



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS



**NARC Wishes You a Happy Thanksgiving!**

### **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](mailto: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.

### **NEWS FROM WASHINGTON**

*Congress is on holiday and will return early next week.*

### **The Congressional Agenda and Advocacy Efforts You Need to Make**

While Congress is not in session this week, the Senate continues work to develop a tax bill that can

pass muster and gain the 50 votes needed to pass the legislation (the vice-president in this case would cast the deciding vote to reach the necessary 51 votes). At least one senator has already indicated his opposition; several fiscal hawks have expressed concern over the \$1.5 trillion deficit that would result if the tax package were adopted; and many others have kept silent, including Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake.

Obstacles to passage that may doom the bill, include: elimination of the state and local tax **(SALT) deduction**, elimination of the *Affordable Care Act's* individual mandate to purchase health insurance, and a proposal to open the Alaska Natural Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas drilling. Another major concern of states and localities is the elimination of the tax-free status for **private activity (infrastructure) bonds** (PABs) that could be included in the House bill.

Opening the ANWR to oil and gas drilling could result in the reemergence of a historical alliance between Democrats and moderate Republicans and further complicate passage of a tax bill. Eliminating the individual mandate could result in 13 million Americans losing healthcare coverage and a substantial increase in the cost of insurance over time, according to the Congressional Budget Office. And eliminating the SALT deduction and tax-exempt status for PABs could put pressure on states and localities to cut their taxes to offset the increase in all taxes paid, which in turn would substantially hinder state and local funding for infrastructure development.

NARC – along with the National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, and U.S. Conference of Mayors – strongly opposes elimination of the SALT deduction and the tax-exempt status for private equity bonds. NARC joined with a coalition of national organizations to preserve both and signed letters informing Congress of the importance of both (**SALT letter; PABs letter**)

NARC urges you to reach out to your representatives and senators to inform them of the impact that elimination of the SALT deduction will have on your communities. A report outlining the **impact of eliminating the SALT deduction in every congressional district** and **other important tools** are available to help you inform your elected leaders.

Other issues that Congress continues to work on but cannot come to agreement on include: funding of the **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**, which provides funds for nearly nine million children in low-income households that do not qualify for Medicaid to obtain healthcare; the fiscal year 2018 appropriation that expires December 8 will need an extension to prevent a government shutdown; and the ever-present debt ceiling must be raised by December 8, as well.

Agreement on how to fund CHIP is blocking passage of its reauthorization, and states are already running out of CHIP money. To find a way forward, leaders must grapple with how much to raise the budget caps (limitations on spending), and how to protect children and young people -- often referred to as Dreamers -- from deportation. Some want to link building the wall and continuing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Others absolutely refuse to compromise on DACA and the wall. The result is a stalemate that seems to have no resolution. And yet again, Congress must figure out how to raise the debt ceiling so that the federal government can continue to borrow.

### **NARC Signs onto Letter for Adequate Funding for Job Training and Adult Education**

Last week, NARC joined the Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (CIAW) coalition to send a follow-up appropriations letter to the top GOP and Democratic leadership in both chambers of Congress. The letter urged congressional leadership to pass a FY 2018 appropriations bill that would reject cuts to education and workforce programs, including the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA). CIAW asked them to support a long-term budget agreement that would include higher spending levels, end sequestration, and raise harmful budget caps. The coalition also requested parity between defense and non-defense spending in the final appropriations bill. The letter will be available on the **CIAW website** soon.

### **Secretary Acosta Testifies Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce**

Last Wednesday, Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta testified before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to talk about the U.S. Department of Labor's priorities. Several key issues were brought up during the **hearing**, including workforce development, the overtime rule,

retirement security, healthcare, and workplace security. In his **opening remarks**, Secretary Acosta talked about the skills gap that exists in the U.S. and how the department's investment in apprenticeship programs will help. DOL is providing \$70 million in grants and regulatory flexibility for Florida, Texas, Georgia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to help with hurricane recovery.

