



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

NARC on the Hill: CDBG Coalition Meetings

Last week, NARC attended Hill meetings with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Coalition on the Senate side to stress the importance of CDBG grants to local governments. In both the FY 2018 and FY 2019 president's budgets, the administration recommended Congress to zero out CDBG's appropriated funding. The House has already passed a bill for FY 2018 that allocated \$2.9 billion for CDBG grants. The CDBG coalition met with Senate offices to urge them to appropriate at least \$3.3 billion to CDBG as they are making final preparations for their FY 2018 Transportation-HUD appropriations bill, as well as for early consideration in FY 2019. NARC will continue to attend Hill meetings this week to advocate for adequate CDBG funding.

House and Senate Drafts for Farm Bill Expected Soon

Agricultural committee leaders in the House and Senate are pushing for draft Farm Bill legislation to be released by the end of March. The president's FY 2019 budget proposal urged Congress to consider significant changes to the Farm Bill, some of which may make its way into initial drafts.

These changes include:

- Reducing SNAP by \$214 billion over the next 10 years;
- Making programmatic changes to SNAP, replacing some benefits with food packages and strengthening work requirements;
- Limiting farm subsidies to those with an income of \$500,000 or less;
- Reducing the average premium subsidy for crop insurance to 48 percent; and
- Cutting the conservation stewardship program.

We could also see the separation of SNAP from the Farm Bill, which Democrats and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue have previously spoken against.

Notable Congressional Committee Hearings This Week

- Tuesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee **hearing on the administration's infrastructure proposal.**
- Tuesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Appropriations Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee will **hear testimony from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on the FY 2019 budget request from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.**
- Tuesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will **hear testimony from Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta and discuss the U.S. Department of Labor's FY 2019 budget.**
- Tuesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Energy and Commerce Communications and Technology Subcommittee will **examine the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.**

- Tuesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Oversight Interior, Energy, and Environment Subcommittee will **examine the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**.
- Wednesday at 10:00 AM ET: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing, ***Building a 21st Century Infrastructure for America: Long-Term Funding for Highways and Transit Programs***.

FCC to Vote on Proposal to Speed Up 5G Deployment

Later this month the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is expected to vote on a measure to speed up the deployment of 5G networks. The proposal would allow certain wireless facilities to bypass environmental reviews and other assessments. Those in support of the proposal say that removing these regulatory barriers will help the nation stay competitive as 5G rolls out globally, cutting time and costs for smaller deployment sites. Proposal text is expected to release this Thursday, with the vote expected on March 22. NARC is engaged with fellow local government advocates to monitor and respond to any local impacts this proposal may have.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

NARC's Legislative Priorities for 2018

Take a look at NARC's policies and priorities for 2018 below. Additionally, NARC will host a member call to review these policies and priorities, explain how NARC staff are working toward achieving these objectives, and share best practices and tips for educating and influencing Congress. *Please see the 'Opportunities' section for call details.*

Infrastructure Package

NARC urges the federal government to increase direct funding to expand and maintain the nation's infrastructure, and provide incentives to attract private financing for the subset of projects that can be supported in this manner. The new infrastructure package should resolve the Highway Trust Fund's funding shortfall, fund regional planning organizations, support multimodal investments, provide flexibility in the projects it supports, and fund existing grant channels.

Broadband

NARC urges Congress to acknowledge that local governments are a key player creating and incentivizing broadband deployment, recognize local authority over rights of way and other public infrastructure assets, encourage public-private partnerships, establish new grant programs to fund broadband deployment, and increase funding for programs targeted at unserved *and* underserved communities.

Disaster Recovery

NARC urges Congress to immediately reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program. In addition, Congress should solicit input and guidance from locally elected officials and regional councils on federal emergency preparedness and disaster recovery programs and initiatives. Congress should allocate emergency preparedness, response, and recovery funding directly to regions and localities that know the immediate needs of their communities best.

