



## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### Committee Highlights This Week

- Tuesday at 9:30 AM: Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson will **testify** before the House Appropriations Transportation-HUD Subcommittee on HUD's FY 2019 budget request.
- Tuesday at 9:30 AM: Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will **testify** before the House Appropriations Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee on the U.S. Department of Commerce's FY 2019 budget request.
- Tuesday at 10:00 AM: Energy Secretary Rick Perry will **testify** before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on the U.S. Department of Energy's FY 2019 budget request.
- Wednesday at 1:30 PM: Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue will **testify** before the House Appropriations Agriculture-FDA Subcommittee on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's FY 2019 budget request.
- Wednesday at 9:00 AM & Thursday at 10:00 AM: The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will hold a two-day hearing, *Combating the Opioid Crisis: Prevention and Public Health Solutions*, to examine the opioid crisis and possible legislative solutions.

### Keeping the Government Funded

Another funding deadline is fast approaching, and Congress has yet to adopt a funding bill that will keep the government open through the end of the current fiscal year on September 30.

Despite increases in both defense and non-defense discretionary funding, many in Congress remain dissatisfied with the \$1.3 trillion bill that House and Senate leaders plan to introduce today. The most serious objection is that this budget agreement will significantly add to the deficit, and therefore the debt.

There are also policy differences that continue to get in the way of a final agreement. Whether and how to shore up funding for the *Affordable Care Act* and Planned Parenthood are two significant stumbling blocks. Funding for immigration enforcement, including the US-Mexico border wall; a host of tax extenders and provisions to address business concerns about the impact of the new tax law; the new rail tunnel between New York and New Jersey, which the White House opposes and is using as a bargaining chip; and school safety and guns also threaten an agreement.

Moreover, it remains to be seen whether House and Senate members have enough time to debate and pass a bill before Friday without resorting to another short-term extension. In light of the upcoming mid-term election, members of both parties want to show their base that the core interests of their communities are being addressed – and many members are attempting to use this bill to do just that.

### Farm Bill Talks on Hold

At the request of his colleagues, Representative Collin C. Peterson stopped Farm Bill negotiations until House Agriculture Committee Chairman K. Michael Conaway provides Democrats with the draft text of the Farm Bill and the Congressional Budget Office cost estimates and impact assessments. Disagreement over the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is partly to blame – as Democrats have made it clear that they oppose the language for SNAP, as it has been described to them and reported in the press. Although Chairman Conaway hoped to release a bipartisan proposal last week, it was put on hold to gain support from several committee Democrats. These recent developments are likely to delay committee action until negotiations can start again between the committee Democrats and Republicans.

### **NARC Co-Writes Letter for FCC Filing**

NARC, in partnership with the National Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors, National League of Cities (NLC), and National Association of Counties (NACo), submitted a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expressing concern with their draft **Second Report and Order** for 5G deployment set for a vote on Thursday. By exempting “small” wireless deployments from review under the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* and the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*, the draft order would pave the way for dramatic changes in our communities with limited or, in many cases, no opportunity for local review. We also express our doubts that rural areas and urban deserts will gain from these actions, making broadband deployment an even greater obstacle.

### **Bipartisan Letter for Great Lakes Restoration Funding**

Representatives Sander Levin (D-MI) and David Joyce (R-OH) submitted a joint letter to the House Appropriations Committee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies requesting an appropriation of \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) for FY 2019. With 63 bipartisan co-signers joining the effort, this is the largest number of signers supporting GLRI funding. Representative Levin said, “The fact that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative garners such strong, bipartisan support is a testament to the importance it has to our region and the nation. Our public health and regional economic vibrancy is built on the Great Lakes’ ecological wellbeing, which can only be maintained with our sustained and robust commitment.”

### **Trump Unveils Plan to Combat Opioid Crisis**

Today in New Hampshire, a state with one of the highest overdose death rates in the country, the president unveiled his *Stop Opioid Abuse* plan. The administration’s new initiative has three steps: reduce drug demand through education, awareness, and prevention of over-prescribing; stop the flow of illicit drugs across country borders and within communities; and save lives now by expanding opportunities for proven treatments. Many recommendations were agreeable solutions, including increasing federal investment; creating an educational evidence-based campaign and **website** to raise public awareness; ensuring that at least half of all federally-employed healthcare providers adopt best practices for opioid prescribing within two years, and all of them within five years; and expanding access to evidence-based addiction treatments in every state. A couple controversial recommendations were to confront sanctuary cities and strengthen penalties against drug traffickers, which may include seeking the death penalty.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **State-Local Collaboration Needed Ahead Opportunity Zone Deadline**

On March 21, governors across the country will nominate a subset of their low-income census tracts to be eligible for tax-advantaged private investments. As included in the **2017 Tax and Jobs Act**, the program will allow investors to transfer unrealized capital gains into private sector investment vehicles called Opportunity Funds. The selected census tracts, or “Opportunity Zones,” will tap into what some experts expect to be over \$6 trillion in unrealized capital gains that may help rebuild some low-income neighborhoods. It is recommended that local officials work closely with their state counterparts to bring together stakeholders from businesses and philanthropic communities and help governors leverage the Opportunity Zone designation.

