



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress is in session.

Two Weeks and Counting

With less than two weeks before both chambers break for the Christmas holiday, Congress must (1) develop a compromise tax reform bill to get to the president for his signature and (2) adopt a Continuing Resolution (CR) that funds the government beyond December 22.

The first – developing a compromise tax reform bill that can pass the House and Senate and be signed by the president – remains very challenging as senators from purple states like Maine are under pressure to preserve the state and local tax (SALT) deduction.

The affordable housing industry is also putting great pressure on Congress to maintain the tax-exempt status of Private Advocacy Bonds (PABs). Removal of the tax-exempt status would mean that bondholders would receive higher interest payments to compensate for being taxed, significantly increasing the cost of affordable housing construction.

The second – adopting a CR to fund the government when the current CR expires on December 22 – may also be harder than originally thought. Democrats are holding out for provisions to protect Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients from deportation. And some Republicans are holding out for cuts to non-defense discretionary programs to offset the cost of the tax bill, which experts predict will increase the nation's debt by \$1.4 trillion over the next ten years.

The final content of each bill will reflect efforts by leadership to find an acceptable compromise, an effort which will likely take them right up to the deadline.

Coalition Calls for Preservation of PABs

Last week, NARC joined many national organizations – including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, and National Association of Counties – on a letter calling for the preservation of PABs and advance refunding bonds in the final tax bill. PABs and advance refunding bonds provide efficient & low-cost financing for critical investments in infrastructure projects that have a clear public purpose (e.g. hospitals, airports, affordable housing, seaports, water and sewer systems). Currently, it is expected that PABs will be preserved in a final agreement, but advanced refunding will be eliminated.

House Jumps into National Monuments Fight

Last Monday, **the president signed two proclamations to scale back two large national monuments** in Utah – the 1.4-million-acre Bear Ears National Monument to 220,000 acres and the 1.9 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to 1 million acres. While the Trump administration maintained that the reduction in land would allow ranchers to be stewards of the land again and drive the rural economy, they faced immediate backlash from environmentalists and American Indian tribes. This Thursday, the House Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing to consider Chris Stewart's (R-UT) *Grand Staircase Escalante Enhancement Act* (HR 4558). This bill would turn the Grand Staircase-Escalante National

Monument into a national park, protecting some of the land that Trump formally shrank from the original monument.

Mayors Get Involved in FCC Net Neutrality Vote Debate

Approximately sixty mayors **signed a letter** opposing the repeal of net neutrality regulations in anticipation of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) vote on Thursday. They fear that the repeal could lead to digital inequality, putting low-income users at risk of getting left behind because they cannot afford the premium Internet speed and availability packages. The repeal can give unfair advantages to telecom companies that are the primary ISPs in communities (like Comcast), leaving little or no flexibility for choosing a provider. The mayors worry that community startups would not be able to compete with large telecom companies that provide premium services. The mayors explicitly state that “the Commission’s proposal seeks to compound its prioritization of the broadband industry above all others, and above local communities, by broadly preempting state and local government ability to respond to the unique challenges faced in our communities.”

OTHER NEWS

EPA Releases List of Priority Superfund Sites

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator (EPA) Scott Pruitt identified over 20 superfund sites that need immediate and intense attention. They have been singled out because EPA feels these projects have critical upcoming milestones and/or site-specific actions that would best benefit from the administrator’s direct engagement. The list will be fluid – once EPA completes an important milestone, another will take its place to ensure progress on all cleanup sites. This list is in direct response to EPA’s **Superfund Task Force Recommendations**.

CPD Funding Matrix and Dashboard Reports Posted

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has posted their **Community Funding and Development (CPD) Funding Matrix and Dashboard Reports** to the HUD Exchange. The reports provide funding information for each city and state receiving CPD program funds, including the Community Development Block Grant, Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants, HOME Investment Partnership Program, and the Housing Trust Fund. The reports detail the size of each grant received in the last few years, as well as the total amount of funds available to spend on related local programs and activities.

Former Obama Officials Tapped by Real Estate Developers to Build Infrastructure Fund

Related Cos., one of the largest real-estate developers in the U.S., has hired former Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx and former senior Transportation Department official Andrew Wright to build an infrastructure arm called Related Infrastructure. The new venture will invest in businesses that develop and operate airports, toll roads, ports, and other infrastructure. Unlike other infrastructure efforts by major financial businesses, Related Infrastructure will buy stakes in construction companies, management firms, and other infrastructure businesses owned by public and private sources, rather than privatizing core infrastructure projects.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

Innovative Tech Fund Helping Expand Internet Access in California’s Low-Income Communities

The **California Emerging Technology Fund** (CETF) and the state government have an ambitious goal for 2023: wire 90 percent of California’s households to expand Internet access. CETF has approached engaging civic leaders in a regional way, funding regional consortia to work on aggregation of rural demand. Regional roundtables help them plan the integration of broadband in key sectors, including economic development, education, workforce, and healthcare. With the financial support from AT&T and Verizon, they have already provided \$30.4 million in grants to more than 100 community-based nonprofits to achieve progress in digital literacy, public awareness and education, and broadband adoption.

MVRPC Introduces Two New Regional Profiles

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) introduced two new profiles to their *Regional Profile Series* last week. The series contains data and analyses relevant to the region, providing a foundation for future planning, coordination, and project development efforts. The

new **Miami Valley Workforce Regional Profile** looks at the region's workforce, highlighting the most common occupations of the region's residents, from 2004 to 2016. The **Miami Valley Housing Regional Profile** summarizes 1980 to 2010 data of the region's household makeup, vacancy rates, types of housing, development trends, construction costs, building permit trends, and housing values and costs.

