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Resources for Hurricane Recovery Efforts

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma have been at the forefront of our thoughts for a couple weeks now. We respect all the hard work our members and partners are doing to respond and recover from the recent aftermath of these catastrophic events.

As many agencies, organizations, and individuals continue to provide preparedness and relief efforts to Texas, Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, Caribbean, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants to make sure that communities are getting ALL the resources available to them. Over the coming weeks, expect to receive resources to help inform various aspects of the recovery process. To start, they have shared the following suite of materials to address the rebuilding phase as residents and communities in impacted areas begin their recovery efforts:

- **Build Back Safer and Stronger**
- **FEMA Building Science Resources to Assist with Reconstruction after a Hurricane**
- **Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters**
- **Hurricane Recovery – Guidance for Turning Power Back On**
- **Rebuilding After a Hurricane Checklist**
- **The ABCs of Returning to Flooded Buildings**

Additionally, FEMA announced that **three State of Texas/FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers would be opening today in the Houston area**. These centers will be offering in-person support to individuals and businesses that are looking for federal assistance after the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey. Representatives from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will also be available to educate business owners about the SBA's disaster loan program. FEMA recommends that all homeowners, renters and businesses should register with FEMA before visiting a center to expedite the assistance process.

Please keep FEMA informed about your progress by sending stories to RNPNetwork@ogilvy-email.com.

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

Overview

Last week proved to be a week of surprises in Washington.

On Wednesday, the president broke with his party and supported a Democratic proposal to fund the federal government, raise the debt limit, and fund relief efforts for Hurricane Harvey – to the surprise and consternation of many Republicans. Republican leaders proposed funding the government and raising the debt ceiling for 18 months, beyond the 2018 midterm elections. Democratic leaders, on the other hand, proposed funding the federal government at current levels and raising the debt ceiling for only three months, and funding relief efforts for Hurricane Harvey.

This short-term solution, which funds the government at the same level as last year, represents a win for local governments that were likely to see substantial cuts to domestic programs had some of the measures already passed by the House become part of a funding bill.

In addition, Congress appropriated twice the amount the president requested for Hurricane Harvey relief without offsets, or cuts in other programs. President Trump signed the bill into law on September 8, appropriating \$15.25 billion for Hurricane Harvey relief. Most of these funds will go to FEMA to assist the State of Texas, its counties and cities, and individuals impacted by Hurricane Harvey. SBA will receive \$450 million of this appropriation to assist small businesses impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

Sadly, the \$15.25 billion appropriation for Hurricane Harvey relief is just a down payment. Damage to Texas by Hurricane Harvey could top \$180 billion, and experts anticipate that Hurricane Irma, which pummeled the Florida peninsula this weekend and is now headed to Georgia and beyond, could cost at least \$108 billion, the same amount as Hurricane Katrina. According to Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), these two natural disasters are likely to drain FEMA's coffers in just a few short weeks, which will require Congress to appropriate more funds.

NARC will continue to work with the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties to ensure that programs that matter to local governments are adequately funded, and that no unnecessary cuts are made to these programs.

Reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program

As Hurricane Irma continues its move from Florida, local officials hosted a briefing on Capitol Hill to urge reauthorization of the **National Flood Insurance Program** (NFIP), which will expire on September 30 without congressional action. NFIP aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations. These efforts help mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. Overall, the program reduces the socio-economic impact of disasters by promoting the purchase and retention of general risk insurance, but also of flood insurance, specifically. Key local priorities include insurance rates and support for mitigation efforts.

Oppose the Comstock Amendment to Help Save Census Bureau Funding

NARC joined local government colleagues and other organizations to send out a **letter** urging the House to reject the **Comstock amendment** proposed for **H.R. 3354**, which is now the *Make America Secure and Prosperous Appropriations Act, 2018*. This amendment would transfer \$30 million from the Census Bureau to support the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program. Congress has already proposed \$300 million less in funding than the Census Bureau needs to carry out all its 2020 Census activities. Please consider reaching out to your House representatives and urge them to oppose this amendment because of the Census Bureau offset.