### **NLIHC Report on the Affordable Housing Gap**

In their newest report, **The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes**, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) found a shortage of 7.2 million affordable and available rental homes for extremely low-income renter households. These households are defined as those with income at or below the poverty level, or in the lower 30 percent of their area’s median income.

Seventy-one percent of extremely low-income renter households are severely burdened by housing costs, spending more than half of their income on housing. The study presents the availability of affordable homes for renter households in each state, D.C., and the 50 largest metropolitan areas.

## REGION SPOTLIGHT

### Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

To engage the next generation of leaders, some regional councils are putting on innovative programs for high school students. The Atlanta Regional Commission is now recruiting for its next round of its **Model Atlanta Regional Commission** program, bringing together 50 high school students from its 10-county region to learn about the issues shaping metro Atlanta. The program's participants practice effective leadership, communication, and collaboration skills through the development of actionable ideas and efforts to promote positive change in the region.

Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization has been visiting various high schools in the region hosting "Think Like a Planner" workshops to teach students how to make their area more accommodating and safe for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists. After walking around their local area, the students present their ideas for improvement to a panel of business professionals, showcasing what they have learned about urban planning and transportation decision-making.

## MEMBER REQUESTS

### MORPC Request: CRM Survey

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is exploring the integration of a new contact management system, also known as Customer Relationship Management (CRM). While there are hundreds of products on the market, MORPC is interested in finding out what is suitable for a regional council. They are also interested in learning if regional councils are using electronic archival and/or retrieval services. Please **participate in this survey**; results will be shared. Responses are due Friday, March 30.

## FEATURED JOBS

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

## FUNDING

*[View full list of grants!](#)*

### Medica Foundation Grants for Mental Illness and Chemical Addiction Programs

Applications Due: April 6

This initiative seeks proposals for programs that help people with serious mental illness and chemical addictions recover and lead productive lives. The Medica Foundation funds programs focused on a continuum of care and provide intensive, person-centered, multidisciplinary services using evidence-based screening, assessment, diagnostic, treatment, and/or prevention services. Projects may also include programs to address the mental/chemical health needs of people with physical, intellectual, developmental disabilities, and/or co-occurring disorders. The focus of this funding area is to address gaps in current behavioral health service, integrate physical and mental healthcare, and provide supportive and intensive case management services.

### USDA Community Connect Grant Program

Applications Due: May 14

The Community Connect Broadband Grant Program (Community Connect Grant Program) is designed to provide financial assistance for services in rural, economically-challenged communities where broadband service does not currently exist. Grant funds may be used to: deploy service at the Broadband Grant Speed to critical community facilities, rural residents, and rural businesses; construct, acquire, or expand a community center; and equip a community center that provides free access to service at the Broadband Grant Speed to community residents for at least two years. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis for entities to serve all premises in eligible rural areas at the Broadband Grant Speed to ensure rural consumers enjoy the same quality and range of broadband services as urban and suburban communities.

## EVENTS

*View full list of events!*

### **One Water for America Policy Framework Webinar 6: Reduce Lead Risks, and Embrace the Mission of Protecting Public Health**

March 20, 1:00 - 2:00 PM ET

Water utilities are responsible for providing safe drinking water by treating water to regulatory standards and maintaining safe water quality through the distribution system. Water utilities do not control the quality of plumbing systems within individual property lines, but their expertise can help find solutions to their community's lead problems. If we are committed to providing safe drinking water, we must reach across silos to generate community-wide solutions that engage healthcare systems, school systems, city departments, state agencies, and community groups.

### **Public-Private Partnerships: Delivering Broadband Solutions for America's Communities**

March 21, 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET

Join BroadbandUSA for a practical conversation on broadband public-private partnerships and how to create successful partnerships for different types of projects and communities. Learn about the successes, challenges, and risks as well as specific details on implementation and management steps. Speakers will highlight their experiences with public-private partnerships in deploying broadband networks, implementing smart cities, powering the Internet of Things, and creating digital inclusion projects.

### **Assessing Economic Impacts of a Carbon Price**

March 21, 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET

While national decisionmakers are divided on environmental policy, state and local leaders are taking the initiative to address climate change. In D.C., a coalition of organizations launched a campaign to introduce a carbon fee and dividend program. If adopted, the proposed carbon fee of \$20 per ton of greenhouse gases emitted would start in 2019, rising \$10 per year until reaching \$150 per ton in 2032. The study, sponsored by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, shows the effects on carbon emissions, revenue, and economic impacts (including GDP and employment) for the District as a whole and individual sectors of the economy. In this webinar, Scott Williamson of the Center for Climate Strategies will explore the proposal and an economic analysis of potential impacts.

### **NARC Webinar! Bridging the Divide Between Urban and Rural Areas**

March 27, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM ET

Strong urban-rural connections are crucial for creating prosperous and economically vibrant regions. This webinar will focus on the ways in which rural areas contribute significantly to regional economies and the benefits that accrue when there is a strong economic relationship between urban and rural areas. Join Christiana McFarland, NLC's research director, and David Shabazian, manager of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (SACOG-RUCS), for a discussion on the economic relationship between urban and rural areas, using SACOG-RUCS as a prime example of what happens when regions bridge the urban-rural divide.

## CONTACT US

*Copyright © 2018 National Association of Regional Councils, All rights reserved.*

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)