



## Top Stories

**6/24/2015**—The U.S. Congress approved both Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance in the buildup to consideration of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade bill. TPA would allow the administration to submit the TPP to Congress for a simple up or down vote with the ability to amend, which many observers believe significantly increase its chance of approval.

**6/16/2015**—The U.S. House Appropriations Committee approved its fiscal year 2016 Interior and Environment [appropriations bill](#), which included \$452 million in discretionary funding for Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for rural counties that include a high percentage of federally owned land. The [Senate version](#) currently includes \$400 million for the PILT program. Both the House and Senate bills contain provisions that would prohibit EPA from using any appropriated funds to finalize, implement or enforce any rules or regulations related to Sections 111(b) or 111(d) of the Clean Air Act (the sections that apply to new and existing sources of carbon emissions). The full House has already begun debate on the bill and will vote on final passage when the chamber returns from the July 4 recess.

## From the Administration

**6/28/2015**—The Department of Energy (DOE) [issued](#) final approval for Sabine Pass Liquefaction LLC Expansion Project to export liquefied natural gas to non-free-trade-agreement countries. Sabine Pass, located in Louisiana, is now authorized to export up to 3.58 billion standard cubic feet per day of natural gas for 20 years. On May 28, DOE [conditionally approved](#) the Alaska LNG Project LLC to export liquefied natural gas as well. The Alaska project seeks to export up to 2.55 billion standard cubic feet per day of natural gas over 30

years. Before the operation can begin, however, it still needs an environmental review and final regulatory approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

**6/24/2015**—The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [issued](#) \$1.8 billion in loan guarantees to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia, to further support construction of two advanced nuclear reactors at the Vogtle electric plant. This is the last of three conditional commitments that were first announced by DOE in 2010, which total \$6.5 billion in loan guarantees.

**6/12/2015**—U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced](#) that all 50 states may now apply for up to \$100 million in grants under the Biofuels Infrastructure Partnership (BIP). Through BIP, USDA will award competitive grants, matched by states, to expand the infrastructure for distribution of higher blends of renewable fuel. These competitive grants are available to assist states with infrastructure funding. States that offer funding equal to or greater than that provided by the federal government will receive higher consideration for grant funds. States may work with private entities to enhance their offer.

**6/10/2015**—Vilsack and Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell released projections for forest fires for summer 2015. The projections show that the summer will continue the recent trend of above average fire activity. The two cabinet secretaries also appealed to Congress to fund wildfires like other natural disasters, rather than how it is currently funded, which takes money away from other necessary forest programs to quickly respond to the wildfires.

**6/8/2015**—USDA [announced](#) it has approved the importation of egg products from the Netherlands. The move follows a request from the Grocery Manufacturers Association, American Bakers Association and other groups noting that the impact of the avian flu has left them with a shortage of eggs.

**6/5/2015**—DOE [awarded](#) \$60 million for nuclear power research to 68 projects around the country. DOE Secretary Ernest Moniz said he is “convinced that nuclear energy will continue to be an important part of the nation’s energy portfolio.”

**6/4/2015**—The Department of Health and Human Services [released](#) the remaining \$34 million in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds. In January, states received an initial release of more than \$3 billion in LIHEAP funds, and in October another \$302 million.

**6/2/2015**—President Obama signed a [presidential memorandum](#) requiring all federal departments and agencies that buy food for federal facilities “create a preference for meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use in the meat supply chain.”

**6/1/2015**—DOE [proposed](#) energy efficiency standards for residential ovens that aim to improve the efficiency of electric ovens by up to 12 percent, and gas ovens up to 33 percent. Under the proposal, energy consumption improvements could include better insulation, a “switch-mode” power regulator for when the ovens are in stand-by mode, and using an electronic spark ignition system.

## From the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress

**6/17/2015**—The U.S. House Agriculture Committee [approved H.R. 2647](#), the Resilient Federal Forests Act. The bill aims to expedite and improve forest management activities in federal forests by providing the U.S. Forest Service with the authority and flexibility needed to deal with the challenges of managing U.S. forests.

**6/10/2015**—The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee [passed](#) S. 1140, legislation that would require EPA to withdraw its waters of the U.S rule and consult directly with those affected by the rule before making it final. The rule attempts to clarify which waters in the United States fall under protection of the Clean Water Act and therefore require permitting.

## Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

**6/29/2015**—The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) [released](#) the final installment of the Multistate Coordination Resources for Clean Power Plan Compliance, complete with a section on state legislative action drafted by NCSL. NCSL’s section analyzes the action taken in 2014 and 2015 in state legislatures related to the Clean Power Plan.

**6/23/2015**—A judge for the U.S. District Court of Wyoming [issued](#) a temporary delay of the Department of Interior’s new regulations on hydraulic fracturing on federal lands. The regulations were set to go into effect on June 24. The ruling came in response to an injunction by opponents of the rule to halt the implementation of the rule until their suits, currently in the court system, are heard. The judge has requested DOI provide him with more information on the rules by July 22. After analyzing the information, he will make a final decision on the injunction three weeks after that date.



[Registration](#) is open for NCSL’s 2015 Legislative Summit taking place Aug. 3-5 in Seattle. See [the website](#) for more details and resources from last year. [Click here](#) to find resources from past meetings including session presentations, information, videos and more!