Farm Bill

NARC urges Congress to support sustained funding for all twelve titles of the Farm Bill to strengthen rural infrastructure (including broadband, water, and wastewater systems), protect our nation's food supply, increase access to healthy food, and promote environmental stewardship and conservation. Congress should reauthorize the USDA rural development programs that offer critical investments in our nation's most underserved communities, including the Strategic Economic and Community Program that promotes regional collaboration.

Protect Local Programs

NARC urges Congress to maintain support for federal programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Economic Development Administration, water infrastructure investment and maintenance, funding for senior programs, and the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) that ensure municipalities, counties, and regions meet the needs of their communities.

Funding for the 2020 Census

NARC urges Congress to increase Census funding by no less than \$300 million above the current funding level, so that the Census Bureau can adequately prepare for the 2020 Decennial Census and support efforts to accurately count historically hard-to-reach populations.

Budget/Appropriations

NARC urges Congress to support parity between defense and non-defense discretionary spending for fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

Substance Abuse Crisis

NARC supports federal efforts to partner with local and state officials to help address the addiction and misuse of opioids, including prescription pain relievers, heroin, fentanyl, and other substances. NARC also urges Congress to provide emergency supplemental funding to local governments for medicine-assisted treatment programs, expanded drug abuse prevention and education efforts, naloxone, and drug take-back programs.

Brownfields

NARC urges Congress to reauthorize the *Brownfields Reauthorization Act of 2017 (HR 1758)*, which would increase cleanup grant amounts, create a multi-purpose grant, allow for administrative costs, and clarify liability issues for local governments. NARC also urges Congress to at least maintain level funding for fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

OTHER NEWS

County Leaders Not Giving Up Fight on Exemption Nixed in Tax Overhaul

Restoring “advance refunding” bonds and pushing for new rural infrastructure dollars that flow directly from the federal government to localities are two priorities that local officials are pushing for this year. Advance refunding on municipal bonds was an important tool that local governments had in their toolbox to finance roads, waterworks, and other infrastructure – without this tool, how will localities jumpstart the infrastructure projects their communities need? On the topic of direct funding to counties, National Association of Counties Executive Director Matt Chase said, “Why should the governor get the money for infrastructure if they own, literally, less than 8 percent of the roads? We like the concept of rural infrastructure, but the money should go to those levels of government that actually own the infrastructure.”

REGION SPOTLIGHT

Broward MPO Complete Streets Initiative Featured in The Nation’s Health

The Nation’s Health, a publication of the American Public Health Association (APHA), recently recognized Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization for its efforts to improve local walking and biking opportunities. The Broward MPO case study, which provides information on how public health advocates and others can partner with MPOs to make bicycling and walking a safer and more convenient choice, helps inform the APHA published *Partnering with Metropolitan Planning Organizations to Advance Healthy Communities* and the Transportation for America guidebook *Building Healthy & Prosperous Communities*.

MEMBER REQUESTS

NARC Request: Data for County-Level Map of Regional Planning Organizations

NARC is working with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission to create a map of regional councils and MPOs in the U.S. We have started by mapping out organizations in Florida, Ohio, and Texas, and we hope to include all other states by our Annual Conference in June. To expedite the project, we request your assistance in gathering data for the map. Please include this data in an excel spreadsheet and send to Cameron Herbolsheimer (cameron@narc.org).

- Please send us a list of the counties your organization serves.
- If you are able to obtain information for your state, please send us a list of each regional planning organization or MPO, as well as the counties that each of them serves.

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Travel Demand Modeler

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

Transportation Planner

Calaveras Council of Governments, San Andreas, CA

Planner I

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Destin, FL

Executive Director

Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts, Frankfort, KY

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

Walmart Community Foundation's Community Grant Program

Applications: Accepted on Rolling Basis

The Walmart Foundation Community Grant Program offers up to \$5,000 for local governments and nonprofit organizations to help create impact in communities. Grants can be awarded to organizations working in one of the following areas: hunger relief and healthy eating, health and human service, quality of life, education, community and economic development, diversity and inclusion, public safety, and environmental sustainability.

