



## Top Stories

**6/22/17** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that the U.S. is [suspending](#) all imports of fresh beef from Brazil over ongoing food safety concerns. Prior to the ban, USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) had been inspecting 100 percent of imported beef and refused entry to 11 percent of those products, a rate nearly 10 times higher than normal.

**6/15/17** – The Department of Justice (DOJ) [announced](#) that it would allow the merger of Dow Chemical Co. and DuPont to continue under certain conditions—Dow Chemical would sell two petrochemicals used in food packaging, while DuPont will sell select herbicide and insecticide products. DOJ believes that the asset sales will help prevent price increases or lost innovation.

**6/14/17** – The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) [announced](#) that in March, wind and solar power installations exceeded 10 percent of total U.S. electricity generation for the first time, and will likely surpass that level for April. Of that total, wind power provided nearly 80 percent of the electricity.

**6/12/17** – As part of the U.S.China 100-day action plan, the administration reached an agreement with Chinese officials on final details of a protocol to allow the U.S. to begin beef exports to China, for the first time since 2003. Following that announcement, USDA’s Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) and FSIS [released](#) requirements and documentation for U.S. companies.

**6/8/17** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent a [proposed rulemaking](#) to the White House’s Office of Management and Budget for rescinding the Clean Power Plan

(CPP), a rule first released in 2015 that would have required states to develop plans to reduce carbon emissions from electricity 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The rulemaking follows the Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth, which [directed](#) EPA to review the statute. The CPP is currently undergoing judicial review. For more information, see [NCSL’s blogs](#).

**6/1/17** – President Donald Trump [announced](#) that the United States withdrawal from the [Paris Agreement](#) has begun, and negotiations to either re-enter or negotiate a new agreement with “more favorable terms for the United States” are underway. However, the United Nation’s body that facilitated the Agreement stated that it “cannot be renegotiated based on the request of a single party.” The withdrawal process is not anticipated to conclude until November 2020. For more information on the Paris Agreement, see NCSL’s blog posts, [here](#) and [here](#).

## From Congress

**6/20/17** – The House approved [H.R. 1551](#), which is aimed at modifying the tax credit for the production of electricity from advanced nuclear power plant facilities. Specifically, the bill would allow certain credits to apply to projects that begin operation after 2020. Previously, such credits were only available to those projects that began operation before 2020. The credits are likely to be a determining factor as to whether two new nuclear power plants are completed in Georgia and South Carolina.

**6/15/17** – The House Energy and Commerce Committee’s Environment Subcommittee approved language of the [Nuclear](#)

[Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017](#) that would make the first changes in 30 years to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which names Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole waste repository. The bill includes sections regarding interim storage locations, payments to host states and limits to work on a defense waste-only repository. NCSL [sent](#) a letter to the Subcommittee's Chairman, John Shimkus, advocating for the inclusion of elements of [NCSL's Radioactive Waste Management policy](#), including the requirement for state consent.

**6/12/17** – The House [passed](#) the Hydropower Permit Extension (HYPE) Act, which amends the Federal Power Act to authorize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to issue a preliminary permit to a hydropower construction license applicant for up to four years instead of three. It also allows FERC to extend the time a licensee has to begin construction on a project for up to eight years, compared to current law which only allows an extension for up to two years.

## From the Administration

**6/23/17** – USDA [authorized](#) emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands until Sept. 30 in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, as the states are experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions.

**6/22/17** – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced a delay to a study examining issues with baseload electric power and reliability [ordered](#) by DOE Secretary Rick Perry, delayed until mid-July.

**6/22/17** – The Department of Interior (DOI) [released](#) an outline of the agency's ongoing efforts to implement the president's regulatory reform initiatives. The notice includes a number of potential actions including more use of advanced notices of proposed rulemakings, rewriting of the agency's hydraulic fracturing on public and tribal lands rule, a review of BLM's methane waste rule and regulations involving offshore energy development. Additionally, the agency is seeking input from the public on what regulations may be appropriate for repeal, replacement, or modification.

