserts and increase access to healthy food in low-income communities.

Capacity-Building Grants for U.S. Land and Water

Deadline: April 30

National Environmental Education Foundation seeks applications from nonprofits for capacity-building grants to encourage responsible use of U.S. land and water sites.

Veteran Housing Grants Program

Deadline: June 25

Home Depot Foundation is offering grants to nonprofit organizations to develop and repair veterans housing. Grants are provided for single family or multifamily housing, permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing projects. Grants will range from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Organizations that have previous experience developing, and manage or own, veteran-specific housing are eligible.

EVENTS

[View list of events still open!](#)

WIOA Update

March 4, 1:00 PM ET

The U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services will provide a webinar on the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*. Leadership from the agencies will share the federal vision for the workforce system under WIOA, discuss urgent actions states and local workforce areas are taking to support implementation, and take questions.

Generational Diversity Webinar Series

March 12, 12:00 – 1:00 PM CT

April 2, 12:00 – 1:00 PM CT

April 23, 12:00 – 1:00 PM CT

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship will offer insights gained through their research on generational diversity, and will share stories of how community leaders are engaging diverse generations, in a three-part webinar series.

Rural Project Marketplace Online Forum

March 23, 12:00 - 5:00 PM ET

March 24, 12:00 - 5:00 PM ET

The Marketplace will bring together rural communities and private sector investors to connect rural projects with financing and funding. The Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) will host two virtual marketplaces and one in-person marketplace annually.

2015 National Community Reinvestment Coalition Annual Conference

March 25-28 – Washington, DC

The event will feature a range of workshops on community organizing and advocacy, housing, access to capital and credit, workforce and community development, fair lending, and business development.

[CONTACT US](#)