



**Conference Note:**

**Energy and Environmental Director Peer Exchange & Communications Director Peer Exchange**

Join NARC for two different peer exchange groups during the 2016 National Conference of Regions in February! NARC intends for these meetings to initiate a network of peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing.

For the Energy and Environment Group, the meeting will be our second convening of environmental and energy directors from regional COGs across the country, following our initial session at the Executive Directors Conference in South Bend. If you are interested in participating, please email Cameron Herbolsheimer ([cameron@narc.org](mailto:cameron@narc.org)) with the proper contact for your organization.

For communications and public affairs directors, this will be the kick-off meeting for a NARC Communications Committee. We want this initial convening to spearhead future efforts and engagement among member communications and public affairs directors. If you are interested in participating, please email Anna Rosenbaum ([anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org)) with the proper contact for your organization.

**Reminder to update your records with NARC's new address:**

660 North Capitol Street NW Suite 440, Washington, DC 20001

**NEWS FROM WASHINGTON**

*Congress is not in session. Both chambers return for the 115th Congress on January 3.*

**The Latest on the Presidential Transition**

Appointees to President-elect Donald Trump's cabinet continued through the past week. Here are his choices thus far:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Selection</b>
Chief of Staff	RNC Chairman Reince Priebus
Chief White House Strategist	Trump Campaign CEO Steve Bannon
Attorney General	Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions
Health and Human Services Secretary	Georgia Congressman Tom Price
Transportation Secretary	Former Labor Secretary for George W. Bush and Transportation Under Secretary for George H.W. Bush Elaine Chao
Education Secretary	Betsy DeVos
Treasury Secretary	Steven Mnuchin
Commerce Secretary	Wilbur Ross
Ambassador to the United Nations	South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley
CIA Director	Kansas Congressman Mike Pompeo
National Security Adviser	Retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn
Defense Secretary	Retired General James Mattis
Housing and Urban Development Secretary	Dr. Ben Carson
Small Business Administration Administrator	Linda McMahon
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator	Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt
Homeland Security Secretary	Retired General John Kelly
Labor Secretary	Andy Puzder

Outstanding Cabinet positions: Secretary of State, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Secretary of Interior.

### **Government Shutdown Averted**

A four-month continuing resolution (**H.R. 2028**) passed the House last Thursday by a 326-96 vote and the Senate cleared the stopgap spending bill by a 63-36 vote with less than an hour to spare on Friday evening. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law early Saturday morning. The CR funds federal agencies through April 28 with additional dollars for a few urgent needs such as natural disaster relief and war operations, and \$7 million for New York City law enforcement for protecting President-elect Trump while he is in Manhattan. Both parties expressed disappointment about passing another CR rather than an omnibus package for the remainder of fiscal year 2017.

### **Water Legislation Update**

The House passed the ***Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act*** (WIIN; previously known as the WRDA bill) by a 360-61 vote on Thursday. A controversial addition was made last week to provide relief for California's drought by relaxing environmental regulations. The House Rules Committee approved a single closed rule for both the CR and WIIN Act by voice vote, allowing no amendments from the floor. Before leaving town, the **Senate cleared this water resources bill** early Saturday by a 78-21 vote. The bill authorizes nearly \$11.7 billion for water infrastructure projects and \$170 million to help Flint, MI repair its lead-tainted drinking water system. This bill is one of the final achievements in this Congress and puts a water resources bill back on a two-year reauthorization cycle.

### **2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates and 2016 Determinations for the Voting Rights Act**

The U.S. Census Bureau released the **2011-2015 five year ACS estimates**, offering a wealth of demographic and socio-economic data on more than 40 topics for communities of all sizes. The five-year estimates average data collected over the relevant time period from an annual sample of roughly 3.5 million addresses, to ensure acceptable levels of statistical reliability for data on neighborhoods, sparsely populated areas (such as rural counties), and numerically small population groups (such as veterans, persons with disabilities, and race and ethnic subgroups).

Census also released the 2016 Determinations for Section 203 of the *Voting Rights Act*, which lists 263 jurisdictions that are required to provide language assistance during elections for groups of citizens who are unable to speak or understand English adequately.

### **Commerce Relies on Regional Economies to Implement Its Workforce Development Strategy**

In a **December 2 article**, *Forbes* magazine highlighted an important and ongoing effort by the U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce) to help employers find skilled workers, and skilled workers find appropriate employment. The goal, according to Commerce, is to close the skills gap so that the 46% of American businesses that are having trouble finding workers and the millions of American workers who are still unemployed or underemployed are able to fill the 5.5 million job openings.

Relying on regional economies, Commerce, Aspen Institute, and FutureWork Consulting developed and implemented Skills for Business. **Communities that Work Partnership** was Skills for Business' effort "to strengthen regional economies by equipping American workers with the skills needed for 21st century jobs and accelerating industry-led workforce development and training efforts," according to *Forbes*. From this, Skills for Business developed a guide known as the **Communities That Work Partnership Playbook**. Released last month, the playbook details highlights and lessons from workforce training in **seven regions** and presents nine "plays" that communities can follow to build partnerships and skills.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Gallup Report Documents Decline of U.S. Productivity**

A new report entitled ***No Recovery: An Analysis of Longer-Term U.S. Productivity Decline*** was released by the **Gallup Organization** last week. The report, which was written with the cooperation of the **U.S. Council on Competitiveness** to celebrate its 30th anniversary, identifies fundamental weaknesses in the U.S. economy that have emerged over the last several decades.