NARC Goes to the Hill to Raise the Caps

Last Wednesday, NARC participated in NDD United's Raise the Caps campaign on the Hill. Volunteer organizations went to each and every congressional office to advocate for adequate funding for non-defense discretionary programs in the appropriations process. We called on Congress to pass bipartisan relief from sequestration budget cuts, raising both the defense and

non-defense discretionary funding caps.

House Amendments Raise CDBG Funding in Appropriations Bill

Last week, House lawmakers adopted amendments to increase funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to just over \$3 billion for FY 2018. One **amendment** by Representative Steve Knight moved \$100 million to CDBG by reducing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's information technology fund by the same amount. The other **amendment** offered by Representatives Claudia Tenney and Frank LoBiondo directed an additional \$10 million to CDBG. The new amount of funding in the House **H.R. 3354** appropriations minibuss would put CDBG funding levels in line with the **\$3 billion in funding the Senate provided for the program** in their appropriations bill. This is great news for localities since the administration originally proposed zeroing the program's funding for FY 2018.

State and Local Officials Praise Federal Self-Driving Legislation Passed in House

The House unanimously passed the *SELF DRIVE Act (H.R. 3388)* last Wednesday, approving the bill's purpose to "[memorialize] the federal role in ensuring the safety of highly automated vehicles as it relates to design, construction, and performance, by encouraging the testing and deployment of such vehicles." *Government Technology* **reported** that many state and local officials hope this legislation will pave the way for localities to regulate planning, licensing, and revenue generation once autonomous vehicles are deployed at a larger scale.

Thomas Bamonte, senior program manager for automated vehicles with the North Central Texas Council of Governments, told *Government Technology* that "having federal leadership, both advancing the development of automated vehicles and insuring the safety of those vehicles, is very important. But I think it's [also] important that we leave sufficient space for cities and regions to consider how best these vehicles are deployed in local particular settings. We're going to need flexibility to do things to accommodate, for example, low-speed shuttles on public streets."

OTHER NEWS

Environment and Energy Topics to Watch This Fall

Roll Call identified five of the top energy and environment priorities that Congress will most likely push this fall:

- **Energy:** *Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017 (S. 1460)*: This is a bipartisan energy and natural resources bill that plans to update the nation's energy policies for the first time in a decade. It has been placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar, meaning that it could be considered on the floor as early as this month.
- **Yucca Mountain:** *Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017 (H.R. 3053)* was passed through the House Energy and Commerce Committee before the August recess. The Trump administration would like to revisit the idea of making Yucca Mountain a site for nuclear waste disposal.
- **Drinking Water:** *Drinking Water System Improvement Act of 2017 (H.R. 3387)* was also recently passed through the House Energy and Commerce Committee. This bipartisan bill would authorize \$8 billion in capitalization grants to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program from FY 2018 – FY 2022.
- **WOTUS:** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed rescinding the *Waters of the United States (WOTUS)* rule back in June. Congress has added policy riders in the House Energy-Water and Interior-Environment spending bills to authorize the Trump administration to revoke the rule without undertaking statutory or regulatory reviews first, which has caused much controversy. EPA will hold a series of webinars soliciting local input.
- **Nominations:** There are several nominations for leadership positions at the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), EPA, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission still left for the Senate to consider.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

MWCOG Offers Dual Solution to Address Housing Crisis and High Office Vacancies

According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MWCOG) latest **Cooperative Forecasts**, the D.C. region (including Northern Virginia and parts of Maryland) is

expected to grow by 1.5 million people and 650,000 households by 2045. This additional housing inventory need poses a serious issue in a region that is already one of the top ten most expensive places to live in the U.S. Additionally, the D.C. region office vacancy rate rose to over 14% in 2016, showing the trend of more employers favoring teleworking.

To tackle both issues at once, the region has been experimenting with converting empty office buildings to residential spaces. The D.C. government has also created an Affordable Housing Task Force to assess how the region can accelerate the conversion process, incentivize this innovative solution, and bring stakeholders together to further address the D.C. housing crisis.

