

December 14, 2015

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Senate is in session. House reconvenes tomorrow.

Waiting on the (Omni)bus...

Negotiators have yet to finalize a \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending package to keep the government operating through the end of the fiscal year. Agreement was nearly reached several times last week and anticipation is mounting. Last Friday, lawmakers passed a five-day continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government funded while they continue to work. Now Congress has until midnight on Wednesday to reach an agreement or pass another extension. A number of sticking points remain between the two sides, mostly regarding legislative riders that are not about the substance of the spending package itself. To complicate matters further, negotiations regarding a package of tax extenders are also being deliberated, with the potential for tying the two together into one package.

GAO Says EPA Broke Rule Promoting Waters Rule

As Congress works on a ban of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) implementation of the proposed Waters of the US Rule (WOTUS) in the omnibus spending bill, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) finds EPA in violation of congressional restrictions previously placed on the agency. According to GAO, EPA violated publicity/propaganda and anti-lobbying provisions in the fiscal 2014 (**PL 113-76**) and 2015 (**PL 113-235**) spending laws by using social media to promote WOTUS. WOTUS expands federal jurisdiction over wetlands and streams under the *Clean Water Act of 1995*. The rule was on hold as a federal appeals court considered a legal challenge. Lawmakers have included riders in the fiscal year 2016 omnibus spending package to prevent WOTUS implementation.

OTHER NEWS

Paris Climate Change Agreement

After two weeks of talks, the almost 200 nations at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris unanimously approved the Paris Agreement. The agreement is considered a historic turning point that could fundamentally change the way energy is produced and consumed. Many environmental groups praised the agreement as the beginning of a new era on climate change action. In the U.S., the agreement does not require congressional approval because of the way it is structured, though many in Congress strongly disapprove.

The primary aim of the agreement is to reduce global temperature warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial averages. The agreement also calls for developed nations to raise a minimum of \$100 billion to support developing countries by 2020. Participating nations will submit updates to their plans every five years. To meet this goal in the U.S., regions can play a part by finding new ways to promote alternative energy use, policy, and technology. The agreement will be open for signing on April 22, 2016 (Earth Day) and will go into effect once 55 countries – comprising at least 55 percent of global emissions – ratify the agreement.

Boosting Broadband Uptake in America

The Brookings Institution and National League of Cities held a discussion on the importance of broadband expansion in cities following their recent **report** on the topic. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) highlighted the need to close the digital divide, discussed the power of the internet, and emphasized the fact that many Americans don't have access to it - the U.S. now ranks 23rd in Broadband internet penetration in the world. Booker discussed the federal government's role in increasing access. Many city officials also spoke about using public spaces to help bridge the gap and stressed that localities need to lead the effort.

Leveraging Data for State and Local Government Transformation

Last week, Route Fifty hosted a webinar discussing how data can be used to improve government services, best practices, and approaches. Laura Miexall from the City of Pittsburg talked about the **Western Penn Regional Data Center** that hosts regional data so that all the municipalities in Allegheny County can fix problems that don't necessarily fit neatly inside municipality borders. Also discussed was how Virginia uses data as a performance management tool and other state - level research findings.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Email responses to anna@narc.org.

PAG: Dispose-A-Med Program

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) in Tucson, Arizona is working with local stakeholders to coordinate a region-wide Dispose-A-Med program. Has your COG/MPO successfully coordinated a similar effort? If so, please share information, web links, plans, documents, or best practices your organization employed to promote, implement, and quantify your efforts for the the program. Additionally, PAG is interested in how your organization addressed poison control, water quality, and partnerships with stakeholders.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Community Planner

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Kelso, WA

Community Development Manager

Flint Hills Regional Council, Ogden, KS

Transportation Planner III

Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Colorado Springs, CO

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

NARC WEBINAR! Scenario Planning

January 4, 2016, 2:00 - 3:30 PM ET *Please note the new time!*

Join PlaceMatters and NARC to learn about recent research on the use of scenario planning tools to support transportation and land use planning in regions and recommendations to make them more readily available and valuable to regions planning for their future.

REGISTER TODAY! 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. **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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