

April 9, 2018 [View this email in your browser](#)



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

The Senate is in session; the House will return tomorrow.

Overview

While Congress is back in session, we are not likely to see any major legislation pass both chambers between now and the mid-term elections in November. Most members have one eye on the elections and the other on a series of divisive issues that will make passing bipartisan legislation difficult.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell made it clear that his focus is on approving federal court and agency nominees. House leaders plan to focus their efforts on passing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution and rescinding funds already agreed to in the 2018 appropriations bill.

If adopted, the Balanced Budget Amendment would require the federal government to balance its budget each year. A two-thirds majority is required in both chambers for this legislation to pass – and while it may pass the House, there is little chance for it to pass the Senate. Even if the amendment were to pass both chambers, three-fourths of states would have to approve it before it could be included in the Constitution – not an easy task.

The rescissions that House leadership are contemplating are part of an effort to assuage House conservatives who strongly objected to increases in non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs and the president's 'buyer's remorse' over signing the FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill into law. These rescissions would cut funding for NDD programs like transportation, housing, energy, and economic and community development while preserving the increased funds for defense. Likely to be presented in a series of bills that will require multiple votes, these bills are likely to pass the House but fail to see the light of day in the Senate.

Legislation for infrastructure programs, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and the 2018 Farm Bill will face enormous obstacles to passage. Stay tuned as we monitor how the House and Senate move forward and report on our efforts to influence the process on your behalf.

Latest News on the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is expected to be one of the first pieces of legislation the House will resume work on now that they are back in session. The House Agriculture Committee could release the bill text of as early as this week, with a markup on April 18. While we do not know the bill's content, we anticipate big changes to the SNAP program. These changes could include the extension of existing work requirements to parents with children and those caring for people with illnesses and disabilities; and the elimination of a state option that protects low-wage working families, seniors, and people with disabilities from abruptly losing most or all their SNAP benefits when they work slightly more and earn modestly more wages.

National Flood Insurance Program Changes

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) implements NFIP changes and updates every six months. **The following changes to the NFIP went into effect** on April 1: premiums

will see an average increase of 6.9 percent when including the *Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act* (HFIAA) surcharge and Federal Policy Fee (FPF); a minimal increase of Cost of Compliance Premiums; and the allowance of a policyholder and their spouse to benefit from the lower HFIAA charge when they reside in a separate primary residence for more than 50 percent of the year. The **following changes are expected to go into effect on October 1**: policyholders who purchase private flood insurance will be allowed to cancel their NFIP duplicate policy, NFIP insurers will be required to notify certain policyholders of lower-cost premium options, and eligibility for the Newly Mapped procedure rating option will be extended.

Agencies to Sign Executive Order that Cuts Infrastructure Project Review Times

At least a dozen Trump administration agencies – including the Interior, Energy, Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – are planning to sign a Trump memo after today’s Cabinet meeting to streamline environmental reviews for major infrastructure projects. This agreement would implement an **executive order** signed by President Trump in August to establish a “one Federal decision” mechanism,” which means that every major infrastructure project will have only one “lead” agency responsible for navigating it through the entire federal environmental review and permitting process. The Trump administration has set the goal of completing reviews within two years.

Federal Deficit to Top \$1 Trillion by FY 2020

Today, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) announced that it expects the fiscal year 2018 deficit to top \$800 billion and the fiscal year 2020 deficit to top \$1 trillion. The increase, according to Congress’ bipartisan budget watchdog, will result from the combination of the tax law passed last December that cuts federal revenues by over \$1 trillion over the next 10 years, and a bipartisan agreement to raise defense and non-defense discretionary funding by \$300 billion over the next two years. According to the *Washington Post*, Benjamin Page of the non-partisan Tax Policy Center said, “We’ve had a big tax cut and a big spending increase, and they’re showing up here.”

OTHER NEWS

Feds Invite State and Local Agencies to Take Part in Disaster Exercise

FEMA’s **2018 National Level Exercise** runs from April 30 to May 11. Federal authorities invite state and local government agencies to participate in this multi-day disaster planning exercise. This year, the scenario will be a hurricane that makes landfall near Hampton Roads, Virginia. Some of the activities include: activating state emergency operations centers, reviewing hurricane plans, and setting up a facility to distribute supplies. Those that want to take part in the exercise can choose to participate for a day or more.

Ransomware: A ‘Soft Nuclear Weapon’ Aimed at Government

After a March 22 ransomware attack in which hackers asked for a ransom of \$51,000 in bitcoin, the City of Atlanta disrupted computers in at least five of its thirteen departments. But this was not the only public ransomware attack in recent weeks – Baltimore, Maryland’s 9-1-1 system was disrupted and Leeds, Alabama paid hackers \$12,000 in bitcoin. According to a recent International City/County Management Association **survey**, 44 percent of local governments report that they regularly face cyberattacks. How can local governments prepare for these attacks, or mitigate damage from successful ones? Recommended strategies include:

- Establish stronger cybersecurity policies;
- Prioritize funding for cybersecurity;
- Hire or empower a chief information security officer;
- Engage with the **Multi-State Information Sharing & Analysis Center**, which is responsible for improving the overall cybersecurity posture of all state and local governments;
- Ask the Homeland Security to do a “SWOT analysis” of your digital infrastructure; and
- Ask your state for assistance, especially if your local government is small.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

ACOG Mourns Passing of John G. Johnson

John G. Johnson, a longtime public servant and regional government advocate, has passed away at the age of 68. He served as executive director of the Association of Central Oklahoma

Governments (ACOG) from July 2008 to December 2017. He was a board member for the South West Regional Economic Development Association and a member of the Statewide 9-1-1 Board. His tireless work with state legislators on regional transit throughout his career ensured passage of the legislation that established regional transit authorities in Oklahoma. Our thoughts are with the entire staff at ACOG.