### **House Passes NFIP Reauthorization**

The House overcame initial bipartisan opposition early last week and passed the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Flood Reform Act (HR 2874)*, jumping the first hurdle to reauthorization and overhaul of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The bill contains measures that would reauthorize the program for five years, make it easier for private companies to compete with the NFIP in the flood insurance market, and prohibit the government from offering coverage to certain homes that experience repeated flooding. Senators from both sides of the aisle are already showing their disagreements with the House-backed bill, and are pushing their own bills. In the words of Senator John Kennedy (R-LA), the House bill failed to balance “the integrity of the program, the financial stability of the program and the affordability.”

### **Hill Talks Continue about Budgetary Spending Caps in Light of the Passed Defense Authorization Package**

Leadership in both chambers of Congress have been working on a deal to raise budgetary caps by as much as \$200 billion over the next two years. The Senate passed the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (HR 2810)* last week, authorizing spending to go \$77 billion over the 2018 defense budgetary cap. If this is not resolved and Congress breaks the budget caps in late January, sequestration will be triggered, and all federal programs will be cut across the board. While talks about spending caps have been progressing, the largest hurdle of making equal parity between defense and non-defense spending caps remain.

### **EPA and Army Propose Amending the Effective Date of WOTUS**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of the Army formally proposed to amend the effective date of the 2015 rule defining the *Water of the United States* (WOTUS). Until now, the rule has been currently on hold nationwide due to the Sixth Circuit's court ruling, which will soon be visited by the Supreme Court. This proposed rule would push the required implementation of WOTUS to 2019, giving agencies time to receive more input on the current rule on how it should be revised. See the pre-publication version of this proposed rule [here](#).

### **FCC Votes to Roll Back the Lifeline Program**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted for a series of rollbacks to Lifeline – a program that provides low-income consumers a discount on monthly telephone service and broadband to help bridge the digital divide. These recent votes would push the authority of Lifeline to states, eliminate an extra \$25 monthly stipend to those who live on tribal lands, and allow FCC to consider a spending cap for the program. Republicans like Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS) applauded FCC's actions to push the program's jurisdiction to states because states play an important role in detecting fraud and providing access to these services. Critics of the votes fear that these actions will limit the reach and effectiveness of the program.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **One Step Closer to VW Settlement Funds**

A major milestone in the Volkswagen (VW) Settlement is about to arrive: states have until December 1 to apply for beneficiary status under the Environmental Mitigation Trust (EMT) and get their share of \$2.7 billion. Wilmington Trust, the selected EMT trustee, will then have 60 days to notify their states about their beneficiary status. States being granted beneficiary status will then have 90 days to submit their Mitigation Action Plans (MAPs), providing goals, actions, and estimates of reduced emissions. After the official MAPs are accepted, states can begin submitting funding requests and access to trust funds as early as April 2018.

To accomplish these large projects, states will have to work with local governments and stakeholders to get input on these plans. It is imperative that local leaders reach out to their **state lead authorities** to relay what kind of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions reduction projects can benefit their communities in the next 15 years. In general, it would be helpful to provide the following information (**provided by NLC**): a ten-year implementation plan, potential project

partners, what the money will be used for, a proposed budget, and how NOx emissions will be reduced. To learn more about the VW Settlement process, visit the [official VW clearinghouse website](#).

### **Join NACo for Disaster Response and Recovery Social Media Day**

Shine a spotlight on the work your member counties are doing to improve disaster resilience as part of the National Association of Counties' (NACo) Disaster Response and Recovery Social Media Day! On December 13, NACo will showcase how counties have responded to and recovered from disasters to strengthen community resilience. @NACoTweets will host a Twitter chat 2:00 PM ET using #ResilientCounties. This event is part of an open call for input that will be used to inform an online Disaster Toolkit for Counties over the next year.

## **REGION SPOTLIGHT**

### **MORPC Hosts Summit on Sustainability**

Last Tuesday, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) hosted its signature environmental conference: *The Summit on Sustainability*. This event brings hundreds of community leaders together to share sustainable ideas and solutions for the region, and honors local efforts through its Green Region Awards.