MARC Aims to Improve Regional Cybersecurity

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is leading a group of stakeholders to create a strategic framework to enhance cybersecurity for the bistate Kansas City region. MARC leaders want to create a purchasing pool for all municipalities to drive down local government technology costs. This group is also considering standardizing cybersecurity processes to make language and practices universal throughout the region. As *Government Technology* reports, the group identified the following additional steps to aid their mission:

- Identify and establish best practices for planning.
- Design and implement regional communications strategies.
- Create collaborative training opportunities to build a high-quality workforce.
- Create a shared-services model to support local governments.
- Improve redundancy and resilience through mutual networks and shared services.
- Establish a sustainable funding source to support a regional response to cyberthreats.

How Four States Prepared for Hurricane Season

With recent hurricanes Harvey and Irma, it is clear that the 2017 hurricane season is now well under way. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration **predicted** that this season, would be above-normal with 14-19 named storms and 2-5 major hurricanes. With the aid of DOE's State Energy Program, four Atlantic states have undergone efforts to implement energy security, resiliency, and emergency preparedness plans:

- Florida's planning and response includes engaging the private sector to have transportation fuel during natural disasters. DOE helps the state's natural gas and energy utilities secure supplies during emergencies and restore power after outages. The state's SunSmart Schools E-Shelter program has equipped public schools with the power it needs to become emergency shelters.
- Georgia has been improving its information systems to address electricity and fuel supply threats. DOE sent regional energy assurance specialists to Georgia last year as Hurricane Mathew approached to improve their response to the storm.
- New York's energy office has conducted multiple studies, concluding that backup power capacity should be provided at strategically located retail gas stations along upstate highways.
- Massachusetts' energy office has been participating in meetings with the City of Boston and Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency on energy resilience during natural disasters.

REGIONS LEAD

Visit www.regionslead.org to read up on the latest NARC blogs. We invite members to submit blogs to the site too.

Making the Census Count: How Regions Can Help

by Maci Hurley

The groundwork that the U.S. Census Bureau is laying out today will affect the accuracy of the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau is up against a significant accuracy issue: past Census reports have historically undercounted certain groups in the U.S., including young children, minorities, and low-income communities. Read on to learn how regions can help.

The Opioid Crisis Was Declared a National Emergency: Here's How Local Governments Can Help

by Maci Hurley

The Trump Administration issued a statement that directed the executive branch to “use all appropriate emergency and other authorities to respond to the crisis caused by the opioid epidemic.” This declaration couldn’t have come any sooner. The National Center for Health Statistics reported that in the third quarter of 2016, overdose deaths reached a record-breaking 19.9 people per 100,000. If this trend continues, our localities will need all the help the federal government can offer to battle this growing epidemic.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Assistant Analyst

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Associate Policy Analyst

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Executive Director

Central Arizona Governments, Apache Junction, AZ

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

TIGER Discretionary Grants

Applications Due: October 16

The *FY 2017 Appropriations Act* appropriated \$500 million to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the TIGER Discretionary Grants program. The FY 2017 TIGER Discretionary Grants are capital investments for surface transportation infrastructure, and are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region. Through the TIGER Grants Program, USDOT must take measures to ensure an equitable geographic distribution of grant funds.

HUD Fair Housing Initiative Program: Education and Outreach Initiative

Applications Due: October 6

The education and outreach initiative (EOI) of the Fair Housing Initiative Program is providing \$7.45 million in funding for organizations to inform the public about their rights and obligations under the *Fair Housing Act*. EOI applicants may be funded under the national-based program or the regional/local/community-based program based on eligibility. Eligible applicants include Qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organizations (QFHOs); Fair Housing Enforcement Organizations (FHOs); public or private not-for-profit organizations or institutions; public or private entities that are formulating or carrying out programs to prevent or eliminate discriminatory housing practices; agencies of state or local governments; and agencies that participate in the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP). Under the EOI NOFA, applicants may apply for funding under multiple components if the applicant meets the specific eligibility requirements for each component.

National Endowment for the Humanities Dialogues on the Experience of War

Applications Due: November 2

The Dialogues on the Experience of War program supports the study and discussion of important humanities sources about war, in the belief that these sources can help U.S. military veterans and others think more deeply about the issues raised by war and military service. Although the program is primarily designed to reach military veterans, men and women in active service, military families, and interested members of the public may also participate. The program awards grants up to \$100,000 to support the convening of at least two discussion programs for no fewer than fifteen participants and the creation of a preparatory program to recruit and train program discussion leaders (National Endowment for the Humanities Discussion Leaders). Discussion programs may take place on college and university campuses, in veterans’ centers, at public libraries and museums, and other community venues.

