



## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### **Tax Reform and Appropriations**

The debate over tax reform remains front and center in Congress. House leadership has scheduled a vote on tax reform later this week, despite some disagreement among members over the deductibility of state and local income, property, sales, and other taxes. If this bill passes the House, the significant differences between the House and Senate versions will make final passage before Christmas recess quite difficult. NARC, the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the National League of Cities will continue their efforts to keep all state and local tax (SALT) deductions and protect municipal bonds.

Congress is also developing an appropriations bill to keep the government funded beyond December 8, when the current continuing resolution expires.

### **NFIP Reauthorization Moves Towards a House Vote**

Today the House will hold a hearing on the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Flood Reform Act* (HR 2874) to reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). **This follows a deal that was struck by GOP leaders** to maintain premium increases while lowering rate hikes for homes with repeated flooding. The bill would include “several changes intended to fix the program’s financial issues and shift more policies to private insurers.” The legislation would also reauthorize the program for five years, even though Democrats pushed for ten years.

The House was expected to vote on the bill last week, but postponed action due to lack of support. Democrats are concerned with both eligibility and the rise in costs for flood-prone households. Republican fiscal hawks may not support the bill, citing the program’s years of financial instability and their vision to shrink the program dramatically. We should see this week whether this bill will have enough support to go to the floor for a vote or if GOP leaders will go back to the drawing board to reauthorize the program by December 8.

### **Trump Announces HHS Secretary Nomination**

Today President Donald Trump announced his nomination of Alex Azar as secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). He will replace Tom Price who resigned after the discovery of his ongoing use of private charter jets became public earlier this year. According to *The Hill*, Azar served as both general counsel and as deputy secretary for HHS under President George W. Bush from 2005-2007, where he served under Secretary Tommy Thompson, the former governor of Wisconsin. At the time, the Senate confirmed Azar for both positions by voice vote. After leaving HHS, Azar became president of Eli Lilly and Company, the Indianapolis-based pharmaceutical giant.

Azar is considered a more traditional choice for secretary. He has broad management experience and a great deal of familiarity with HHS and its operations. In his new position, he will have to shoulder responsibility for repealing and replacing the *Affordable Care Act*.

### **Great Early Enrollment Numbers for the *Affordable Care Act***

After much dispute over the *Affordable Care Act* this summer, the program's open enrollment period for this year has already shown large sign-up results. **According to CMS**, more than 600,000 Americans signed up for individual coverage within the first four days of open enrollment (464,140 of those individuals were renewing coverage, and 137,322 were brand new registrants). The previous head of CMS, Andy Slavitt, **tweeted** that the sign-ups were up 179% compared to the equivalent enrollment period last year. The open enrollment period will close after December 15.

### **Updates on WIFIA and WOTUS**

NARC attended the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Intergovernmental Associations meeting last week to hear updates directly from Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water Lee Forsgren. He gave updates on the *Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (WIFIA) program and the *Waters of the United States* (WOTUS) rewrite.

Forsgren reported that the first round of WIFIA was successful. Twelve projects were issued WIFIA loans, which went through a selection process based on financial soundness, engineering design, and merit. About \$2.3 billion in loans were leveraged to finance projects for stormwater, wastewater, drinking water, and water recycling. The projects also leveraged **more than \$1 billion in private capital** and money from EPA's State Revolving funds to accelerate these projects. Forsgren expects that as long as WIFIA is funded through FY 2018 appropriations, EPA will issue another request for proposals for this flexible program early next year.

The public comment period for the proposed first step of review of WOTUS closed on September 27, 2017. Forsgren reported that about 750,000 comments were collected from this process. EPA is meticulously combing through all the comments, which is slowing down the WOTUS repeal and replace process. EPA estimates that they will be able to complete action on phase 1 of the rule by Spring 2018. EPA has almost completed its ten stakeholder meetings on WOTUS and is looking to reengage local and state governments on issues of federalism before the WOTUS changes are finalized.

