



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Dear Colleagues,

What happens when a lame duck Congress has only a few days left to fund the federal government before a December 11 deadline and wants to ensure that the next Congress has an opportunity to have a greater say over government spending? You learn a new term for a cross between a multi-agency short term extension or an “omnibus” spending bill and a continuing resolution to keep federal programs funded at current levels, and you call it a “CRomnibus.”

Regardless of the short term decisions on funding and tax breaks, long term budget implications will challenge funding for local government programs as seen in this recent report from the Congressional Budget Office. [CBO](#) lists 79 options for budgetary savings including many with direct local impact. The report includes options which CBO describes as a compilation of options provided from a variety of sources, not intended as a recommendation. Click [HERE](#) for the summary table of options.

On spending, the CBO list includes: [eliminating or reducing funding for certain grants to state and local governments](#) including community development block grants, home weatherization, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, U.S. Department of Justice grants, and education grants; [limiting highway funding to expected highway revenues](#); eliminating grants to large and medium sizes airports; eliminating subsidies for Amtrak; eliminating capital investment grants for transit systems; and [increasing payments by tenants in federally assisted housing](#).

On increasing revenues, the CBO list includes the following options: [eliminating the deduction for state and local taxes](#); [repealing the low-income housing tax credit](#); [increasing excise taxes on motor fuels by 35 cents and index for inflation](#); [eliminating the tax exemption for new qualified private activity bonds](#); and [converting the mortgage interest deduction to a 15 percent tax credit](#).

Congress has a lot on its plate for the next few weeks and in the coming months. Regions will need to pay close attention as the debate unfolds. Make sure to join us at the 2015 National Conference of Regions in Washington for the latest information.

Thanks,
Leslie Wollack

PROGRAM UPDATE

President Announces Funding for Law Enforcement Cameras: Today, President Obama announced \$263 million in funding for law enforcement agencies to purchase body-worn cameras and improve training. The White House said the funding, which would need to be matched by state and local police, could purchase 50,000 body-worn cameras. The White House said that the President also plans to overhaul how the federal government disperses military equipment to local police departments. Click [HERE](#) for the article.

Local Government Organizations Thank EPA for Moving Forward on Affordability Framework: Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a *Financial Capability Assessment Framework for Municipal Clean Water Act Requirements*. This Framework was the result of nearly two years of discussions with representatives of The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo). The local government organizations asked for these discussions due to the growing concern that costly water and wastewater mandates were dramatically impacting low and fixed income residents. The groups welcomed the Framework as a good first step in bringing national water quality goals and local resource constraints in better balance. Click [HERE](#) to read EPA's memo.

ETA's Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative: The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) will provide technical assistance to regions focused on developing new sector strategies partnerships, expanding and sustaining existing ones, and scaling up effectiveness and impact. The Initiative is designed to create a networked national sector strategies movement of workforce systems that are sharing and supporting each other by leveraging the significant body of sector strategy knowledge already available. Sector strategies are regional, industry-focused approaches to workforce and economic development that improve access to good jobs and increase job quality in ways that strengthen an industry's workforce. The agency recently launched a webinar series to showcase the opportunities ahead in building sector strategies. The first webinar features Kentucky's ongoing work with economic development, workforce development, and education partners. Click [HERE](#) for materials from the webinar.

2014–2015 Winter Heating Costs Report for Older and Low-Income Households: While this winter's heating costs are projected to decline on the whole, households heating with fuel oil will pay more than those heating with natural gas, electricity, and propane. This report from AARP analyzes data from the *2009 Residential Energy Consumption Surveys* and the *October 2014 Short-Term Energy Outlook*. It examines heat-related energy consumption and expenditures among consumers age 65 and older based on income, heating fuel used, and geographic location. Click [HERE](#) for the report.

Report on Helping Low-Income Families: If policymakers want to reduce poverty, they'll have to shake up a fragmented system that sometimes works against itself. That's the thrust of a recent report, *Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach*, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that calls for a "two-generation" approach to helping low-income families. Click [HERE](#) for the report.

N4ASurvey Shows Efforts to Enable Americans to Age in Place are Expanding: A survey by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) found that more than 70 percent of local service providers now offer programs to help people find alternatives to nursing homes or other institutional care; that's up from less than a third in 2008. The survey of 618 agencies also found that their role has expanded to meet the federal *Affordable Care Act's* (ACA) goal of reducing the nation's medical expenses by minimizing repeat hospital admissions. The survey suggests that the agencies have become key players in the ACA's *Care Transitions Program*, which is designed to reduce costs by improving follow-up care for Medicare beneficiaries after their discharge from the hospital. Click [HERE](#) for the survey, and [HERE](#) for the *Washington Post* article.

POLICYUPDATE

Congress is in session.

Senate EPW Hearing: The U.S. Senate Environment and Public Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife will hold a hearing tomorrow December 2 at 9:30 AM EST entitled, *Innovation and the Utilities of the Future: How Local Water Treatment Facilities are Leading the Way to Better Manage Wastewater and Water Supplies*. Click [HERE](#) to view the hearing live. After the hearing, testimony from the hearing will be available at the same link.

