

April 25, 2016 [View this email in your browser](#)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

House and Senate are in session.

Overview

This week, the House will take action on bills concerning the FBI's terrorist screening database (**H.R. 4240**), email privacy (**H.R. 699**), and trade secret protection (**S. 1890**). House Armed Services will mark up the full *National Defense Authorization Act* for 2017 (**H.R. 4909**). Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation will mark up several measures, including a bill (**S. 2644**) to reauthorize the Federal Communications Commission for the **first time in more than 25 years** and House Energy and Commerce starts a two-day markup of 22 bills, including several measures to address opioid abuse. Senate Judiciary will mark up bills related to expatriating terrorist associates (**S. 247**) and DNA testing (**S. 2348, S. 2577**).

Appropriations

Senate leaders are hoping to break a record by passing an appropriations bill in April. Passage of the \$37.5 billion Energy-Water bill (**S.1140**) for FY2017, which is expected to be completed by Tuesday, would mark the earliest final vote on a spending measure in the Senate since the modern budgeting system began in the 1970s. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is prepared to devote up to 12 weeks of floor time to get all 12 regular spending bills passed by the start of the

new fiscal year on October 1, a feat last accomplished in 1994.

Democrats warn that the process could significantly slow if Republicans attach policy riders designed to undermine Administration initiatives. Several amendments are scheduled for votes today and tomorrow and more than 68 amendments have been filed so far. The *Waters of the U.S.* rule was at stake last week when Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) pushed an amendment aimed at nullifying the rule; however, Republicans mustered only 56 votes for Hoeven's measure, falling short of the 60 required. The Senate is scheduled to vote on one amendment Monday and three on Tuesday, including one by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) that would increase the U.S. Department of Energy's wind research and development program by \$15.4 million.

If the Senate completes action on the Energy-Water bill in coming days, there are three more appropriations bills that have been approved by the Appropriations Committee and are ready for floor action: Military Construction-Veterans Affairs (**S. 2806**), Commerce-Justice-Science (**S. 2837**), and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (**S. 2844**). The committee scheduled no additional markups for bills this week and Congress is on recess next week.

EPA's Brownfields Program Hearing

At a hearing last week, the House Environment and the Economy Subcommittee heard from six witnesses on the importance of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program. All testimonies supported reauthorization and provided examples of how the program benefits communities. Witnesses encouraged Congress to provide more funding and answered questions on how to proceed. Several members of Congress were interested in providing more opportunities to rural communities and discussed the benefits of working regionally to clean up brownfields. NARC will be joining our local government colleagues in supporting reauthorization of this program, which has not been reauthorized since 2006.

OAA Reauthorization Enacted

Reauthorization of the *Older Americans Act* (OAA; S.192) was signed into law by President Obama on April 19. OAA establishes services and protections to Americans above the age of 60, including funding for caretaking, nutritional, and health services in addition to ombudsman programs that protect older Americans from abuse or negligence within these services.

FEMA Requests Comments on *Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide*

As the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works to implement the new standard for its Public Assistance program, it is requesting input on the draft language from the public and emergency management community. The draft language is posted to the Federal Register and will be available for comment until May 23. FEMA will conduct outreach to its intergovernmental partners through a webinar and the upcoming Public Assistance Workshop taking place at the Emergency Management Institute in May.

FHWA System Performance NPRM

Last week, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (**NPRM**) proposing national performance measures regarding performance of the National Highway System, Freight Movement on the Interstate System, and the CMAQ program. This is the third of three rules from FHWA establishing national measures of performance, and is by far the most extensive and far-reaching of the three. This rule will have implications for MPOs and for the planning process in general. [NARC would like to consult a group of members for their reactions to this rule, to help us understand its impacts.](#) Your feedback is crucial as we develop our response to the rule and prepare comments to the docket. If you are interested in participating, please contact Erich Zimmermann (erich@narc.org).

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Developing an Emergency Management Plan Webinar

April 27, 2:00 PM ET

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." Wise words from Benjamin Franklin, but words too often not followed by business leaders. As part of Agility's 12 Steps to Preparedness campaign, this webinar will show you how to protect your most critical functions while overcoming or mitigating threats. You'll learn how to: put executable plans in place, ensure leadership & proper financial backing, and ensure that logistics are in place to facilitate your plans.

USDA Rural Gateway Peer-to-Peer Conference Call

April 28, 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET

Leaders of the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD) will share their knowledge of successfully implementing activities that have expanded and created opportunities for those living in rural communities, with a focus on strategies to expand the development of cooperatives and local food systems. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions about best practices and establish contacts for future reference. RSVP by email to rhed@hud.gov no later than close of business on April 26. Please include your name and organization. If you have any questions, please call 1-877-RURAL-26.

NARC Awards! Application Period is Open

Deadline extended to April 29

NARC is accepting nominations for its 2016 Achievement and Leadership Awards, which will be presented at the Awards Gala Dinner during the 50th Annual Conference and Exhibition, June 26-29, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The awards provide an excellent opportunity for winners to promote their successes to a larger audience, as well as share best practices with their partners and peers. See [nomination guidelines](#) for details.

NARC Webinar! Partnering for Strong Economies: Regional Councils & Walkable Communities

May 5, 2:00 PM ET

Join NARC and America Walks for a webinar on how federal transportation funding is allocated through regional councils and how to access it for projects that promote walkable communities, including complete streets, safety efforts, and place-making. Attendees will explore two unique perspectives as we hear from a regional planner and an advocate who has worked to use the resources available from their regional council. Q&A to follow.

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