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.

Concerns Grow Over the Impacts of House and Senate Tax Bills

by Neil Bomberg

Congress is back from Thanksgiving break and confronted with some significant choices, including passage of a tax bill that substantially reduces the corporate tax rate and eliminates some common individual tax deductions. From the outset, the goal has been to pass a tax cut bill – good or bad – before Congress breaks for the Christmas holiday. To do this House and Senate Republicans are moving at breakneck speed to get the bill to the president for his signature.

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.

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Planner II – Economic Development

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Pensacola, FL

Planner II – Data Analyst

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Pensacola, FL

Bexar Area Agency on Aging Care Specialist

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Executive Director

Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization, Lady Lake, FL

FUNDING

View full list of grants!

Youth Service and Conservation Corps Workforce Development

Applications Due: January 8, 2018

The Federal Highway Administration requests applications for a new cooperative agreement entitled *Youth Service and Conservation Corps Workforce Development*. The proposed agreement aims to assist the grantee in encouraging states and regional transportation planning agencies to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified youth service or conservation corps to perform appropriate projects eligible under the federal-aid highway program. The goal of the project is to expand youth workforce development opportunities while strengthening transportation career pathways.

Veterans Business Outreach Center Program

Applications Due: January 08, 2018

The Small Business Administration's Veterans Business Outreach Center Program (VBOC) seeks

proposals that provide quality training and counseling to veteran small business owners and entrepreneurs. A key component of this funding opportunity is for applicants to provide training to transitioning military personnel through the Boots to Business (B2B) Training Program and to veterans previously discharged from the military through the Reboot Training Program. Additionally, applicants will provide counseling, training, technical and financial skill development, comprehensive business assessments, and mentoring services to veteran, active duty, Reserve, National Guard, military spouse/survivor entrepreneurs, and small business owners interested in starting a new, or expanding and diversifying an established, small business.

EVENTS

View full list of events!

Unravelling the Food-Health Nexus: Addressing Practices, Political Economy, and Power Relations to Build Healthier Food Systems

December 12, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM ET

Unravelling the Food-Health Nexus – a report commissioned by the Global Alliance for the Future of Food and written by IPES-Food (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) – provides a comprehensive overview of the health impacts of food systems, identifying the channels through which food systems affect human health, and how prevailing power relations and imperatives in food systems help to shape our understanding of the impacts they generate. This webinar will provide participants with leading-edge research on the health impacts of food systems, insight from global thought leaders, and a deeper understanding of the systems-based solutions needed to move forward to address these complex issues.

WOTUS Definition Update for Governmental Partners

December 12, 1:00-2:00PM ET

EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) will be hosting a webinar for state, local and tribal partners to discuss progress the agencies have made in developing a new rule on the definition of “Water of the United States” (WOTUS). Both agencies will review the status of three ongoing efforts: 1) proposing to add an applicability date to the 2015 Rule; 2) proposing to reinstate the legal status quo prior to the 2015 Rule; and, 3) developing a new WOTUS definition. The agencies will discuss feedback from stakeholders on the step 2 redefinition and their expected approach for analyzing potential effects of a new definition.

Working Across Government to Advance Racial and Health Equity

December 12, 1:00-2:00PM ET

Human Impact Partners is hosting a four-part webinar series built around the strategic practices outlined in their recently released ***Health Equity Guide***. Each webinar will focus on a **set of strategic practices** that health departments can take to pursue a wall-to-wall transformation of how they work internally, with communities and alongside other government agencies. This webinar, the second in the series, will discuss:

- Why working across government is key to advancing health equity;
- How King County (Seattle) established shared goals for equity across county government agencies;
- How Madison/Dane County (Wisconsin) is working with other government agencies to apply racial equity tools and analyses to city and county programs, plans, and policies;
- How GARE is helping health departments build government alliances and a shared understanding to advance racial equity; and
- Resources to help your health department work across government to advance health equity.

Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations: Status Update

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

Join Bloomberg Government analysts for a webinar on the state of play surrounding fiscal year 2018 appropriations. In this webinar, Bloomberg Government will discuss:

- The status of a short-term funding debate, as well as if and when an omnibus spending package could emerge;
- The issues complicating negotiations within the Republican conferences and with Democrats, including increased defense spending, budget caps, immigration, and

- payments to health insurers; and
- How tax reform and disaster aid fits in the picture.

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.

Opportunities in the 2018 Farm Bill: Federal Efforts to Advance Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems

January 9, 3:00-4:15 PM ET

The Farm Bill shapes our local, regional, and national food systems, from farm and crop production, to access to healthy food, to nutrition and hunger programs. The process to reauthorize the Farm Bill in 2018 is underway. Stakeholders, advocates, and community members all have a role in ensuring that the next Farm Bill protects and expands progress made thus far, while strengthening policies that advance equitable and sustainable food systems.

This PolicyLink webinar will provide a brief overview of the Farm Bill and status of reauthorization, as well as highlight four key policy pillars within the legislation: the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), healthy food incentive programs such as Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI), and sustainable agricultural and local/regional food system development. Speakers will discuss challenges and opportunities in each policy arena and highlight opportunities to get involved in shaping the next Farm Bill.

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