New House Bill to Protect Drinking Water: Rep. Bob Latta (R-OH) introduced legislation to protect drinking water from harmful algae blooms following the drinking water emergency in Toledo, Ohio last summer. The crisis impacted 400,000 Ohio residents when they were told to stop drinking tap water for two days. Focusing on the long standing issue of toxic run-off that impacts local drinking water supplies, Rep. Latta's bill follows a U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing, *Cyanotoxins in Drinking Water*. Rep. Latta's bill (H.R. 5753) would amend the *Safe Drinking Water Act* and calls for a strategic plan for "assessing and managing risks associated with cyanotoxins in drinking water provided by public water systems."

Non-point pollution has been an issue for local governments for years, with public water utilities bearing the burden for cleaning up upstream pollutants in order to provide safe drinking water for residents. In testimony before the House Energy and Economy Subcommittee, John Donahue, president of the American Water Works Association, highlighted the issue. "Although each watershed is unique and has its own mix of nutrient sources, across the nation the most prominent uncontrolled sources of nitrogen and phosphorus are non-point sources — that is, runoff. These sources are at the same time both the hardest to manage and the furthest from being subject to meaningful federal regulatory authority." Click [HERE](#) for testimony and video from the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

WIOA Key Provisions: The enactment of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) provides a tremendous opportunity for reforms to ensure America's one-stop system is job-driven—responding to the needs of employers and preparing workers for jobs that are available now and in the future. Click [HERE](#) to view brief, narrated presentations by ETA staff highlighting key provisions in the new law.

REGIONS360

MWCOG Solar Workshop: On November 17, several NARC staff members attended the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MWCOG) solar workshop: *Driving the National Capitol Region Solar Market: Opportunities for Local Government*. MWCOG is a member of the [Solar Ready II](#) project, funded by the [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative Rooftop Solar Challenge II](#), and is striving to implement solar best management practices across the Washington, D.C. region. The workshop featured several presentations from national solar energy experts, solar energy organizations, and local jurisdiction representatives on community bulk solar purchasing and municipal solar procurement. Click [HERE](#) learn more about MWCOG's *Solar Ready II* project.

TMACOG Hosts Student Watershed Watch Summit: The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) hosted the 25th annual Student Watershed Watch Summit on November 19 at the University of Toledo Scott Park Campus. Sixteen schools performed field work and evaluated water quality parameters. Classrooms presented their results from the stage and prepared table top displays. Their oral presentations are evaluated by a panel of judges who work in environmental or educational fields. Teachers evaluate the table top displays. Students also attend workshops exploring professions in environmental science. Speakers represented the Toledo Zoo, Metroparks of the Toledo Area, and the Ohio EPA emergency response team. The Student Watershed Watch is supported by government and business sponsors.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Please send all responses to Anna Rosenbaum, anna@narc.org.

Communications Strategies: Does your COG have a written communications strategy that you can share? The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) in Detroit is interested in expanding their communications program and would like to see how other COGs have identified their communications goals, and their strategies to implement those goals.

Use of HUD's Location Affordability Portal: Does your COG or MPO regularly use the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) [Location Affordability Portal](#) for scenario or other planning purposes? If so, please let us know how and when you use the tool. HUD is interested in this information.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants still open!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of events still open!

WEBINAR: Sharing Data for Better Results

December 3, 1:00-2:00 PM

If you're interested in sharing data to provide better services, there's a lot to know about federal laws and regulations, how to keep the public informed and how to find the balance between privacy and the delivery of effective services. Join NLC's webinar to learn more about these topics and their new [data sharing toolkit](#). Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: NLC Briefing Report on Service Delivery and Performance Management

December 4, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Join this webinar for a briefing on NLC's new report, *Performance Management Guide for City Leaders*, along with presentations from city performance management staff. Performance management provides cities with the tools to make informed program and process improvements, to more wisely spend scarce budget resources, and to ensure that the community's needs are being prioritized. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: State and Local Pension Reform: Can We Cut Costs and Improve Retirement Security?

December 9, 12:30-1:30 PM ET

Faced with deficits exceeding \$2 trillion nationwide, public-employee retirement plans across the country have been trimming pension costs by cutting benefits and raising employee contributions. Such actions, however, have undermined retirement security for many participants. Are there better ways for state and local pension plans to balance their books? Join the Urban Institute for a live webinar that examines the funding of state and local pensions and assesses various reform options. Panelists will also unveil new online tools that allow policymakers and researchers to compare plan finances and benefits and assess the potential effects of different reforms. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Reminder! NARC WEBINAR: Introduction to the National Center for Mobility Management

December 11, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

NARC will join NLC and American Public Transportation Association to co-host a webinar on the work of the National Center for Mobility Management. The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) promotes customer-centered mobility strategies to advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community. This webinar will provide an overview of the NCMM's capacity-building resources available to communities and share tips on how to tap into the Center's expertise on transportation coordination, health care and job access strategies, funding and financing, and more. Click [HERE](#) to register.

NARC CONFERENCE: NARC's 2015 National Conference of Regions

February 8-10, 2015 – Washington, DC

Registration is open for the National Conference of Regions. This conference is a forum for locally-elected officials and their Regional Councils to explore federal policy issues, and discuss NARC's legislative priorities for the 114th Congress. Click [HERE](#) for the conference webpage.