



Top Stories

7/25/17 – The [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees have both approved a number of FY 2018 appropriations measures that include agriculture, energy, environment, interior, and transportation (House only). While significant uncertainty remains regarding the future of the FY 2018 process, funding levels in both chambers are slightly below FY 2017 levels, but significantly above the spending reductions proposed by the president earlier this year. Stay tuned to NCSL throughout the fall for further updates on FY 2018 appropriations.

7/20/17 – The Trump Administration released its first [Unified Agenda](#) of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, which provides an updated report on the actions administrative agencies plan to issue in the near and long term. A number of contentious regulations from the previous administration are listed including: the Clean Water Rule; the Clean Power Plan; the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) hydraulic fracturing guidelines; and the Department of Interiors (DOI) methane venting and flaring rule, among others.

7/19/17 – President Donald Trump issued an executive order (EO) "[Establishing a Presidential Advisory Council on Infrastructure](#)." The 15-member council will report on "funding, support, and delivery of infrastructure projects in several sectors, including surface transportation, aviation, ports and waterways, water resources, renewable energy generation, electricity transmission, broadband, pipelines, and other such sectors as determined by the council."

7/19/17 – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [awarded](#) \$30.9 million in grants to 43 states for implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act's [produce safety rule](#) as part of

the [State Produce Implementation Cooperative Agreement Program](#). In 2016, FDA awarded \$21.8 million to 42 states. The rule, which begins to phase in 2018, applies the first federal on-farm food safety standards for growing, harvesting and packing of produce.

7/2/17 – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [released](#) its proposal for FY 2018 Renewable Fuel Standards (RFS), which included a reduction in advanced biofuel levels to 4.24 billion gallons in advanced biofuels, down from 4.28 billion in FY 2017. Additionally, within the advanced biofuel category, the mandate for cellulosic ethanol was cut to 228 million gallons, down 23 percent from 2017. The proposal maintained the required level of 15 billion gallons of conventional biofuels.

6/28/17 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is [seeking](#) public comment on [several questions](#) prior to the development of a national food disclosure standard for bioengineered food. The National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard Act was enacted on July 29, 2016 and gave AMS two years to establish a national standard and procedures necessary for implementation. The deadline for input is Aug. 25, 2017.

6/27/17 – EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) [proposed](#) a rule to rescind the 2015 definitional "Waters of the United States" rule, otherwise known as the Clean Water Rule or WOTUS, and to recodify the regulatory text that existed prior to the promulgation of the 2015 rule. The proposed rule follows the February EO on "[Restoring the Rule of Law, Federalism, and Economic Growth by Reviewing the 'Waters of the United States' Rule](#)," which directed the agencies to review, and potentially rescind WOTUS. The rescinding of the rule is the

first step in a [two-step process](#) to rewrite the divisive rule. On July 12, the House Appropriations Committee advanced the [FY 2018 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill](#) containing language that would exempt the administration's repeal of WOTUS from the [Administrative Procedure Act](#), effectively exempting the agencies from providing for public participation in the rulemaking process.

6/26/17 – DOI Secretary Ryan Zinke [announced](#) a record \$464.6 million in Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to more than 1,900 local governments throughout the nation. The disbursement is the largest amount ever allocated in the program's 40-year history. PILT are federal payments to local governments to offset losses in property taxes due to non-taxable federal lands within their boundaries and made annually.

From Congress

7/18/17 – Led by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Michael Conaway (R-Texas), 109 bipartisan members of Congress, [sent](#) a letter to President Donald Trump requesting he use his authority to operate on an ongoing basis, the Cotton Ginning Cost Share Program beginning with the 2016 crop year. The previous administration operated the program for the 2015 cotton crop, providing \$300 million in assistance payments to cotton growers.

7/18/17 – The U.S. House of Representative Appropriations Committee approved a [provision](#) in the Fiscal Year 2018 Homeland Security Appropriations Act that would allow businesses to hire workers through the H-2A visa program, even if the work is not "temporary or "seasonal," as required under federal law. The amendment, offered by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.), would extend the program to all of agriculture that may not have seasonal aspect including dairy operations.

7/10/17 – The Senate approved [Neomi Rao, 54-41](#), as Administrator of the White House Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Rao is an associate professor of law and founder of the Center for the

Study of the Administrative State at the Antonin Scalia Law School.

6/29/17 – The Senate Agriculture Committee unanimously approved legislation to reauthorize the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA). The [Pesticide Registration Improvement Extension Act](#) would be the fourth reauthorization of PRIA, would renew the law for an additional seven years, and increase the user fees paid by industry to cover costs associated with product approval. Funding is also included for farm worker safety programs, and environmental grants.

6/27/17 – The House Energy and Commerce committee approved the [Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017](#). The legislation 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.

From the Administration

7/20/17 – USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue [announced](#) that China has agreed to allow the United States to export rice for the first time ever, following nearly a decade of negotiations.

7/17/17 – USDA is [requesting](#) feedback from the public on how the agency can provide better customer service and remove unintended barriers to participation in programs. The agency is requesting the public's ideas on regulations, guidance documents, or any other policy documents that need reform. The request follows EO 13777, aimed at lowering "regulatory burdens on the American people by implementing and enforcing regulatory reform."

7/12/17 – USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Administrator, Al Almanza, announced his resignation. Almanza has served at FSIS in various positions since 1978.

7/12/17 – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) conditionally [approved](#) exploratory well drilling into federally submerged lands of the Beaufort Sea scheduled to begin in December 2017, and only allowed during the winter months.

7/11/17 – The U.S. Department of Energy [issued](#) a request for information related to the agency’s new test procedure rules for certain varieties of compressors. The current standards were published in early January and intended to take effect in February, but were stayed by the new administration. Comments are due by Sept. 11, 2017.

6/29/17 – The U.S. State Department [announced](#) the issuance of three Presidential permits for three pipelines crossing the US-Mexico border. One of those authorizes the construction, connection, operation and maintenance of the new Burgos Pipeline, which has the capacity to deliver 108,000 barrels of certain refined petroleum products daily.

6/23/17 – USDA’s Acting Deputy Secretary Michael Young sent a memo notifying various offices of the establishment of the Modernizing USDA Commission, and the process USDA will be using to develop its Reform Plan. The memo comes following USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue’s organizational realignment announced in May 2017, which followed [EO 13781](#), which directed each agency to propose a plan to reorganize, and improve their “efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.”

NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL’s 2017 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Boston, Aug. 6-9.