



## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is not in session. The Senate will return June 4, and the House will return June 5.*

### **Senate Finance Committee Releases 22 Opioid Bills**

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee announced the introduction of **twenty-two bills** to tackle the opioid crisis. In a joint statement, Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) said, “With the release of these smart and effective policy solutions, we are committed to convening a markup in the coming weeks to further examine these recommendations, move them through the committee in regular order, and put them on track to becoming law and making a difference in the lives of Americans across the country.”

### **Banking Bill Expected to Help Lower State and Local Borrowing Costs**

According to public finance officials and experts, the *Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act (S. 2155)* that the president signed into law last Thursday promises to help reduce state and local borrowing costs. The bill reclassifies investment grade municipal bonds as “high-quality liquid assets,” which may drive many major banks to use these bonds to meet federal liquidity requirements. This is expected to drive up demand for the bonds while decreasing interest rates for state and local borrowers. Emily Brock, leader of the Government Finance Officers Association's federal liaison center, said that while it's too early to know how much this designation will save state and local governments, she anticipates much interest from banks in municipal debt.

### **Update on WRDA**

The House and Senate versions of the water resources legislation currently moving through Congress take several perspectives. The Senate version is now broader than the House version, now that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee adopted multiple amendments creating new water infrastructure financing mechanisms and the requirement that the iron and steel must be made in the United States. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), chairman of the Senate

Environment and Public Works Committee, said he is “committed to getting infrastructure to the president’s desk;” however; he could not provide a timeline for the full Senate to review the bill.

The House bill was designed to move through the chamber quickly, without controversial provisions. The bill authorizes projects the Army Corps of Engineers can move forward, some of which include a \$3.3 billion storm mitigation project in Texas; a \$973 million harbor expansion in Georgia; and a \$306 million flood-control project in Hawaii. The House bill would also move the Army Corps of Engineers out of the U.S. Department of Defense. The bill is expected to receive a vote the first week of June.

## OTHER NEWS

### **Quest for Affordable Housing Drives People Away from the Coasts**

For the first time in a decade, cities in Texas and Arizona gained more residents than New York City and Los Angeles gained. A major factor in this change seems to be the high and rising cost of living in coastal metropolitan areas. The average New York City or Los Angeles homeowner spends close to 30 percent of their income on their mortgage and taxes, compared to the 22 percent that San Antonio or Phoenix residents pay. Lawrence Yun, chief economist at the National Association of Realtors, said that Texas and Arizona cities have gained popularity because of lower home prices and low-tax policies drawing in more employers.

## REGION SPOTLIGHT

### **ARC Forum on Social Isolation and Depression in Older Adults**

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) recently hosted a forum with health care professionals, educators, students, and the public devoted to the topic of social isolation and depression in older adults. According to AARP, about four million adults enrolled in Medicare have poor social networks.

The forum generated some important insights:

- Retirement can be tougher for men, as they are less likely to ask for help.
- Those with depression do not always look sad, and it often looks different in older adults than younger people.
- The forum agreed on definitions for the terms: social isolation, loneliness, and depression. Social isolation refers to a lack of contact between a person and society and can be voluntary; loneliness is psychic pain or distress that occurs when a person feels alone; and depression is a disease with core symptoms of depressed mood and lack of interest in normal activities.
- Social isolation, loneliness, and depression are all public health issues. Experts recommend talk therapy – combined with medication, if necessary – and physical exercise to help combat these issues.
- Suggestions for change included confronting how we think about aging and older people, as well as considering home sharing programs that match older adults who have extra space with younger adults in need of housing.

## FUNDING

***View full list of grants!***

### **FY 2019 NEA Our Town Grants**

Applications Due: August 9

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts’ (NEA) creative placemaking grants program. These grants support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Successful Our Town projects ultimately lay the groundwork for systemic changes that sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities. Our Town has two program areas:

- **Place-Based Projects:** Through arts engagement, cultural planning, design, and/or artist/creative industry support, these projects contribute to improved quality of life in local communities. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization.

Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$200,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

- **Knowledge Building Projects:** These projects build and disseminate knowledge about how to leverage arts, culture, and design as mechanisms for strengthening communities. These grants are available to arts service or design service organizations, and/or other national or regional membership, policy, or university-based organizations. These projects require a partnership that will facilitate the knowledge sharing and/or exchange. Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$100,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

### **HUD FY 2018 Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants**

Applications Due: September 17

The Choice Neighborhoods program leverages significant public and private dollars to support locally driven strategies that address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, come together to create and implement a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants support the implementation of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans that are expected to achieve the following three core goals:

1. *Housing:* Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.
2. *People:* Improve outcomes for households living in the target housing related to employment and income, health, and children's education.
3. *Neighborhood:* Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, important to families' choices about their community.

## **EVENTS**

***View full list of events!***

### **NARC Webinar! Fleets for the Future Webinar: Best Practices for EV Charging Infrastructure**

May 31, 12:30-1:30 PM ET

Fleets for the Future (F4F) is a national team of regional councils, 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. Join the F4F team to learn the basics of electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE), how to use telematics for infrastructure planning, and best practices in education and technology. To learn more about incorporating electric vehicles into your fleet, see our team's **most recent webinar recording** and **best practice guide**.

### **Dealing with Forecast Uncertainty in Decision Making**

May 31, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

This webinar is one of a five-part hurricane awareness webinar series in advance of the 2018 Atlantic Hurricane Season. The webinars are intended to improve the understanding of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) hurricane-related products and services, so that, with our partners in the emergency management and broadcast communities, we can build a Weather Ready Nation.

### **Healthy Homes Equal Healthier Lives: A Discussion with HUD Secretary Carson**

June 8, 10:00-11:30 AM ET

The advantages of a more integrated approach to the health and housing needs of our country are significant. By more tightly linking the two, policymakers can work to improve the health outcomes and quality of life for vulnerable Americans, while more efficiently allocating limited federal resources. There are many promising collaborative opportunities at the intersection of health and housing as federal departments confront a host of pressing challenges, from combating

opioid addiction to recovering from natural disasters. Join the Bipartisan Policy Center for a discussion with HUD Secretary Ben Carson on the Trump administration's health and housing priorities and partnerships.

### **Protecting Elections from Cybersecurity Threats: Resources to Help Counties**

June 21, 2:00-3:30 PM ET

Cyber threats and IT systems manipulation is a growing concern – not only for county election officials but the public trust as well. Presented by the National Association of Counties (NACo), Public Technology Institute (PTI), and Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing Analysis Center (EI-ISAC), this webinar will present an overview of the types of threats that local elections officials might expect, while providing resources – tips for incident response and remediation, tools for monitoring vulnerabilities and threats, leading practices for elections systems security – to help local officials make their elections systems more secure.

## **CONTACT US**

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

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