The Home Depot Foundation's Community Impact Grant Program

Applications: Accepted on Rolling Basis

The Home Depot Foundation offers grant awards up to \$5,000 to nonprofit organizations and tax-exempt public service agencies in the U.S. that are using the power of volunteers to improve the community. Priority is given to projects serving veterans and/or diverse and underserved communities. Projects should be volunteer friendly, have a strong and lasting impact on the community, and keep the safety of volunteers in mind. Grants are given in the form of Home Depot gift cards for the purchase of tools, materials, or services and are required to be complete within six months of the approval date.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Grant Funding for Broadband Initiatives

March 8, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Join the Connected Nation team and special guests from Grants Office, LLC for an in-depth look at grant programs for broadband initiatives. This webinar will highlight funding available to help both rural and urban communities deploy high-speed internet. They will also discuss programs to leverage existing networks for public safety, education, workforce training, and economic development initiatives. Finally, the Connected Nation team will share successful project examples.

Connecting Housing & Education: How a Data-Sharing Partnership Can Improve Outcomes for Children in your Community

March 8, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

Nearly four million children live in public housing and HUD-assisted multifamily properties. Housing providers and school districts work hard to create environments where children can succeed, and collaboration between these two sectors can lead to even greater improvements in school readiness, attendance and graduation rates, and reading and math proficiency. Recognizing this potential, a growing number of public housing authorities, multifamily housing providers, and school districts have formed partnerships focused on data-driven strategies to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children living in HUD-assisted housing. The session will introduce attendees to the **Data Sharing Road Map**, a new resource from HUD and the U.S. Department of Education, and explore the potential benefits of a data-driven partnership between housing and education organizations.

The 2018 Farm Bill: How to Gear Up to Protect Food Assistance

March 9, 12:30 – 2:00 PM ET

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is up for renewal this year as part of the Farm Bill, and the House Agriculture Committee is expected to introduce its version of the 2018 Farm Bill in March. SNAP cuts in the House Farm Bill could be the opening volley in a larger effort to take away food, housing, healthcare, and other necessities from people who are struggling – all under the misleading banner of “welfare reform” or “workforce development.” Our success in defeating cuts and harmful changes to SNAP in the Farm Bill—as well as defeating any similar proposals for other low-income assistance programs in future legislation—depends in part on how we respond to the release of the House Farm Bill in March. Whether you are a longtime SNAP advocate or just learning what SNAP stands for, please join the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for a webinar to learn about the potential threats to SNAP in the 2018 Farm Bill and suggestions on how to frame the debate and help protect food assistance.

NARC Member Call! NARC's Policies and Priorities for 2018

March 14, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Dial: (571) 317-3122 / Access code: 304-259-525

NARC leadership recently reassessed NARC’s policies and priorities based on likely 2018 congressional initiatives. Please join us for this member-only call to review NARC’s policies and priorities for 2018 (see information shared above), explain how NARC staff intend to work toward achieving these objectives, and share best practices and tips for educating and influencing Congress. Contact Neil Bomberg (202.618.6360, neil@narc.org) or Maci Morin (202.618.5691, maci.morin@narc.org) with questions.

The 2018 County Health Rankings State Reports: How to Use Data from These New Reports to Improve Health and Increase Equity

March 27, 3:00 PM ET

This year’s County Health Rankings release will include enhanced state reports that focus on persistent gaps in opportunity that contribute to poor health outcomes. Building on our strong foundation of calling attention to the many factors that influence health, these reports highlight data on social and economic disparities based on place and race and ethnicity, in addition to providing evidence-informed strategies and examples of communities taking action to address equity. Be sure to review your state’s 2018 report, which will be available on the **County Health Rankings & Roadmaps website** on March 14, and come to the webinar with questions.

CONTACT US

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