According to the report's author, Gallup's senior economist **Jonathan Rothwell**, economic growth has fallen since the 1970s and 1980s and three large sectors are primarily to blame: health care, housing, and education.

Rothwell points out that in 1980 healthcare, housing, and education accounted for 25% of national spending. By 2015 the share of national spending for those three sectors "ballooned" to 36%. The result has been a significant deterioration in the ability of many Americans to obtain quality health care, housing, and education. Specifically, 28% of household income is currently allocated for rent, as compared to 19% in 1980. Self-reported health status fell for people aged 25-59 between 1990 and 2015, in large part due to the cost of adequate healthcare. Per capita gross domestic product growth was only one percent from 2007 to 2015, and only 39% say that now is a good time to find a quality job.

The report concludes that reviving growth will require a new strategy, one that is not based on short-term partisan issues, such as "dialing taxes up or down, injecting stimulus, lowering interest rates and enacting or repealing high-profile regulations." A new strategy must focus on making dysfunctional markets work better for people, rather than special interest groups.

The report does not spell out what Gallup and the U.S. Council on Competitiveness would define as solutions. Instead it states that in upcoming papers, Gallup will lay out potential bi-partisan policy solutions based on the analysis in this paper. NARC will continue to follow Gallup's work in this area and update you as we learn more.

### **The Case for Healthy Places: Improving Health through Placemaking**

Last Thursday, The Project for Public Spaces released ***The Case for Healthy Places***—a report of peer-reviewed research that offers evidence-based guidance, recommendations, and numerous case studies to which health institutions, community organizations, and **other partners** can refer in order to create and support healthy placemaking initiatives. Produced with generous support from **Kaiser Permanente** and Anne T. and Robert Bass, this important study focuses on five key areas: **Social Support & Interaction; Play & Active Recreation; Green & Natural**

**Environments; Healthy Food; and Walking & Biking.** The final chapter addresses **health care institutions** specifically, detailing ways in which they can take action to become placemaking champions in the communities they serve.

## REGION SPOTLIGHT

### MORPC's Thea Walsh Presents at White House Event

The White House Domestic Policy Council and Office of Science and Technology Policy convened its first-ever Electric Vehicle (EV) Datathon. This event, held in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy and four of its National Laboratories brought together EV experts, charging-station providers, cities and states, automakers, and the software-development and data-analysis communities.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Transportation Systems and Funding Director Thea Walsh met with other experts from around the country at the White House to explore EV best practices and how data collection and management can inform efforts to deploy EVs in growing regions. “It was truly an honor to represent MORPC and our members in this important meeting at the White House,” Walsh said. “I was there to share our collaborative transportation planning efforts with Smart Columbus and that our growing region prepares itself for Electric Vehicle infrastructure projects.”

### DVRPC Board Retreat and Megaregions Workshop

Last week, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) held their annual Board Retreat in conjunction with a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) workshop on megaregions. The two-day event brought together local, state, and federal transportation experts to explore how to work together on a megaregion level. Day one featured national megaregions expert and director of the Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development Dr. Catherine Ross and speakers ranging from the Secretary of PennDOT to a senior research associate from the American Transportation Research Institute. Speakers focused on how the Mid-Atlantic megaregion can collaborate, with in-depth discussions relating to freight activities. The second day included panels with NARC member Executive Directors from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Mid-America Regional Council, and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. FHWA is hosting workshops like this around the country to spur conversations on megaregions and transportation planning coordination.

## MEMBER REQUEST

### CDBG Success Stories

NARC has joined with the Community Development Block Grant Coalition to highlight the value of federal housing and community development programs to communities as the President-elect Trump Transition team develops policies on housing and community development. We are seeking information on CDBG projects that have made a significant contribution to your communities.

Do you have a success story to share? If so, please provide the following information from this [link](#) so we can include your successful project in our transition document. Please send responses to Anna Rosenbaum, [anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org).

## FEATURED JOBS

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

### Executive Director

Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Fairfax

## FUNDING

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

### Reminder! 2017 National Walking Summit

Proposals due: December 15 at 9:00 PM ET

America Walks and the Every Body Walk! Collaborative are holding the 2017 National Walking Summit in St. Paul, MN from September 13-15, 2017. After two successful conferences in Washington, DC, the venue is moving to a city that is embracing livability to give participants an

opportunity to explore firsthand the potential of walkable communities. The theme of the 2017 National Walking Summit is *Vital and Vibrant Communities: The Power of Walkability*.

The conference will explore how walking and walkability create engaged, thriving, and inclusive communities for all members. The Summit Program Committee is seeking individuals and groups to actively participate in the Summit. They are looking for sessions that emphasize action-oriented and results-driven research, programs, policies, and partnership to promote walking and walkability.

Please email Kristen Henry at [khenry@americawalks.org](mailto:khenry@americawalks.org) with any questions. Applicants will be notified on the status of their submission by March 1, 2017.

## EVENTS

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

### **CCTA Program Webinar**

**December 14, 9:00–10:00 AM ET**

**December 15, 2:00–3:00 PM ET**

**December 19, 2:00–3:00 PM ET**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is hosting a webinar for interested applicants to understand the program's objectives and priorities, available grant funding, application requirements, application submission process, and the review and selection process. Three different dates are available to accommodate schedules. All webinars will include the same information, so it is only necessary to attend one. Advanced registration is required due to space limitations. Registration is on a first come, first serve basis.

### **Registration Open! 2017 National Conference of Regions**

*February 12-15 – Washington Court Hotel, 525 New Jersey Ave NW 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 soon. Capitol Hill Day is the final day of the conference, February 15, 2017.

## CONTACT US

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