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## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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# eRegions

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## **EXECUTIVE BRIEF**

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you had a wonderful 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend! This particular Independence Day gave me a lot to think about, as I was selected to be a juror on a trial here in Washington, DC on July 2. Serving on a panel of peers, evaluating the evidence, and providing a verdict as part of a jury is an important civic duty in this country, and one of the features of our justice system that makes us unique. It's an honor to serve.

Of course, jury duty is also a bit disruptive to the rest of our lives. As the judge has told us that the trial could last for two weeks, I have asked Shannon and Erich to handle any arising matters in my place during court hours; I will be in the office after 5:30 PM and available by phone and email during our many court breaks.

In other news, now that we've wrapped up our 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, we have begun planning NARC's Executive Directors' Conference in Des Moines, Iowa September 21-24.

**Erich W. Zimmermann**

Director of Transportation  
Programs

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Please let us know if you have any ideas for events or speakers you would like to see at the conference. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in Des Moines this September!

Thanks,  
Joanna

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## PROGRAMUPDATE

**Solar Energy's Emerging Role in Agriculture:** More and more farmers are noticing the benefits of integrating solar energy into their farms. Solar energy allows farmers to independently meet their high energy needs, eliminate the risks associated with fossil fuels, and reduce the farm's impact on the environment. NARC's latest Solar Outreach Partnership case study highlights [Pinehold Gardens](#), a 21 acre farm in Milwaukee that adopted solar energy to reduce the farm's carbon footprint and monthly electricity bill. Click [HERE](#) to read more about Pinehold Gardens' decision to go solar and the many benefits that resulted.

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## POLICYUPDATE

*Congress is in session.*

**Appropriations Update:** There are 35 legislative days remaining before the start of the new fiscal year – October 1 – when FY15 appropriations *should* be complete. However, this process hasn't seen an on-time finish since 1994, and it is expected that this year will be no different. The U.S. House of Representatives is nearly halfway through their bills, with the sixth appropriations bill (Energy-Water) up for vote this week. The U.S. Senate has yet to pass any of its spending bills due to an amendment process roadblock.

**House Set to Vote on Workforce Legislation:** This Wednesday, *July 9*, the House is expected to vote on *HR 803, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, a bipartisan bill that reauthorizes and modernizes the *Workforce Investment Act*. NARC strongly supports this bill and urges you to contact your member of Congress to vote YES. WIOA was passed overwhelmingly by the Senate on June 25.

**Freight Trust Fund Bill Expected This Week:** Later this week, House Transportation Committee member Janice Hahn (D-CA) is expected to introduce a bill that will create a Freight Network Trust Fund, funded with a portion of import duties collected by Customs and Border Patrol. The bill would provide approximately \$2 billion annually for so-called “last-mile” connectors that are crucial for system efficiency.

**State and Local Elected Officials Support Long-Term Transportation Funding:** In a letter today to House and Senate leadership, leaders from a number of national associations that represent state, county, and municipal officials – including the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities – urged Congress to solve the impending Highway Trust Fund (HTF) crisis and pass a long-term reauthorization to replace MAP-21. The letter cites the need for a strong commitment from the federal government and the uncertainty that arises from short-term extensions and temporary patches. The letter can be read [HERE](#).

**Congress Needs \$8.1B for HTF Fix:** The highway account of the HTF is expected to dip below \$4 billion (B) by the end of July. Once it dips below this level, the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) will take measures to ensure that the account will be able to cover existing obligations (see post below). **The Congressional Budget Office (CBO)** indicates that the highway account of the HTF will need \$6.6B to remain solvent through the end of the 2014 calendar year; the transit account will need another \$1.5B. Senior staff from the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways & Means Committee met during the recent July 4<sup>th</sup> recess to negotiate a package of offsets and a bill duration (Sen. Wyden prefers a bill through the end of the year while House Republicans would like a bill that extends into 2015.). Despite progress, it is unclear when an agreement will be announced.

Currently, the Senate Finance Committee proposal would use the Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST) Trust Fund surplus, plus a number of unrelated (to transportation) pay-fors to offset a transfer to the HTF. House Ways & Means Committee Chairman Camp (R-MI) has previously expressed support for using repatriated dollars to provide an HTF patch, though it is more likely that he'll work with his Senate Finance counterparts on a patched

together solution. This approach only gets the HTF through the end of the year, and would require additional action during a lame duck Congress. House Speaker Boehner (R-OH) proposed a nine-to-twelve month fix, but has not detailed the funding mechanism to generate the \$16B needed (ballpark figure).

**U.S. DOT Secretary Warns State DOTs and Transit Agencies:**

U.S. DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx recently sent letters to the states outlining U.S. DOT plans for managing the impending HTF shortfall. U.S. DOT will institute cash management procedures for payments from the HTF starting on August 1, effectively limiting state reimbursements from rolling reimbursements to every other week. A similar cash management plan for the Trust Fund's Mass Transit Account would be required sometime later this year. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

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## MEMBERREQUESTS

**TCC - PPPs for Natural Gas Utilities:** Mike Pennington, Executive Director from the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCC), is looking for examples of public private partnerships (PPPs) that provide or assist in providing natural gas utilities to various businesses in un-served areas. Suggestions and options on how to accomplish this are welcome.

**OCWCOG - Business Plan for Lending Programs:** Fred Aoulosleman, Executive Director of Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG), is looking for information from NARC members that administer lending programs. Specifically, OCWCOG would like to know:

- What loan and lending programs does your organization manage?
- Does your loan/lending program have a business plan with loan and performance goals?
- Do you have a financial sustainability plan for your loan/lending program? How do you integrate various loan programs to achieve loan/lending goals and financial stability?
- Do you market your programs? How?

- If available, please share the business and marketing plans.

Please forward any feedback to Anna Rosenbaum, [anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org), including which member assistance request to which you are responding.

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## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants still open!

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of events still open!

### **WEBINAR: An Untapped Resource: Understanding SNAP E&T**

*July 8, 1:00 PM ET*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) can be an important part of a state's workforce development system. It helps low-income individuals access education, training, and critical supportive services that are often difficult to obtain. To capitalize on the potential of this program, workforce stakeholders need to better understand both what is allowed under SNAP E&T and how the program interacts with the larger SNAP nutrition program. As part of a suite of SNAP E&T resources, National Skills Coalition and *Seattle Jobs Initiative* recently released recommendations and best practices for developing a successful SNAP E&T program. Join SNAP E&T experts on this webinar to discuss the potential of the program, and how communities can capitalize on this largely untapped resource. Click [HERE](#) to register.

### **NARC CONFERENCE: Executive Directors' Conference**

*September 21 - 24; Des Moines, IA*

Join the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and NARC for the 2014 Executive Directors' Conference in Des Moines, IA.

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