



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

Tax Reform

As Congress heads towards the end of President Trump's first year in office, the House begins acting on the promised tax reform legislation. The House push to adopt tax reform legislation will continue for the next several weeks with committee hearings, debate, and ultimately a vote. Supporters of the legislation who claimed that it would simplify the tax code, reduce middle-class taxes, increase jobs, and help small businesses praised the strictly partisan tax bill.

Detractors argued that it would benefit wealthy Americans and large corporations, and hurt individuals who live in more heavily taxed states like New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, and California, in large part because the bill would eliminate the state income tax and sales tax deductions that are important to many taxpayers. Unlike the Senate version, this bill would retain the property tax deduction.

That perspective is supported by a **report** by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) that documents the impact the elimination of state and local taxes would have on states and localities. In a **letter to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady** (R-TX), NARC and 28 other organizations expressed their opposition to those provisions. Use this **template** to let your representatives know that they must preserve all state and local tax deductions.

Flood Insurance Agreement Compromise

On Friday, House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) and House Financial Services Committee Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) announced they have negotiated an agreement for a long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program, "being from Louisiana and Texas, we are all-too familiar with the devastating effects of floods and the havoc they wreak on communities. That's why we agree on the importance of a long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program that helps both policy holders and taxpayers. The bill we support will begin to make the flood insurance program more stable and sustainable for the people who count on it. We look forward to bringing this legislation to the House soon and urge our colleagues to support it."

The agreement struck Friday appears to resolve some key sticking points on long-term reauthorization: the compromise would prevent policyholders whose homes flooded multiple times in the past from being booted from the program; homeowners would see their rates rise from their grandfathered rates only after filing two future claims; and rates would then rise 10 percent per year until hitting the current risk-rate, with a third claim seeing rates increase by 15 percent per year. Draft text should be available soon.

CHIP Extended Five Years

On Friday, the House passed a bill to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for five years, which ran out of funding at the end of September and forced some states to cut benefits for low-income children that did not qualify for Medicaid coverage. Most Democrats voted against

the bill because of the way the program would be funded. To fund the program, House Republicans included provisions that would increase Medicare premiums on those households earning \$500,000 or more per year, remove some individuals and households from the Medicaid rolls, and cut \$6.35 billion over ten years from a public health initiatives fund that helps pay for programs to address opioid abuse. Now it is up to the Senate – which has indicated its dissatisfaction with the House bill -- to find a way out of this partisan quagmire that the House established to obtain the bipartisan support it needs to pass the Senate.

Other Congressional Activity

Last week the Senate stayed focused on judicial nominations and approved three nominees to federal circuit courts.

This week the House plans to vote on: the *Hydropower Policy Modernization Act of 2017* (**H.R. 3043**) to make the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission the lead hydro-power regulator, labor law violation legislation (**H.R. 3441**), and a bill (**H.R. 2201**) that exempts certain micro-offerings from Securities and Exchange Commission registration requirements.

And still we have no clear movement forward on an appropriations bill to keep the government open past the December 15 deadline. With approximately 20 days left in this session of Congress, the pressure is growing rapidly to produce a bill that can pass both chambers, and gain the president's signature.

OTHER NEWS

Climate Change: The 2017 Report of the Lancet Countdown

The *Lancet* Countdown tracks progress on health and climate change and provides an independent assessment of the health effects of climate change, the implementation of the *Paris Agreement*, and the health implications of these actions. It follows the work of the 2015 *Lancet* Commission on Health and Climate Change, which concluded that climate change threatens to undermine the past 50 years of gains in public health, and conversely, that a comprehensive response to climate change could be “the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.”

