



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session

Both the House and the Senate will markup their budget resolutions this week. The Senate Budget Committee markup is scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday; the House Budget Committee markup is scheduled for Wednesday. A number of additional budget hearings are scheduled in committees this week.

Comments on EPA Proposed Rule on Air Pollution

Comments are due tomorrow, March 17, on a proposed rule from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which would tighten air pollution rules. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone proposes a tighter ozone standard that would result in hundreds of additional regions in non-compliance under the *Clean Air Act*. NARC is working with the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors on a potential coalition letter, which will be posted to our website. If your COG or MPO plans to submit comments, please send your submission to joanna@narc.org.

Increased Funding for EDA Urged through 'Dear Colleague' Letters

Members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) are circulating "Dear Colleague" letters to appropriations subcommittees, urging support for \$273 million in funding for the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in FY2016. This request represents a \$23 million increase over the FY2015 enacted level, and includes a \$9.5 million increase for planning grants (to \$39.5 million), an \$18 million increase for economic adjustment assistance (to \$53 million), and \$25 million for regional innovative strategies. Representatives John Duncan (R-TN) and James McGovern (D-MA) are leading the charge on the House letter. [The deadline for House signatures is March 20](#). Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) is leading the effort in the Senate. [The deadline for Senate signatures is March 25](#). NARC members are urged to ask their Senate and House members to sign onto these "Dear Colleague" letters.

Increased Funding for CDBG Urged through 'Dear Colleague' Letters

Members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) are circulating "Dear Colleague" letters in support of \$3.3 billion in funding for the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) in upcoming deliberations by Appropriations Committees in both houses of Congress. CDBG provides flexible funds for local governments to strengthen local economies and leverage private funding. This highly effective program allows local governments to respond to their individual community needs. NARC asks your support in urging your Washington representatives to [sign on to the attached letters by the March 18 deadline](#).

Senate Finance Leadership Seeks Input on Bipartisan Tax Reform

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) are soliciting ideas from stakeholders and the public on how to overhaul the nation's tax code to make it simpler, fairer, and more efficient. The goal of this effort is to provide additional input, data, and information to the Committee's bipartisan tax working groups, which are currently analyzing existing tax law and examining policy trade-offs and reform options within each group's designated area. The working groups will examine the individual income tax, business income tax, savings and investment, international tax and community development and infrastructure. Comment deadline is April 15.

Senate Holds Hearing on BRAC

Last Wednesday, the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support held a hearing on a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) request to seek a new round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in FY 2017. John Conger, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment, testified that military services need to find ways to eliminate excess capacity at installations as a result of sequestration and reductions to personnel. Several Committee members oppose the DoD proposal because it does not address several issues identified during the 2005 round of BRAC, including the upfront costs of closing facilities.

Senate Holds Hearing on FirstNet

Last week, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing on the progress of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). *The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012* established FirstNet as an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of a nationwide public safety broadband network (PSBN). During the hearing, Mark Goldstein, Director of Physical Infrastructure at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), testified that GAO estimates the cost of building and operating the PSBN could cost between \$12 billion and \$47 billion in its first ten years. Susan Swenson, chairwoman of FirstNet, said she expects FirstNet to reach full operability by 2022 and does not anticipate a need for further federal funding. Earlier this week, FirstNet released a [notice](#) requesting input from stakeholders on its preliminary interpretation of several issues.

Senate Reintroduces Energy-Efficiency Legislation

Last week, Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) reintroduced energy legislation, the *Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2015*. The bill promotes energy-efficient practices in commercial real estate buildings and require federal agencies to develop an implementation strategy for the maintenance, purchase, and use of energy-efficient technologies. The bill previously failed, as it was attached to the Keystone XL legislation.

Marketplace Fairness Act Introduced in Senate

On March 10, Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) introduced the *Marketplace Fairness Act of 2015* (S. 698) in the Senate. The bill is nearly identical to legislation that passed in the 113th Senate in a 69-27 vote. The bill would enable state and local governments to collect existing sales tax laws when residents make online purchases, creating a level playing field for bricks-and-mortar retailers and Internet retailers. Companion legislation has not yet been introduced in the House, but Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) is reportedly working on similar legislation. Meanwhile, House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) released a [discussion draft](#) of legislation that relies on hybrid-origin sourcing to collect sales taxes.

OTHER NEWS

Get into the Act: May is Older Americans Month

May is Older Americans Month, honoring older Americans and their contributions to their communities and the nation. Originally designated as Senior Citizens Month by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, this year's theme for the 50th anniversary of the *Older Americans Act* (OAA) is "Get into the Act." The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Community Living prepared a set of [resources](#) for observances in communities.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

OKI Solar Map and Website

The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) hosted a Solar Ready Workshop on March 6. The workshop was a great success with over 100 people in attendance, including local government officials, solar industry representatives, representatives from nonprofits groups, financial institutions and lenders, facility managers, and property owners. Session topics focused on the national and local solar industry, access to solar financing and investments, and public and private financing tools for the commercial and residential markets. Also at the workshop, OKI publicly launched its new [Go Solar Ready](#) solar map and website. The OKI solar map, created through the [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative Rooftop Solar Challenge project](#), provides general

information about the estimated annual solar energy potential on building rooftops in the OKI region. OKI created a short [video](#) to explain how the map works. The *Go Solar Ready* website also features information on solar best management practices, methods for promoting rooftop installations, and OKI's *Solar Ready Construction Guidelines*.

Dubuque Solar Workshop

On March 10, NARC hosted a regional solar workshop with the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) and the Petal Project in Dubuque, IA. The workshop provided actionable information on the benefits and barriers of solar development in Iowa, the regulatory landscape of solar, and innovative financing options for solar projects like Power Purchase Agreements. The workshop had over 45 attendees, and featured three local speakers from the Dubuque region in addition to the solar trainers from the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Outreach Partnership ([SolarOPs](#)).

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Contracts and Procurement Analyst

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Regional Planner

San Joaquin Council of Governments, Stockton, CA

Transportation Safety Planner/Civil Engineer

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, Pittsburgh, PA

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

2015 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards

Deadline: April 10

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Community Awareness Awards highlight innovative local practices and achievements by recognizing individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions toward making their communities safer, stronger, better prepared, and more resilient. Winners will be selected from nine categories, and must feature program activities taking place between January 1, 2014 and April 10, 2015. Submit applications to citizencorps@fema.dhs.gov.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Green Infrastructure for Arid Communities

March 24, 1:00-2:30 PM ET

This webinar will showcase green infrastructure practices and the many associated benefits that can be effective in wet, arid, and semi-arid climates around the nation that have different precipitation patterns and water demand challenges.

CONTACT US