EVENTS

View full list of events!

NARC Webinars! Trees, Stormwater, and Resiliency: An Opportunity for Local Communities

with National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA):

September 13, 2:00-3:00 PM ET;

with National Association of Development Organizations (NADO):

September 20, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Traditional 'gray' infrastructure systems – like roads, utilities, and water/wastewater networks – have long supported our cities and towns as they grow and develop. However, as leaders grapple with shrinking budgets and deteriorating local infrastructure, the resilience and multifunctionality of green infrastructure and trees continues to broaden its appeal as a fiscally responsible investment for the long-term health and vibrancy of an area. A new interactive tool developed by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Governments in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, NARC, Davey Resource Group, and Centerline Strategies, LLC will enable community planners, engineers, stormwater managers, community foresters, and policymakers to better capitalize on trees when investing or reinvesting in their stormwater systems. This resource can help you unleash new and innovative approaches for realizing the full capacity of trees as a component of your community's infrastructure systems. Join one of these webinars to discuss regional resilience planning and how TreesandStormwater.org can assist you in maximizing the benefits of trees and green infrastructure in your community.

Coordinating with Local and Regional Partners on Road Safety

September 13, 3:00-4:00 PM ET

Vision Zero Cities and MPOs work to improve safety on roadways. MPOs provide funding based on long range transportation plans, they serve as a regional nexus for crash data and performance measurement, and they have the ability to stimulate a collaborative process to address issues that no single jurisdiction can tackle alone. In this discussion, representatives from Oregon Metro and the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission will talk candidly about ways MPOs and cities are working together and where we can do more to improve safety, including:

- How can we maximize the use of state and federal funds for transportation safety?
- How can MPOs and cities work together to incorporate safety into all projects?
- How can choosing good performance metrics ahead of time lead to safety outcomes?
- What helps cities measure and track safety progress and what would help them even further in terms of regional data? What are MPOs currently measuring?
- What are lessons from city and MPO collaborative Vision Zero efforts?

Retail Boomtowns: Creating an Atmosphere for Retail Attraction

September 14, 2:30-4:00 PM ET

In a rural region, a thriving retail sector is a phenomenal asset, bringing in both people and tax revenues. Though many national retailers gravitate towards larger cities, with the right strategies, small communities also can earn their attention and investment. Discover how your community can lay the groundwork for retail attraction and creatively tell its story to gain the interest of local, regional, and national firms, growing both employment opportunities and the tax base. Attend this International Economic Development Council webinar to learn how to:

- Use data and visuals to tell your community's retail story.
- Create programs to encourage local and regional retailers to open stores.
- Learn how other small communities have become retail hubs and identify replicable strategies.

Regional Food Systems: Driving Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

September 14, 3:00-4:00 PM ET

Join this free Connecting Communities® webinar to explore using regional food system investments to drive entrepreneurial activity and small business development. Speakers will discuss technical support that can be provided to entrepreneurs, as well as creative tools for financing regional food enterprises. The webinar will draw on research from a new book authored by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve

System, ***Harvesting Opportunity***. The speakers are all contributors to the publication; they will highlight how organizations are working to ensure that the opportunities created through regional food investments are available to all, including traditionally marginalized populations.

Supporting Age Friendly Efforts at the State/Regional Level

September 21, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

While age friendly efforts need to be grounded at the local level, there are opportunities to improve the success of those efforts by working at the state/regional level to remove obstacles and address policy constraints. Please join Grantmakers in Aging as they present two age-friendly initiatives underway at the state/regional level. New Hampshire's diverse stakeholders in aging issues have come together to redefine aging through a collective impact process, which hinges on the idea of building a shared vision to create age-friendly communities through collaborative efforts across the state. The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative is a network of leaders in community, health and wellness, government, advocacy, research, business, education, and philanthropy who have come together to advance healthy aging.

CONTACT US

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