The Lancet Countdown's 2017 report tracks 40 indicators across five areas, arriving at three key conclusions: the human symptoms of climate change are unequivocal and potentially irreversible; the delayed response to climate change over the past 25 years has jeopardized human life and livelihoods; and the past five years have seen an accelerated response, and in 2017 momentum is building across a number of sectors - the direction of travel is set, with clear and unprecedented opportunities for public health. See their **indicators for thematic breakdowns** of the report, including Climate Change Impacts, Exposures and Vulnerability, Adaptation Planning and Resilience for Health Mitigation Actions and Health Co-Benefits, Finance and Economics, Public and Political Engagement, or download the full report for free.

Additionally, the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat recently released a publication, ***Climate Action Now: Summary for Policymakers 2017***. The document showcases good practices and policies, identifies common challenges to mitigation and adaptation actions, presents technologies and actions that can be scaled up and replicated, and highlights actions policymakers can take. Finally, the administration also released a **related report** confirming that Earth is warming at an alarming rate due to human activity.

Aging and Addiction

Since the opioid epidemic was declared a National Public Emergency, getting the word out on addiction through information, advocacy tools, and resources is more apt than ever. It is important to remember that addiction affects all demographics – and seniors make up a large part of this crisis too. The **National Council on Seniors Drug & Alcohol Rehab** is a non-profit organization with a mission to educate and assist seniors struggling with addiction, and the caregivers and family members who support them. The organization's objective is to effectively halt the growing silent epidemic of senior addiction through information on how drugs affect the aging body, the reasons seniors turn to them, and how seniors can recover from alcoholism and other substance use disorders. The site houses multiple informational guides that may aid your Aging staff in their endeavors, so please share this resource today.

Not-so Affordable Housing

In this Brookings Institution article Jenny Schuetz uses an analysis by Freddie Mac to examine housing affordability in the U.S. Evidence shows that affordability is on the decline and only getting worse. One example examines rent changes for a sample of apartment buildings that Freddie Mac financed at least twice between 2010 and 2016 – only 11.2 percent of unsubsidized apartments were affordable for very low-income households in 2010, and that dropped to only 4.3 percent in 2016. Affordability is most difficult for the poor, but middle-income families are also facing significant obstacles, particularly in California and Florida. In measuring affordability, Schuetz notes that rents and income are the basis of the affordability equation defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which states that households should pay no more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Schuetz tells us that it is important to know if income or increased rents are driving the change in affordability, because policymakers will want to craft solutions based on those drivers.

REGIONS LEAD

Visit www.regionslead.org to read up on the latest NARC blogs. We invite members to submit blogs to the site too. Please send contributions to anna@narc.org.

Texas Regional Council Preparation and Recovery Efforts for Hurricane Harvey

by Maci Hurley

Some areas of Texas received more than 50 inches of rain from Hurricane Harvey. The *Houston Chronicle* reported that the hurricane broke the record for heaviest rainfall ever logged in the U.S. during a tropical storm, totaling 64.58 inches in Nederland, Texas. Local, state, and federal officials all agree on one thing: it will take Southeast Texas months, if not years, to fully recover. Local officials and regional councils had pivotal roles to play in the preparation and recovery efforts for Hurricane Harvey...

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Principal Transportation Engineer/Planner

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Transportation Director

Greater Portland Council of Governments, Portland, ME

Accountant

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Cooperative Purchasing Program Manager

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington, DC

Senior Environmental Planner

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, Cincinnati, OH

Developer/Data Analyst

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

Planner/Engineer

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

REQUESTS

CDBG Coalition Requests Your CDBG Stories

Does your regional council have any success stories about the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in your region? The CDBG Coalition, of which NARC is a member, is looking for CDBG project information and stories to include in their *CDBG National Report*. Please submit your stories to Sarah at sarah@narc.org by November 30 and include the following information: project name, location, project year, project description, use of CDBG funds, target population, amount of CDBG funds, leveraging, jobs created (if any, both temporary and permanent), project impact, a high-resolution photo, quote from a beneficiary, and project contact

information.

Regional Council Anniversaries

Has your regional council celebrated a milestone anniversary recently or somewhat recently? If so, NARC would love to hear about it. Please share the details of events you hosted, social media campaigns, and general marketing collateral with Anna at anna@narc.org.