## **REGIONS LEAD**

Visit [www.regionslead.org](http://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](mailto:anna@narc.org).

### **Why the SALT Deduction Matters. Why You Should Save It.**

by Neil Bomberg

Now is the time to let your senators and representatives know that you oppose elimination of the SALT deduction and that they should vote against any tax proposal that would do this. Over the next weeks and months, Congress will be debating legislation to “reform” the nation’s tax system. That debate will focus on many things, including corporate taxes, inheritance tax, individual tax brackets, and charitable tax deductions, among others. But none of the debates may prove as important to states, counties, cities, and towns as the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, which allows individuals and households to deduct what they pay to states and localities in the form of income, property, and sales taxes from their federal returns.

### **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!***

### **Transportation Modeler**

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

### **Manager, Office of Contracts & Purchasing**

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

### **Executive Director**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Pittsfield, MA

## **FUNDING**

***View full list of grants!***

**2018 VA Grant and Per Diem Program – Transition in Place NOFA**

Applications Due: February 21, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the availability of per diem funds for assistance under the Per Diem Only (PDO) component of the VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program. VA encourages reapplication for those applicants who seek to continue providing "Transition in Place" (TIP) grants and new applicants that will serve the homeless veteran population through a TIP housing model to facilitate housing stabilization. VA expects to fund approximately 500 beds over a two-year period under this NOFA. Approximately \$25 million is available to support an average of 25 beds per night, per project.

### **2018 Veterans Affairs Grants and Per Diem Program – Per Diem Only NOFA**

Applications Due: February 28, 2018

VA is announcing the availability of per diem funds to eligible entities to provide transitional housing beds under VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program models. VA expects to fund 1,500 beds with this NOFA for applicants who will use one or a combination of the following housing models: Bridge Housing, Low Demand, Hospital-to-Housing, Clinical Treatment, and Service-Intensive Transitional Housing and Service Centers. This NOFA announces the availability of per diem funding to provide a minimum of five transitional housing beds. No more than 40 beds per model, per medical center, per each applicant's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be allowed under this NOFA.

## **EVENTS**

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

### **UAS Integration Pilot Program Webinar**

November 21, 12:00-1:15 PM ET

November 27, 12:00-1:15 PM ET

The **Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program** offers state, local, and tribal governments the opportunity to safely test and validate advanced UAS operations. They may also partner with private industry. The results from the Program will help reduce the risks of UAS operations to public safety and security, and better realize the benefits of unmanned technology. This webinar will provide you with an overview of the Program, application process, and the specific criteria and deadlines that you will be required to meet.

### **Census Webinar: 2012-2016 ACS Five-Year Estimates**

November 28, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

The American Community Survey (ACS) provides a range of important statistics about people and housing for every community in the nation. This survey is the only source of local estimates for most of the 40 topics it covers for communities across the nation. For example, it produces statistics for language, education, commuting, employment, mortgage status and rent, income, poverty, and health insurance. The U.S. Census Bureau will hold a webinar in advance of the December 7 release of the 2012-2016 ACS five-year estimates. The webinar will show participants how to access the data and compare geographies and statistics over time.

### **Special District Spotlight: The Importance of Remaining Visible in a Digital Age**

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

There are countless interactions that citizens have with special districts each day — from turning on the faucet in the morning to being guided by the light of the street lamps at night. Yet, even with the increased reliability on the services they provide, special districts often go unnoticed by the citizens and stakeholders they serve.

As the largest portion of government agencies across the country, it is more important than ever for special districts to connect with their audiences to communicate their value. But with such a unique scope and message, which tools should be leveraged?

This webinar, hosted by Granicus, will teach you more about:

- Accomplishing more with less: With tight budgets, what are the top priorities?
- Selecting the right tools: Which tools are best for your mission and when should you use them?
- Increasing transparency with digital solutions: What are the benefits of providing more information to your audience?

- Improving customer service: How can going digital enhance the citizen experience?

## CONTACT US

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