MEMBERSHIP REQUEST

MORPC Request: Costar Subscription

Does your organization subscribe to Costar? The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is looking for feedback from those that are using Costar to access regional data. If you have used or are currently using Costar, MORPC would like to know about your experience, the quality of the data, and if you found their pricing structure consistent. Please share your thoughts with anna@narc.org.

REGIONS LEAD

Visit www.regionslead.org to read up on the latest NARC blogs. We invite members to submit blogs to the site too. Please send contributions to anna@narc.org.

2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill Bolsters Many State and Local Programs

By NARC Staff

Since the release of the FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill on March 21, NARC staff has been combing through the \$1.3 trillion package to determine how localities will be impacted. Much of it is great news for regions, as the bill proposes additional funding for so many of the priorities NARC has advocated for over the last year.

President Releases Budget that Would Undercut Funding to Regions

by Neil Bomberg

On February 12, the president officially submitted his **fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget proposal** and **addendum** to Congress. If enacted, his recommendations would make significant programmatic and funding changes to federal programs in FY 2019. The result of these recommendations would include a noteworthy \$107 billion parity gap between defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding levels.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Transportation Planner/Research Analyst II

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Transportation Planner/Research Analyst II

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Manager of Contracts and Procurement

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Senior Risk Program Analyst

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Environmental Planner/Engineer

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

Adult and Young Adult Reentry Projects

Applications Due: May 4

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has announced the availability of approximately \$82.5 million in grant funds authorized by Section 169 of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), which authorizes research and evaluations to improve the management and effectiveness of workforce programs and activities. Through this funding

opportunity, ETA seeks to enhance both adult and young adult reentry strategies through collaboration with the field to identify and respond to emerging or chronic reentry challenges. The intent of this initiative is to protect community safety by ensuring that formerly incarcerated individuals:

- Become productive, responsible, and law-abiding members of society;
- Are provided with positive opportunities to engage in pro-social activities, such as employment and/or education;
- Maintain long-term employment;
- Sustain a stable residence; and
- Successfully address their substance abuse issues and mental health needs, as applicable, through partnerships with local programs.

EPA Announces New Funding for Water Infrastructure Projects

Letter of Interest Due: July 6

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the availability of \$5.5 billion in loans, which could leverage over \$11 billion in water infrastructure projects through the *Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (WIFIA) program. The two priorities for this funding round are: 1) to provide for clean and safe drinking water, including reducing exposure to lead in the nation's drinking water systems; and 2) to repair, rehabilitate, and replace aging infrastructure and conveyance systems. In the letter of interest, the prospective borrower should provide information to demonstrate the project's eligibility, financial creditworthiness, engineering feasibility, and alignment with EPA's policy priorities. If EPA selects the project, then the prospective borrower is invited to apply.

EVENTS

View full list of events!

Internet Sales Tax: From 1967 to Oral Argument in South Dakota v. Wayfair

April 17, 1:00-2:00 PM ET

On April 17, the Supreme Court will hear oral argument in *South Dakota v. Wayfair*. In this case, the Supreme Court will decide whether to allow states to require out-of-state vendors to collect sales tax. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of South Dakota, states and local governments will be able to collect billions of dollars more in sale tax annually. Join Tillman Breckenridge, Bailey Glasser, who wrote the State and Local Legal Center amicus brief in this case, in a discussion about how we got here and what happened at oral argument.

NARC Webinar! F4F: Incorporating Electric Vehicles into Your Fleet

April 18, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Fleets for the Future (F4F) is a national U.S. Department of Energy-funded partnership, led by NARC, Clean Cities coalitions, and industry experts tasked with coordinating regional and national procurement initiatives to consolidate bulk orders of alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) and infrastructure. Please join the F4F team on April 18 to learn about electric vehicle (EV) opportunities available on the market today, how to assess the suitability in your fleets, and how incorporating EVs can reduce costs for your fleets. You can find the team's best practice guide for electric vehicle procurement on the **F4F website**. Q&A will follow the presentation.

NARC Webinar! Regional Food Planning Initiatives Help Shape Healthy Communities and Economies

April 26, 3:00-4:00 PM ET

Regional councils have a natural advantage for leading food planning initiatives. Join this webinar to learn about this advantage, the number of regional councils already taking on food-related initiatives, and the kinds of projects they are implementing. Our speakers will highlight opportunities and common challenges for regional councils in the local food space. Three regional councils will share information about their projects and how their efforts will help their organizations' economic and community development and food equity goals.

Understanding SNAP & Its Importance to Reducing Poverty in Rural America

May 2, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one leading federal program that helps to provide needed assistance to millions of struggling, low-income individuals and families. Join

NACo for this educational webinar to dive into SNAP's critical importance to helping reduce poverty in rural counties, including the role of county governments in administering SNAP in 10 states. Moreover, attendees will hear a legislative update on SNAP as it relates to the Farm Bill reauthorization and a broad recap of the NACo Farm Bill Summit in Palm Beach County, Florida. This webinar will include a blend of subject-matter expertise, county case examples and interactive question-and-answer opportunity.

CONTACT US

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