



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

House & Senate resume session on Tuesday.

This Week

On Tuesday, the Senate is expected to begin discussions on a transportation reauthorization package. The Senate will take up a House-passed bill (since this reauthorization must originate in the House) on an unrelated topic, strike the language of that bill, and rewrite it as its long-term reauthorization proposal. Senate leadership seems to be planning a three-year reauthorization of surface transportation programs, which expire at the end of July. The Senate's three-year plan is projected to require upwards of \$40 billion more than gas taxes are expected to generate, so whether that chamber can successfully pass reauthorization legislation will depend on whether leaders can find that level of additional funding.

The House is expected to consider a bill to establish minimum federal standards for coal combustion residuals (**HR 1734**) and a bill requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a voluntary food labeling program on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which preempts state and local laws requiring mandatory labeling of GMO foods (**HR 1599**).

Senate Finance Committee Releases Tax Extenders Package

The Senate Finance Committee released a bipartisan tax extenders **package** that will retroactively extend 52 expired provisions through the end of 2016. The package totals \$96 billion over ten years and includes a \$22 billion extension of the research tax credit, a \$6.7 billion extension of the state and local sales tax deduction, and a \$10.5 billion extension of the renewable production tax credit. The Senate Finance Committee will **markup** the package this Tuesday.

NARC and Sister Organizations Send Letter to Senate Committee on TIGER

Five associations representing local governments, including NARC, sent a letter to the Senate Commerce Committee last week urging inclusion of a multi-modal TIGER-like discretionary program before the markup of their legislation, the *Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015* (**S 1732**). The letter also requested that MPOs and Regional Councils be explicitly eligible for any funding through such a program. Although S 1732 was introduced including a TIGER-like program for freight projects, the provision was pulled from the final draft, which passed by the committee on party lines in a 13-11 vote.

Senate Approves Reauthorization of Senior Programs

The Senate passed the *Older Americans Act* (OAA) Reauthorization (**S 192**, see **summary**) by voice vote last week. The legislation alters the Title III funding formula for state grants to reflect the size of each state's senior population, although there is a "hold harmless" clause that ensures that no state receives less than its allocation in 2006. The bill also reauthorizes and streamlines the administration of social and nutrition services for seniors, directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide information and technical assistance to support best

practices for the modernization of multipurpose senior centers, and includes provisions to prevent abuse of seniors. Although authorization for most OAA programs expired at the end of FY 2011, Congress has continued to appropriate funding for OAA-authorized activities. The House has yet to take action on OAA reauthorization this year.

House Appropriators Approve Homeland Security Spending Bill

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2016 homeland security appropriations in a 32-17 vote. The bill provides \$39.3 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which is \$337 million below the FY 2015 level and \$2 billion below the President's budget request. The bill provides \$2.5 billion for state and local disaster preparedness grants, equal to the FY 2015 level and nearly \$300 million above the President's request. During markup, an amendment was adopted in a 28-21 party line vote to prevent "sanctuary cities" - which operate under "sanctuary" laws or practices in which local law enforcement officials do not cooperate with federal law enforcement in immigration cases - from receiving certain DHS funding, including state and local disaster preparedness grants. Floor consideration of the legislation is the next step, although the timing for this (along with other appropriations measures) remains unclear.

The Senate Appropriations Committee Passes 2016 Agriculture Bill

On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed the **Agriculture, Rural Development, and FDA Appropriations Bill** to provide \$20.5 billion in discretionary spending in a 28-2 vote. The bill provides \$65 million less than the 2015 enacted level and \$1.1 billion less than the President requested. Mandatory funding of \$123.3 billion puts total mandatory and discretionary funding in the bill at \$143.8 billion. The combined funding is \$24 billion below the Administration's request and \$3.7 billion below the 2015 enacted level. The bill also provides \$6.5 billion for the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program, a decrease of \$110 million from the 2015 level and the President's request; \$855 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a boost of \$8.8 million from fiscal 2015 and \$24 million above the Administration's request; \$1.25 billion in rural water and waste program loans; \$7.5 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans; and \$24 billion in loan authority for the single family housing guaranteed loan program, which is the same as the 2015 enacted level and the President's request.

Oversight of Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011

The Subcommittee on Energy and Power, chaired by Representative Ed Whitfield (R-KY), held a hearing last Tuesday to examine the May 19, 2015 pipeline rupture incident along the California coastline and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) recent measures to prevent further pipeline accidents. PHMSA Interim Executive Director Stacy Cummings received repeated criticism for her PHMSA's failure to implement nearly one-third of the 42 total mandates prescribed in the **Pipeline Safety Act of 2011**. Cummings claimed responsibility for the delay and emphasized that although accidents are highly infrequent, impacts are so disastrous that comprehensive preventative measures are being taken to ensure widespread pipeline security.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Palm Beach Increasing Green Mobility

The Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization created **Wheels**, a new program designed to promote the use of green transportation alternatives and decrease the number of cars on the road for daily commutes. The program will take place over five days in Miami this November. One highlight of the event will be a discussion on how employers can accommodate those who walk and bike to work. The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority says it will provide unlimited free Tri-Rail passes to anyone who boards a train with their bike. The event will also feature a video to help bikers navigate train stations and proper boarding procedures.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Email responses to anna@narc.org

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. 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?

Do you have experience using labor market data to support partnerships with employers or workforce investment boards around workforce development needs?

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Executive Director

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Anniston, AL

Associate Contracts Engineer

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Non Waiver Services Coordinator

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

FUNDING

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EVENTS

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[NARC Conference! Becoming Your Best: Professional Development Training for](#)

[Executive Directors](#)

August 9-11, Austin, TX

Join the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the 2015 Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference in Austin, TX. At the first ever Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference put on by NARC and NADO, you will have the opportunity to network, share best practices, and explore opportunities for strengthening professional capacity and development. You won't want to miss it!

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