



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress in in session.

This Week in Congress

The Senate will continue consideration of Trade Promotion Authority this week. The House will focus on homeless veterans (**HR 474**) and other veterans issues, including employment (**HR 1038**, **HR 1313**, and **HR 1382**), identification (**HR 91**), and housing (**HR 1816**). Tomorrow, the House is expected to vote on the *Highway and Transportation Funding Act* (**HR 2353**), which extends the surface transportation program through the end of July. Congress was unable to find offsets adequate to provide the \$11 billion needed to keep the trust fund solvent through the end of this calendar year. The Senate is expected to vote on the short term extension shortly after House passage.

Task Force on 21st Century Policing Issues Final Report

The White House released the final **report** from the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing today. The Administration directed **the task force** to identify best practices and offer recommendations on policing practices that reduce crime and build public trust. The report includes recommendations on improving oversight and policy, technology and data, community policing, training and education, and officer safety. In conjunction with the release of the report, the White House also announced new requirements for police departments seeking to purchase specific equipment. Under the new standards, police departments must get approval from their local civilian governing body, such as a city council, and provide additional information justifying their need for the equipment. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) also announced \$163 million in federal grants available to help local police departments implement the task force's recommendations.

House Passes Bill Requiring EPA to Withdraw Waters of the U.S. Rule

Last week, the House passed the *Regulatory Integrity Protection Act* (**HR 1732**) in a 261-155 vote. The bill prohibits the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) from finalizing a proposed rule that seeks to define the federal government's authority to regulate certain interstate waters under the *Clean Water Act*. The bill also requires EPA and USACE to withdraw their proposed rule and consult with state and local officials to develop a new proposal. In a **statement of administration policy**, the White House said the bill would deny businesses and communities the necessary certainty to invest in projects that rely on clean water. Similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate. See **NARC's letter of support**.

Legislation to Lift the Crude Oil Export Ban Introduced in the Senate

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced the *Energy Supply and Distribution Act of 2015* (**S 1312**) last Wednesday. The bill lifts the ban on

domestic crude oil exports and requires the U.S. Department of Energy to lead an effort to coordinate energy data collection, as recommended in the Administration's **Quadrennial Energy Review**. Earlier this Congress, Representative Joe Barton (R-TX) introduced **HR 702**, which also repeals the ban on domestic crude oil exports.

House Passes Bills Expanding Benefits to Public Safety Officials

The House voted to approve multiple bills affecting state and local law enforcement and public safety officials. One such bill is the *National Blue Alert Act* (**S 665**), which directs DOJ to work with state and local law enforcement to develop a national network to distribute information on security threats to law enforcement officers. The bill requires DOJ to work with state and local law enforcement agencies on the development of Blue Alert plans and creates new dedicated DOJ staff to work on these activities. The Senate passed the *National Blue Alert Act* last month. The *Don't Tax Our Fallen Public Safety Heroes Act* (**HR 606**) was passed in a 413-0 vote and exempts from taxation all benefits paid to survivors of public safety officers killed in the line of duty. Finally, the *Defending Public Safety Employee's Retirement Act* (**HR 2146**) allows federal, state, and local public safety officials to begin receiving payments from federal government retirement plans at age 50. HR 2146 was approved by a 407-5 vote.

THUD Approved by House Appropriations Committee

The House Appropriations Committee last week approved the FY 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) appropriations **bill** in a 30 – 21 vote. The legislation provides \$55.3 billion in discretionary spending for THUD programs, an increase of \$1.5 billion above FY 2015 levels and \$9.7 billion below the President's FY16 budget request. Highway and transit programs receive level funding, \$40.25 billion for highways and \$9.5 billion for transit. The Community Development Block Grant program kept the FY15 level of \$3 billion. The committee rejected several amendments to increase infrastructure funding, including Amtrak, during the mark-up. Floor time for the House THUD bill has not been scheduled. The Senate Appropriations Committee has not unveiled its version of THUD legislation.

Appropriations Subcommittee Advances Commerce, Justice and Science Bill

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies approved its FY16 spending bill by voice vote last Thursday. No amendments were offered during the markup. The bill provides \$8.2 billion for the U.S. Department of Commerce, a \$251 million reduction from the FY15 level. The bill also includes \$27.5 billion in funding for DOJ, an \$852 million increase over FY15. The bill, which includes approximately \$2 billion for DOJ grant programs, reduces overall funding by \$334 million (compared to FY15 levels), while increasing funding for several state and local grant programs, including Violence Against Women programs (which will receive \$474 million, a \$44 million increase), Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (\$409 million, a \$33 million increase), and missing and exploited children programs (\$68 million).

