



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

The Senate is in session, and the House will return tomorrow.

Congress Has a Major To-Do List in December

With just 15 legislative days left for the Senate and only 12 days for the House, Congress has quite a bit of legislation to consider before the year's end. Congress must finish their work on appropriations to fund the government and reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program by December 8, both of which may get short-term extensions. The Senate is pushing for a vote on tax reform this week, and is considering including language to repeal Obamacare's individual mandate. Democrats are pushing for action on the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals program by the end of December. Congress must also reauthorize the National Security Agency's warrantless surveillance program, which is expected to encounter some difficulty reaching agreement among both chambers by the December 31 deadline.

Concerns Grow Over the Impacts of House and Senate Tax Bills

This week the Senate will begin considering its version of the tax reform bill, which is **wildly unpopular with the general public**.

These bills would substantially reduce the value of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction on personal taxes or eliminate it entirely. This could cause local taxpayers to demand a reduction in SALT altogether. The bills would also limit what types of municipal bonds are tax-exempt and require that interest generated from private activity bonds (PABs) be taxed. PAB financing generally benefits private developers who benefit from lower financing costs when developing projects that have a clear public purpose (e.g. hospitals, airports, affordable housing, seaports, water and sewer systems).

Opposition to the Senate bill is growing – not only because of the harm it would do to the SALT deduction or the use of municipal bonds – but because it would **increase the national debt by \$1.5 trillion over ten years**. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), this legislation would have a **significant negative impact on families with household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year** almost immediately.

Among the most vocal groups are the nonpartisan **Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget** (CRFB) and the nonpartisan **Tax Policy Center**, each of which has published reports and issued press releases that call into question many of the assumptions of the Senate tax bill.

Regarding the Senate version, CRFB wrote that:

- *There is no theoretical basis to suggest tax cuts could be self-financing. To do that, the economy would need to grow by \$5 to \$6 for every \$1 of tax cuts.*
- *There is broad consensus among economic models that future tax cuts won't pay for themselves. Some models find tax cuts would be partially self-financing, while others find the economic feedback would actually increase the deficit effect of tax cuts.*
- *Past tax cuts in 1981 and the early 2000s have led to widening budget deficits and lower revenue, not the reverse as some claim.*

Even after using dynamic scoring, the Tax Policy Center found that **economic growth would be about .03 percent more than it would be without the tax cuts**. Thus, it would have a much smaller impact on the gross domestic product (GDP) than has been claimed by Congress and the administration. Notwithstanding economic growth, this legislation would contribute about \$1.4 trillion to the national debt and fail to improve the overall economy. (Dynamic scoring attempts to predict the impact of federal policy changes on households and businesses and how that will contribute to economic growth.)

Moreover, we must not forget that we face efforts to significantly reduce non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs. Transportation, workforce training, public health, economic development, and other NDD programs are being threatened with further cuts that would irreparably harm these federally-sponsored programs. At the same time, defense discretionary spending is targeted for substantial increases in funding. The loss of \$1.5 trillion in federal revenues over ten years could only serve to exacerbate this push to reduce non-defense discretionary spending, which in turn would directly impact the people you represent and serve.

What can you do? Join NARC, the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the **National League of Cities** (NLC) in opposing the specific changes to tax deductibility and municipal bonds that the House and Senate have proposed. For guidance on how to present your arguments, visit **NACo** and **NLC's** advocacy webpages. Watch NARC's blogsite, **Regions Lead**, for more information later this week. You may also want to read NARC's latest blog on the **SALT deduction**.

FCC Plans Net Neutrality Repeal

In a statement released last Tuesday, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai **officially proposed** to vote on repealing net neutrality protections. In the statement, Chairman Pai said that the Obama administration's 2015 rules imposed heavy regulation on the Internet and depressed innovation and investment in broadband networks. He said his draft *Restoring Internet Freedom Order*, which has already been provided to the other FCC Commissioners, will stop the federal government from "micromanaging the Internet" and "require Internet service providers to be transparent about their practices so that consumers can buy the service plan that's best for them and entrepreneurs and other small businesses can have the technical information they need to innovate."

There is strong opposition from both grassroots movements and big online companies, like Google and Facebook. They fear that the repeal of the 2015 net neutrality rules would create a "pay-to-play" Internet, allowing telecom companies to control the speed of websites their customers want to access. Despite heavy lobbying efforts on both sides, it is expected that FCC's board of directors will vote 3-2 in favor of this proposal on December 14. To add your voice to the debate, **submit a comment** under "new filing" on the left side of the page.

