



Top Stories

6/29/2015—The U.S. Supreme Court [ruled](#) to overturn the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rule regulating mercury and air toxics from the power sector. In the 5-4 ruling the court found that EPA should have better taken into account the costs to the power sector before deciding whether to limit the toxins. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said most power plants are "already in compliance" and "investments have been made" since the rule was issued in 2011, so the immediate impact of the Supreme Court decision is unclear.

6/23/2015—The U.S. House of Representatives voted 398-1 to approve [H.R. 2576](#), the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Modernization Act. The bill would update the decades old law that regulates toxic chemicals in the marketplace. The bill would grandfather in existing state laws related to toxic chemicals but would pre-empt a new state law if EPA has made a determination on the specific chemical that law was regulating. NCSL approves of language in H.R. 2576 that allows states to regulate a particular chemical in the absence of an EPA final determination, and requests that such language be included in a final TSCA modernization bill.

6/19/2015—EPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [jointly proposed](#) phase 2 standards for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles that aim to improve fuel efficiency and reduce carbon pollution. According to EPA, the transportation sector is the second largest contributor of carbon emissions. Within that sector, medium- and heavy-duty trucks emit about 20 percent of the transportation sector's carbon pollution while accounting for just 5 percent of the vehicles on the road. This second stage of standards builds off an initial phase of fuel-efficiency standards for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles,

which launched in 2011 and applies to model years 2014 through 2018.

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 114th Congress

6/25/2015—The U.S. House [voted](#), 247-180, to approve H.R. 2042, a bill sponsored by Representative Ed Whitfield (R-Ky.) that would allow states to delay or opt out of EPA's Clean Power Plan regulations on greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants. Eight Democrats voted for the bill. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.V.) introduced a similar bill in the Senate, [S. 1324](#), but it would also halt EPA's rules for new and modified power plants, which are set to be finalized at the same time. A vote has not yet been planned in the Senate for S. 1324 or the recently passed House bill.

From the Administration

6/22/2015—EPA [released](#) a study projecting the costs of climate change to U.S. regions and sectors, if carbon pollution remains the same. The report estimates that by 2050, global action to curb greenhouse gas emissions will result in \$10 billion to \$34 billion in savings on electricity system costs.

6/16/2015—The White House hosted a [Clean Energy Investment Summit](#) at which the administration highlighted \$4 billion in commitments by major foundations and institutional investors to fund “climate change solutions.” This surpasses the White House’s “call to action” last year asking for a goal of \$2 billion for its Climate Energy Investment Initiative. Additionally, the White House announced it is launching a Clean Energy Impact Investment Center that will make information on climate change from federal agencies accessible and understandable to the public.

6/4/2015—EPA released its [draft assessment](#) on the potential effect on drinking water from hydraulic fracturing. The report found that hydraulic fracturing activities have not led to widespread, systemic impacts to drinking water. However, the agency did find “important vulnerabilities” in the water lifecycle that could affect drinking water.

6/3/2015—EPA’s Office of Water released a memo providing additional guidance to state’s that utilize Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF). The guidelines, which will be implemented beginning with the FY 2015 SRF capitalization grants, will require SRF recipients to include recognition of federal funding at the project. The purpose of the guidance is to enhance the public awareness of SRF assistance grants and to which projects the money is being dedicated.

6/10/2015—EPA [announced](#) it will develop new rules to reduce emissions from commercial airplanes under the Clean Air Act. EPA is working in conjunction with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which is already developing carbon dioxide standards for aircraft. The ICAO standards are expected to be adopted in early 2016.

5/28/2015—EPA issued a [notice](#) temporarily restricting the use of pesticides while bees are pollinating fields. The restrictions would apply to farmers and other users of certain pesticides that are especially toxic to bees, during the season when bees are present in the fields. The action would only apply to bees managed by professional beekeepers when they are in use pollinating fields under a contract with the landowner.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

6/24/2015—Idaho Governor Butch Otter said he will formally protest the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) resource management plan for the protection of sage grouse habitat, which covers almost 18 percent of Idaho. Otter said BLM’s plan contains “top-down” mandates that threaten the partnership already in place between Idaho and the federal government. In May, BLM unveiled resource management plans for the 10 Western states in which sage grouse habitat thrives. Otter is the first Western governor to formally protest the plans. For more information on BLM’s sage grouse announcement see [NCSL’s blog](#).

6/24/2015—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit [rejected](#) a challenge to EPA’s proposed standards for greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants. The court said it does not have the authority to review a rule before it is final, and did not look at the merits of the group’s arguments against the legality of EPA’s plan.



[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!