### **EPA Releases Notice for Air Quality Designations for the 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards**

Last week, EPA released a **partial list of counties** that would not be impacted by the 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Ozone. This rule, which has not yet been implemented, would lower the NAAQS for ozone to 70 parts per billion. The **notice** designates 2,649 counties as either meeting the 2015 standards or unclassifiable. Attainment designations for the counties that were not included in this list will be considered at a later date. The *Clean Air Act* mandates EPA to make all attainment designations within two years after the NAAQS rule is published, but designations for 420 counties are still outstanding (the deadline for review expired on October 1, 2017). **NACo says** that while 227 counties are "currently regulated under ozone air quality standards... the new 70 ppb standard is expected to increase the number of impacted counties to over 350."

### **DOL Seeks Public Comment on Draft FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan**

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) **Draft FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan** is provided to satisfy a requirement of the *Government Performance and Results Modernization Act* that agency stakeholders have an opportunity to comment. This plan presents a description of how component agencies will achieve supporting goals and strategic objectives in the next four years. Submit comments to [dolstratplan@dol.gov](mailto:dolstratplan@dol.gov) by December 7.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **DOE Resource: C-PACE for State and Local Governments**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy released a **fact sheet** on the commercial property assessed clean energy (C-PACE) tool. This tool "finances energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements on commercial property" using borrowed capital to pay upfront costs. C-PACE must be authorized by state legislation and further authorized by local governments, but the benefits are numerous: the use of C-PACE leads to "investment in local businesses, energy and cost savings, and job creation." Check out the fact sheet to learn more about key C-PACE features, examples of C-PACE projects, and how the tool works.

## **20 States, 50 Cities Pledge to Abide by Paris Agreement**

Even though President Trump has announced that the U.S. will withdraw from the Paris Agreement, many states and cities across the country have promised to hold themselves to reaching its goals. As part of the group **America's Pledge**, these state and local leaders are pursuing efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote alternative, renewable energy sources. According to a **report** they recently released, the group acknowledged that federal government efforts are necessary to realize all of the goals of the Paris Agreement. While these state and local government leaders will continue to advocate for federal involvement, they have brought the fight against carbon emissions to the local level.

## **It's National Apprenticeship Week!**

DOL designated November 13-19 as this year's National Apprenticeship Week. The week gives organizations and businesses everywhere a chance to showcase their programs, facilities, and apprentices in their communities. The goal of the week's activities is to show the value of apprenticeships in preparing a highly-skilled workforce. If you are hosting or attending an event for National Apprenticeship Week, please **register the event**. You can also visit the **official National Apprenticeship Week webpage** for a map of local events near you.

## **REGION SPOTLIGHT**

### **State and Rural Initiatives to Bring High-Speed Broadband to West Virginia**

The West Virginia state government and the Region I Planning and Development Council have initiatives underway to bring high-speed broadband services to their unserved population. The state's Broadband Economic Council (BEC), formed in 2016, is asking residents to get involved to help them identify where broadband speeds are the slowest. By visiting BEC's website and **Speed Test Portal**, residents will help inform a statewide broadband coverage map that the state government will use to inform their efforts.

On the regional side, the Region I Planning and Development is seeking \$125,000 in CDBG funds and intends on matching it with an Economic Development Administration grant for the purpose of studying broadband in their six-county region. They intend to hire a broadband engineering firm to identify existing providers and technologies and come up with solutions to increase broadband access for the region. They will then seek funding from a variety of sources to fund the implementation of these suggestions.

## **FEATURED JOBS**

***View full list of jobs!***

### **Senior Planner**

Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta, GA

### **Director, Transportation Planning and Operations**

Denver Regional Council of Governments, Denver, CO

### **Senior Planner (Ped/Bike Coordinator)**

Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization, West Palm Beach, FL