Brownfields Reauthorization is Up for Consideration in the House

This week the House is expected to vote on the *Brownfields Enhancement, Economic Redevelopment, and Reauthorization Act of 2017 (HR 3017)*. This bill would reauthorize the program through fiscal year 2022 at an annual level of \$200 million. It would also expand grant eligibility to nonprofit groups, including community development organizations; reinstate a \$50 million annual authorization of grants for state and tribal assistance; require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reserve up to \$1.5 million in annual funding to help small, rural, and disadvantaged communities; allow EPA to award \$1 million in multipurpose grants; and increase maximum grant amounts to \$500,000 per site. If the bill is passed by a simple majority in the House, it will then be up for consideration by the Senate.

OTHER NEWS

Help Improve Emergency Communications. Local Participation in the SAFECOM Nationwide Survey Matters

SAFECOM and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications have teamed up to release the SAFECOM Nationwide Survey (SNS). The survey will provide valuable insights on the current state of the nation's emergency communications, and will be used to provide justification to advocate for more grant funding and capability improvements; develop additional training and other resources; and make more informed policy decisions. Funding

decisions to support critical public safety requirements depend on valid information that reflects the needs of the community. The SNS is an opportunity for public safety's voice to be heard!

The SNS is now live and can be accessed from the **SAFECOM website** or by copying and pasting the following web address into a browser: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2018SNS>. Please encourage public safety agencies and departments (such as law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, 9-1-1 call centers/public safety answering points, emergency management agencies, and public safety non-government organizations) within your constituencies to complete the survey. For more information on NARC's participation in the SAFECOM program, please visit www.dhs.gov/safecom.

Opioid Epidemic has a \$504 Billion Price Tag

The White House's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) recently estimated that the opioid epidemic cost the American economy over \$504 billion in 2015, including nonfatal opioid abuse. Consequences of nonfatal opioid abuse include billions in medical and addiction treatment costs, criminal justice costs, and the resulting decrease in productivity among users. The CEA report, ***The Underestimated Cost of the Opioid Crisis***, is six times higher than any preceding analysis, putting the cost at 3% of the total U.S. GDP. This new analysis accounts for underestimation by previous studies for the economic cost of life from the epidemic and the underreporting of opioid deaths. According to CEA's preliminary analysis, more than 64,000 lives were lost to drug overdoses in 2016 – that equates to a rate of 175 deaths per day in 2016. CEA plans to publish economic analyses of proposed epidemic interventions to follow this report. Learn more about the Opioid Crisis in this **NARC blog**.

Planning a New Park? Use a Greenprint to Help

The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and Conservation Fund have come together to develop a new tool to help policymakers and planners alike plan for new parks. The **Greenprint Resource Hub** offers examples of greenprints, or “a strategic conservation plan and/or tool that reveals the economic and social benefits that parks, open space, and working lands provide communities,” and how your community can start one. Planners can use the tool to locate greenprints across the U.S., learn best practices, and find relevant funding opportunities. Greenprints help planners consider all aspects of park planning and how they intersect, including parks and open space, complete communities, working lands, habitats, and ecosystem goods and services.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

Kansas City Region “Effectively Ends Homelessness” for Veterans

Last week, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness recognized the Kansas City region for ending homelessness for regional veterans. This achievement is a result of a regional coalition created two years ago, the Coordinated Coalition of Homelessness, by the mayors of Kansas City, Kansas; Kansas City, Missouri; and Independence, Kansas. They worked hard with local leaders and stakeholders to identify resources that homeless veterans would need to help get them on their feet, and they now have 60 partnership organizations involved. The United States Interagency Council said in their letter to coalition leaders that they are “confident that the infrastructure systems [they] have built will ensure that any Veteran experiencing homelessness in the region will get the support they need to quickly obtain a permanent home.”

New MAPA Transportation Tools

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) has created new transportation tools to help its constituents get around the region. MAPA has launched a new rideshare **website** and mobile **Apple** and **Google** apps so users can find others in the community who are interested in carpooling, biking, walking, or riding a bus together. Whether you are a resident or in the area just for the day, you can enter in your travel route information and the tool will partner you with those with similar routes and schedules. MAPA has also developed a **metro area bike map** for its region, complete with information on the BikeOmaha System and Heartland B-Cycle, the region's growing bike sharing program.