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

Applications Due: November 22

HUD is offering funding through the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants program. This program supports locally-driven strategies that address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing.

The Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

Applications Due: December 4

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is offering grants through The Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program to meet the food needs of communities and low-income individuals; promote comprehensive responses to local food access, farm, and nutrition issues; and meet specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agricultural needs.

Rural Health Care Services Outreach Program Grant

Applications Due: December 6

The Health Resources and Services Administration, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy is accepting applications for FY 2018 Rural Health Care Services Outreach Program. The purpose of this grant program is to expand the delivery of healthcare services in rural areas. Outreach projects should focus on the improvement of access to services, strategies for adapting to changes in the health care environment, and overall enrichment of the respective community's health. To be eligible, your organization must be a public or non-profit entity located in a rural county or rural census tract. Applicants must apply in a consortium with at least two additional organizations and must not have previously received an outreach grant for the same or similar project unless they are planning on proposing to expand the scope of the previous project.

Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program

Applications Due: January 25, 2018

The Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) has \$10,000,000 in grant funding to be awarded to national and regional non-profit organizations and consortia to facilitate and encourage innovative homeownership opportunities on a national, geographically diverse basis. Applicants must propose to use a significant amount of SHOP Grant funds in at least two states. SHOP Grant funds must be used for land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, and for reasonable and necessary planning, administration, and management costs (not to exceed 20 percent). The construction or rehabilitation costs of each SHOP unit must be funded with other leveraged public and private funds. SHOP units must be decent, safe, and sanitary non-luxury dwellings that comply with state and local codes, ordinances, and zoning requirements, and with all other SHOP requirements, including but not limited to, the requirements for energy-efficiency, water conservation, and accessibility. SHOP units must be sold to homebuyers at prices below the prevailing market price. Homebuyers must be low-income and must contribute a significant amount of sweat equity towards the development of SHOP units.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

NARC & APA Webinar! Trees and Stormwater: A Tool for Your Community

November 9, 2:00 PM-3:00 PM EST

Using trees in landscape design provides a multitude of environmental benefits, particularly when they are used in new and retrofitted stormwater management installations. This webinar will introduce a new free interactive web-based tool developed by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Governments and the U.S. Forest Service that will help you maximize the value of trees in

stormwater management. Join the American Planning Association, National Association of Regional Councils, and national experts in green infrastructure design for an introduction to this exciting new tool that enables strategic placement of trees to improve stormwater management.

The Economic Consequences of the Opioid Crisis

November 9, 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET

The prescription opioid abuse and dependence epidemic arrived suddenly in 1999 and has only been gaining momentum in terms of scope and intensity since then. Opioid deaths have quadrupled in that time frame and the advanced necessity for treatment and prevention options is both directly and indirectly affecting the rest of the public. Policy makers are still trying to learn as much as possible about the magnitude of this nationwide crisis and determine the best strategies for combating it. In this webinar, REMI Economist Peter Evangelakis, Ph.D. will use dynamic fiscal analysis to identify and quantify the wide array of negative impacts generated by this tragedy.

Charging Ahead: The Rise of Electric Vehicles

November 16, 11:00 AM- 12:00 PM ET

Join National Journal Presentation Center analysts Claire Carter, Taryn MacKinney, and Alistair Taylor, as well as National Journal Energy and Environment Correspondent Brian Dabbs, for an in-depth discussion on electric vehicles, the current state of play in the US market and what to expect moving forward. This webinar will address the following key questions: Who are the major players and policymakers in this area? Which policies have fostered the industry's growth so far, and which state and federal actions could help—or hinder—its development going forward? How will the Trump administration's deregulatory drive impact the development of EVs in the U.S.? How feasible are the ambitious goals laid out by countries like France and India, and what's the likelihood that a similar target could be set in the U.S.?

CONTACT US

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