**6/22/17** – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) [suspended](#) an application by Waste Control Specialists to construct a nuclear waste storage facility in Texas following a federal judge's blocking of their proposed \$367 million merger with Energy Solutions, a company that handles low-level nuclear waste. DOJ argued that the merger is anti-competitive.

**6/19/17** – The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) [announced](#) that they will not enforce certain sections of its "[Safety of Underground Natural Gas Storage Facilities](#)" interim final rule while it drafts a new version. The rule was published in response to the 2015 Aliso Canyon disaster in California, during which 4.62 billion cubic feet of gas leaked from an underground storage facility.

**6/16/17** – The Department of Health and Human Services [released](#) the remaining \$378 million in fiscal year (FY) 2017 funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant funds.

**6/15/17** – The North American Electric Reliability Corp., in its "State of Reliability 2017" report noted that while there were no cybersecurity attacks that took down parts of the U.S. grid in 2016, grid security, particularly cyber security, is an area where "past performance does not predict future risk." They called for a closer look at threats that could potentially penetrate power companies and smart grid networks.

**6/14/17** – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is [suspending](#) the implementation of provisions of the Methane and Waste Prevention Rule that have not yet gone into effect while litigation and an internal agency review are in the process of playing out.

**6/14/17** – The U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia [ordered](#) the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to redo certain sections of its environmental analysis surrounding the Dakota Access pipeline concluding it failed to adequately consider potential consequences of a spill from the project. However, the project itself was not halted.

**6/13/17** – EPA [proposed](#) a two-year delay of the agency's final rule aimed at limiting methane emissions from new and

substantially modified sources in the oil and natural gas sector. The rule is already amid a [90-day stay](#) that was initiated by energy industry trade groups to administratively reconsider the rule.

**6/12/17** – DOE [removed](#) a section of its website dedicated to public comments concerning the storage of nuclear waste. All documents and studies associated with the department's goal of consent based siting were removed and replaced with a statement noting the agency is updating the website's language to align with the "priorities under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Perry." Earlier this year, NCSL submitted [comments](#) to DOE regarding our support for implementing a consent-based siting process for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, as based on the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on America's Nuclear Future.

**6/12/17** – U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue named Anne Hazlett to Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development. Hazlett will report directly to the Secretary and oversee the Rural Utilities Service, the Rural Business Service, and the Rural Housing Service. Hazlett previously served as Chief Counsel to the Majority on the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

**6/8/17** – USDA [awarded](#) four loans totaling \$43.6 million to help provide broadband service in rural portions of California, Illinois, Iowa and Texas. The loans were provided through Rural Development's Telecommunications Program which funds infrastructure and equipment to deliver broadband and distance learning and telemedicine services throughout rural America.

**6/6/17** – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [announced](#) its intent to extend compliance dates for agricultural water requirements established by the Food Safety Modernization Act's (FMSA) produce safety rule. The announcement follows a [decision](#) by FDA in March to explore ways to simplify the agricultural water standards after receiving feedback from stakeholders that some of the requirements are too complex to understand and implement.

**5/31/17** – A U.S. Geological Survey [indicated](#) that hydraulic fracturing is not a significant source of harmful chemicals in drinking water wells. The new study is the first to systematically determine the presence of benzene and methane in drinking water near the well sites. However, more study is needed to fully determine the long-term effects.

**5/31/17** – In accordance with Executive Order 13771, "Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs," DOE is [seeking](#) comments and information to assist them in identifying existing regulations, paperwork requirements and other regulatory obligations that can be modified or repealed to achieve a meaningful burden of reduction while continuing to achieve DOE's statutory obligations. The deadline for submission is July 14, 2017.

**5/30/17** – NRC is [seeking](#) comment on efforts to obtain Office of Management and Budget approval for renewing an information collection about the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository. NRC is looking to retrieve existing information about the project from Nevada, local governments and others that were involved in the Yucca program. The notice follows the release of the president's budget which calls for \$30 million to resume Yucca's licensing process.

## NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL's 2017 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Boston, Aug. 8-9.