### **Principal Transportation Engineer/Planner**

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

## **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](mailto:anna@narc.org).

## **FUNDING**

*[View full list of grants!](#)*

### **Transitional Living Program and Maternity Group Homes**

Applications Due: March 11, 2018

The Administration for Children and Families has announced the availability of funds under the Transitional Living Program (TLP) and Maternity Group Home (MGH) Program. The purpose of the TLP and MGH grant programs are to implement, enhance, and/or support effective strategies for successful transition to sustainable living for runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to under 22 and/or pregnant and parenting youth ages 16 to under 22 and their dependent children. Both projects must provide safe, stable, and appropriate shelter for 18 months. Under extenuating circumstances, shelter can be extended to 21 months and can provide comprehensive services that supports the transition of homeless youth to self-sufficiency and stable, independent living. Through the provision of shelter and an array of comprehensive services, TLP youth will realize improvements in four core outcome areas: safe and stable housing; education/employment; permanent connections; and social and emotional well-being. Grants awarded under this announcement will have a start date of May 1, 2018 and the project period will be 41 months. The total 41-month project period should not exceed \$641,660.

### **Street Outreach Program Grant**

Applications Due: March 11, 2018

The Administration for Children and Families has announced the availability of funds under the Street Outreach Program (SOP). SOP works to increase young peoples' personal safety, social and emotional well-being, self-sufficiency, and to help them build permanent connections with families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks. These services, which are provided in areas where street youth congregate, are designed to assist such youth in making healthy choices and to provide them access to shelter and services, including outreach, gateway services, screening and assessment, harm reduction, access to emergency shelter, crisis stabilization, drop-in centers, and linkages/referrals to services. The award process for the FY2018 SOP allows for annual awards over a three-year project period as funds are available.

## **EVENTS**

*[View full list of events!](#)*

### **Speaking with Authority**

November 15, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

This professional development webinar, co-hosted by the National Conference of State's Young and New Professionals group and Women's Legislative Network, aims to help participants increase self-awareness and personal brand when communicating daily. Whether you are a legislator headed into session or a legislative staffer gearing up for January, we all need to be concise, clear, and credible. Ditch those phrases and words that undermine your authority, replace them with words that have impact making you the expert.

### **The FY18 Budget Outlook for Affordable Housing Programs**

November 16, 2:30-3:30 PM ET

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition and other leaders of the Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding invite you to join advocates from across the country to learn about the status and outlook for the fiscal year 2018 budget process and how advocates can effectively communicate with policymakers and the public about the need for increased federal investments in proven affordable housing and community development programs. With more households struggling to make ends meet, we cannot afford funding cuts to the very programs that sustain our communities and help families thrive.

### **Transportation Financing and the VW Settlement**

November 16, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

The recent settlement around Volkswagen diesel emissions is providing states with an opportunity to access funding to modernize their transportation systems, but ensuring that funding ends up becoming sustainable is a challenge. The National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) will provide an overview of the Volkswagen (VW) Clean Air Act Civil Settlement and the status of the fund disbursement process. A speaker from Cadmus will discuss the work they have been doing on exploring new financing methods for electric vehicle charging stations.

### **Resilient Power: Utilizing Solar Energy in Disaster Planning and Recovery**

December 6, 2:00-3:15 PM ET

As recent natural disasters serve as an unfortunate reminder of nature's fury and impact, county leaders across the country continue to actively seek disaster preparedness and community resilience solutions. Explore the importance of a resilient energy system and role of solar energy – including battery storage and microgrid technology-- in preparing and recovering from a natural disaster or other emergency scenario in this webinar.

### **How Covered California's Digital Adoption is Accelerating Access to Healthcare**

December 13, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Covered California – the state of California's official healthcare marketplace – helps ensure individuals, families, and small businesses can find low-cost health insurance. Paper-based processes previously made it harder for the organization to quickly and efficiently provide coverage to citizens who needed it. So Covered California implemented a digital agent enrollment process to streamline internal administration and offer customers a higher level of service.

Join *Government Technology* and the Center for Digital Government to hear the story of Covered California's digital transformation, and how accelerating digital agreements and signatures can help your agency provide better citizen-facing services. They will cover:

- Redesigning core government processes
- Achieving more by integrating digital systems
- Measuring impact and time savings
- Automating workflows to reduce errors and incorrect information
- Improving compliance and security with digital audit trails

## **CONTACT US**

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