OTHER NEWS

FHWA Releases Bike Lane Planning Guide

Today, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) released its new **Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide**. The guide outlines planning considerations and design options for certain types of bicycle infrastructure. It provides information on one and two-way facilities, outlines different options for providing separation, and highlights midblock design considerations including driveways, transit stops, accessibility, and loading zones. Intersection design is also taken into consideration, including the related operations, signalization, signage, and on-road marking concerns. Case studies highlighting notable practices and lessons learned from across the country are also included. The guide builds on FHWA's **current policy** to provide pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and FHWA's support for **design flexibility**. It will inform the U.S. Department of Transportation's ongoing **Safer People, Safer Streets** initiative as well.

NIST Guide Comment Period

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) issued for public review its draft *Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure*. The guide is intended to help communities plan for windstorms, floods, earthquakes, sea-level rise, industrial mishaps,

and other hazards and to help communities mitigate consequences of such disasters. NIST is seeking review and comments on the draft during a 60-day public comment period and is willing to work with individual councils interested in learning more about the draft guide.

N4A Livable Communities Report

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) released a report highlighting innovative programs in developing Livable Communities. The report includes descriptions of programs in six states and shares lesson learned in developing action plans to serve an aging population.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

NCTCOG Earns EPA SmartWay Affiliate Challenge Honor

EPA recently recognized the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) as one of seven recipients of a SmartWay Affiliate Challenge award for support of policies and practices that reduce truck emissions and improve freight efficiency. The SmartWay Affiliate Challenge is a national campaign developed by EPA to acknowledge organizations that participate in SmartWay and do an exceptional job supporting the partnership's freight sustainability goals. The challenge was open to all affiliates nationwide.

MEMBER REQUESTS

MWCOG: Labor Market Data

Chuck Bean, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), is interested in learning how other NARC members use labor market data. MWCOG's Board of Directors identified regional economic competitiveness as its focus for the year, and is interested in developing a deeper understanding of the Washington region's industry and occupation outlook. Please send responses to this inquiry to anna@narc.org. Specifically, MWCOG would like to know:

1. How are you using labor market data? What projects are you applying it to?
2. What data sources do you use? Which do you find most useful and why?
3. Do you have experience or have you considered producing industry and occupational outlooks as part of your regional forecasting process? If so, what resources and tools are you using?
4. Aside from regional forecasting, have you developed any other labor market data products? If so, what products have been the most effective at engaging your Board of Directors as well as Economic Development Community?
5. Do you have experience using labor market data to support partnerships with employers or workforce investment boards around workforce development needs?

NARC: Request For Information

NARC has been invited to testify before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on EPA's new proposed ozone standard. (See [NARC's coalition letter](#) on the proposal.) We would like member input for our testimony. If you submitted comments to the docket, please email those to joanna@narc.org or erich@narc.org. Please also send answers to the following questions by close of business on May 19:

1. What is the attainment status of your region under the current ozone standard? How will that change under EPA's proposal to tighten the standard to 65-70 ppb?
2. If your region is out of attainment, please provide specific examples of the types of local regulations or ordinances the county/region had to implement to comply with the nonattainment designation. For example, some regions/counties have regulations on burning or barbeque grill usage.
3. Please describe the transportation conformity process in your region under the current standard. How will that change if the standard is tightened? What projects would likely need to come off your plans as a result? Please provide specifics on the local impact(s) of those projects, if possible.
4. What other affects (beyond transportation conformity) would a change in the standard (and

on your attainment designation) have on the region? Specific impacts on the region's economic development would be particularly helpful--for example, have new requirements impacted keeping or attracting new industries to your region? Or specific counties within the region?

5. Please describe any benefits the region has seen from implementation of the current ozone standard.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Accountant

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Columbus, OH

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

FirstNet Grants Available

The U.S. Department of Commerce has responsibility for building, operating, and maintaining a nationwide wireless broadband network for public safety, known as FirstNet. This interoperable platform for emergency and daily public safety communications was first recommended by the 9-11 Commission and is funded by Congress. It is a data only system and does not include voice communications. Commerce has provided grants to each state to begin planning for the program and has been going across the country reaching out to public safety, state, and local representatives.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Navigating Indicator Databases

May 20, 1:00PM ET

The U.S. Census Bureau's Economic Indicators provide the first official measures of the changing U.S. economy. Economic indicators provide monthly and quarterly data that are timely, reliable, and offer comprehensive measures of the U.S. economy. These statistics cover construction, housing, international trade, retail trade, wholesale trade, services, and manufacturing. The data provide measures of current economic activity that allow analysis of performance and inform business investment and policy decisions. Learn about economic indicators data, how the data can be used, and how you can access the data through the *Investigating Economic Indicators* webinar series. This webinar will focus navigating Census Bureau databases to find economic indicator data.

NARC's 49th Annual Conference and Exhibition

June 7-10, Raleigh, NC

Join the conversation on the latest in regional government at NARC's Annual Conference and Exhibition, hosted by the Triangle J Council of Governments. Events begin Sunday afternoon with two optional mobile workshops exploring Raleigh. Sessions will highlight economic development tools for regions, the impact of changing demographics, collaborating to reduce waste, economic transformation in the region, innovations in transportation, digital technology, street design, workforce, green infrastructure, and water resources.

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