

November 30, 2015 [View this email in your browser](#)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### **This Week...**

Both the House and Senate return to a December 11 deadline to reach agreement on an omnibus spending package. Republican senators meet about a reconciliation bill to repeal parts of the health care law and block Planned Parenthood funding just days after a "politically motivated" shooter attacked a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado on Friday. The measure could be on the floor by mid-week.

The *Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act (S 611)* is also being considered this week. The bill, which passed the Senate on June 9, would provide technical assistance to small towns and rural community public water systems to assess and prioritize their needs for system monitoring, water treatment, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reporting requirements. With 27 percent of the U.S. population residing in rural areas, small water systems account for 77 percent of all systems. S. 611 maintains the existing statutory authorization of \$15 million annually (including 3 percent for technical assistance to public water systems owned or operated by Indian Tribes), but changes the law to cover funding from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2020. The bill also authorizes EPA to provide technical assistance programs to small public water systems through grants or cooperative agreements made to non-profit organizations. The bill prevents grants and cooperative agreements from being used to bring a citizen suit under SDWA and expands the types of activities eligible to receive a grant or cooperative agreement to include: assistance with source water protection plans, monitoring plans, and water security

### **Transportation Deadline**

Congress has only a few work days remaining until the current transportation reauthorization extension expires on December 4. Both House and Senate staff are working to forge a compromise between each of their bills, but the lack of an announcement prior to recess indicates that unresolved issues remain. One of the major sticking points is whether to make it a six-year bill that keeps annual funding basically the same but with an inflationary increase or a five-year bill with higher annual spending levels. Given the extremely short time frame Congress has to act, there is a good chance we'll see another extension.

NARC compiled a **side-by-side document** outlining current law and how that compares with the details of the Senate DRIVE Act and the House STRR Act. Additionally, NARC and the rest of the LOT Coalition **sent a letter to conferees** outlining a number of issues that impact regions and local areas. If you have a Senator or Representative that serves on the conference committee, we urge you to reach out and make your feelings known about what should be in the final legislation. The LOT Coalition letter above has some great talking points that you can include in your own communications. Click **HERE** for a list of conference committee members from the

Senate and House transportation committee.

### **White House Sets Ambitious Target for GHG Emissions**

On November 23, the White House announced that federal agencies will cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 41.8 percent from the 2008 levels by 2025 (previously set at 40 percent last March), saving \$18 billion in energy costs. Federal agencies are also putting out Strategic Sustainability Performance Plans, to outline how they are cutting carbon emissions, waste, and energy use to save taxpayer dollars.

## **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

### **Centralina COG's Innovation Corridors**

The Charlotte Region's CONNECT Our Future initiative, funded by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regional planning grant, took strides this Fall to move forward their vision for improved public transportation. Local, state, and federal stakeholders came together to vet the "Innovation Corridors" concept, which would make use of economic development and place-making tools to expand public transit along five primary transportation corridors identified through the CONNECT process. Elected official delegates from the Centralina Council of Governments are now weighing in on the greatest opportunities and challenges around making this concept a reality.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **NARC Needs Your Scenario Planning Input**

Does your organization currently use scenario planning tools in planning or decision-making? Is your organization considering using scenario planning, but have held back for some reason? Have you avoided scenario planning because of time, expense, or any other reason? We need your participation and input! NARC received federal and foundation support for an exciting project to explore **how regional planning organizations are currently using scenario planning tools and ways to reduce the barriers to entry** so more organizations consider their use in the future. We need members that are using, have used, are considering using, have considered but rejected the idea of using, or are simply interested in learning more about scenario planning. *Organizations that participate in this interview round may also be invited to a two-day meeting in Washington, DC on January 6-7, 2016 that will explore these issues in greater detail.*

### **Scenario Planning Webinar**

January 4, 2016 at 3:00 PM ET

For anybody interested in learning more about this project and the results of this initial round of member interviews, NARC and Place Matters will host this webinar.

Please contact Erich Zimmermann at [erich@narc.org](mailto:erich@narc.org) before **December 4** if you are interested in participating or have any questions.

## **FEATURED JOBS**

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

## **FUNDING**

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

### **ETA Tech Hire Partnership Grants**

Application Deadline: March 11, 2016 by 4:00 PM ET

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) announced the availability of approximately \$100,000,000 in grant funds for the TechHire partnership grant program. This grant program is designed to equip individuals with the skills they need through innovative approaches that can rapidly train workers for and connect them to well-paying, middle- and high-skilled, and high-growth jobs across a diversity of H-1B industries such as Information Technology (IT), healthcare, advanced manufacturing, financial services, and broadband.

## EVENTS

*View full list of events!*

### **2016 National Conference of Regions**

February 7-9, 2016\* – Washington, DC

The National Conference of Regions is NARC's forum to determine key policy issues and a legislative agenda for the year ahead, targeting topics central to our members' missions and their local elected officials' focus. Additional information will be available very soon. *\*Note: Capitol Hill Day is February 10. Please make room in your travel plans to meet with your representatives.*

## CONTACT US

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