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.

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 Planner

Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, Toledo, OH

Public Administration Specialist

Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, Toledo, OH

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!](#)

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Funding Opportunity for 2018

Applications Due: January 31, 2018

This funding opportunity for Phase I of the Cooperative Watershed Management Program is seeking proposals for activities to develop a watershed group, complete watershed restoration planning activities, and to design watershed management projects. Up to \$100,000 in federal funds may be awarded to an applicant per award, with no more than \$50,000 made available in a year for a period of up to two years. States, tribes, local and special districts (e.g., irrigation and water districts), local governmental entities, interstate organizations, and non-profit organizations, including existing watershed groups, within the 17 western states are eligible to apply.

Digital Humanities Advancement Grants

Applications Due: January 16, 2018

Digital Humanities Advancement Grants (DHAG) support digital projects throughout their lifecycles, from early start-up phases through implementation and long-term sustainability. Experimentation, reuse, and extensibility are hallmarks of this grant category, leading to innovative work that can scale to enhance research, teaching, and public programming in the

humanities. The Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment for the Humanities may jointly fund some DHAG projects that involve collaborations with museums and/or libraries. DHAG may involve: creating or enhancing experimental, computationally-based methods, techniques, or infrastructure that contribute to the humanities; pursuing scholarship that examines the history, criticism, and philosophy of digital culture and its impact on society, or explores the philosophical or practical implications and impact of digital humanities in specific fields or disciplines; or revitalizing and/or recovering existing digital projects that promise to contribute substantively to scholarship, teaching, or public knowledge of the humanities.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Fitting the Road to the Context: Florida's Context Classification and Complete Streets Implementation

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

Florida DOT is making major strides toward improving pedestrian and bicycle safety through its Complete Streets Implementation initiative. One of FDOT's most innovative achievements has been the recent adoption of eight context classifications to guide road design decisions. Under this new system, planners and engineers will consider existing and future characteristics such as land uses, building configuration, and street connectivity to ensure that roads are designed for the right vehicle speeds, road users, and trip types. While the concept of context classification is not new, FDOT is one of the first states to operationalize it within formal decision-making processes. Join DeWayne Carver from FDOT to learn about the new context classification approach, why FDOT developed it, and how it will guide roadway design decisions moving forward. Billy Hattaway, Director of Transportation for the City of Orlando, will talk about why the new system is important for local communities.

Building Arts-Driven Community and Economic Development Solutions for Your County

December 12, 2:00-3:15 PM ET

Join NACo on this interactive webinar to learn how counties are improving their economies and building thriving communities by leveraging their arts and culture assets. Local communities will discuss their creative placemaking work to address local challenges. The selected teams from the NACo Creative Counties Placemaking Challenge will also be announced. This discussion will provide county elected officials and staff members with examples of successful creative placemaking efforts from across the country and tips for how to develop and implement projects in their own communities.

Trees and Stormwater: A Tool for Your Community

December 14, 2:00-3:30 PM ET

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 Water Environment Federation, National Municipal Stormwater Alliance, 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.

Becoming a Destination Employer: County Insights from Gallagher's 2017 Benefits Strategy & Benchmarking Survey

December 19, 3:00-4:00 PM ET

Join Gallagher for an informative webinar highlighting county-specific results from their *2017 Benefits Strategy & Benchmarking Survey*. Learn best practices for human capital management within the public sector, and discuss the value of your county's participation in Gallagher's 2018 survey through a partnership with NACo.

National Stormwater Calculator for Managing Runoff Using Green Infrastructure: Addition of a Cost Module and a Mobile Web App

January 31, 2018, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Green infrastructure is becoming an increasingly attractive way to reduce the amount of

stormwater runoff. It provides many environmental, social, and economic benefits that promote urban livability, such as improved surface water quality, water conservation, and improved aesthetic and property value. EPA developed the National Stormwater Calculator (SWC) to help support local, state, and national stormwater management objectives and regulatory efforts to reduce runoff through infiltration and retention using green infrastructure practices as low impact development controls. It can be used for any location within the United States, including Puerto Rico. This webinar will provide potential and example applications, and will present the new cost module and mobile web application.

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