

# Washington Friday Report

Volume XII, Issue 15

April 16, 2010

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*A meeting with the Senate Majority Leader was just one of the highlights of a busy week, which saw big actions by several agencies rolling out key administration programs. We have it all for you and more in the two pages that follow below!*

### A Conversation with Leader Reid

We had the rare opportunity and privilege to participate in a small meeting Thursday morning with **Senator Harry Reid** of Nevada, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate. Leader Reid is currently facing challenges on three crucial fronts: (1) trying to pass an agenda in partnership with the Obama Administration and the House at a time when his majority is diminished below the 60 votes needed to cut off debate; (2) an uphill re-election fight for a fifth term, in which most polls show his favorability ratings low and several challengers surpassing him; and (3) the personal trauma of his wife's injuries suffered five weeks ago when a truck hit the back of her car.

The Leader spent most of the time in our meeting discussing the upcoming Senate agenda, which will include further work on the Senate majority's "jobs agenda", the financial reform bill brought to the floor this week, food safety legislation and eventually a new Supreme Court nomination. Appropriations bills will start moving eventually but prospects for them being concluded individually this year prior to the elections are cloudy at best. I thanked him for the Senate's work this year on jobs legislation and underscored how important their efforts to date, as well as future bills in this area, are to local government.

*Though suffering from hay fever, I can report that the Majority Leader, from an up-close perspective, is in good spirits, heartened by the recent big victory on health care reform and clearly eager to achieve all the significant goals he has set out for himself this year.*

### Broadband: Meeting with the FCC

On Monday we had the opportunity to meet with two members of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—**Erik Garr** and **Steve Klitzman**—to discuss the *National Broadband Plan* courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The FCC announced last week that they plan to put the 2010 National

Broadband Plan into action despite various concerns from Congress. The agenda plans to use the D Block to deploy affordable broadband to over 100 million Americans over the next decade while enhancing competition and marketplace choices. Garr and Klitzman stressed the need for federal monitoring of competition and consumer protection with regard to widespread Internet use. They argued that such technology will provide those in lower and middle class areas access to job opportunities, which are now found vastly online. They plan to formulate a Task Force in order to make recommendations to the FCC plans, welcoming input from local government. Currently, many national organizations representing state and local government officials have opposed the commercial auction of the 700 MHz D block and request reallocation of the D block to public safety. *We have attached a letter from the "Big 7" state and local groups regarding D block concerns.*

### HUD Sustainable Communities: Get Ready

HUD is currently asking those interested in the new **Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program** to indicate their interest in submitting an application for the program and to register with HUD as a potential applicant, prior to the formal *Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)* being made. For FY10, \$98 million is available for this high-profile, regional partnership program, a signature Obama Administration-HUD initiative, growing out of the Livability Partnership between HUD, DOT and EPA. HUD must be notified of the intent to submit no later than May 14. HUD is eager to know how many applicants it will have for Sustainable Communities so it can properly assess its workload in the application review period which will follow. Additionally, HUD indicates that the electronic registration for this program could take 2-4 weeks, so they are anxious for potential applicants to get started on that process. We recommend that if there is interest, the statement on the intent to apply go forward as soon as possible, and we are happy to help you in this process. *HUD's official notice, which they call "Notice of Fiscal Year 2010 Opportunity to Register and Other Important Information for Electronic Application for the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program" can be viewed through the following link:* <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/nofa10/sustaincomm.pdf>

We also thought you would also be interested in learning more about the **Partnership for Sustainable Communities**, initially formed by HUD, the EPA and DOT in June of 2009. These three agencies have pledged to ensure that housing and transportation goals are met while simultaneously protecting the environment, promoting equitable development, and

helping to address the challenges of climate change. For starters, the DOT will work to promote a multi-modal transportation system through programs like TIGER and the Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program. Under the leadership of **Secretary Donovan**, HUD will continue to implement the Sustainable Communities Initiative and a multitude of other programs geared at stabilizing neighborhoods across the nation. The EPA program offers many different tools—such as the Brownfields project and Environmental Justice grants program—in order to ensure best practices for state and local sustainability goals. *A detailed summary of the partnership and its programs is attached for your review.*

### **COPS Hiring: A Second Chance for the “Pending”**

We’ve learned that the COPS Office is getting ready to begin the FY10 round of funding for the COPS Hiring and Retention Program (CHRP). They informed us that if an agency applied for the CHRP grant under the Recovery Act and was not funded but was told their application was in “pending” status, those agencies will be notified within the next two weeks in writing to update their application in the areas indicated for consideration. For funding these “pending” applications, \$300 million is available on a competitive basis, for which some 6,000 agencies are eligible. *If you are in that category, you should be hearing from the COPS Office shortly about updating the Recovery Act applications.*

### **FTA: TIGGER II and Clean Fuels, Too!**

A Notice of Funding Availability was released Tuesday by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announcing significant funding in FY10 discretionary funds for the Transit Investments for Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction (TIGGER) program and FY 2009 and 2010 Clean Fuels Grant program funds, augmented with FY 2010 Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities program funds. \$75 million is available under the TIGGER program. Applications are due August 11. FTA will be looking to fund “*innovative programs of national significance*”. Eligible purposes include reducing energy consumption and reducing greenhouse gases in public transit systems. Requested funding must be at least \$1.0 million but not greater than \$25.0 million. *Only public transit agencies or state DOT’s may apply.* The “expected” federal share is 90%.

Additionally, \$81 million is available under the Clean Fuels-Bus and Bus Facilities Grants program. Grants applications are due June 14. Eligible applicants include FTA designated recipients in maintenance or non-attainment clean air areas. Purposes include purchasing clean fuel buses, constructing or leasing clean fuel bus facilities or projects relating to zero emissions, biodiesel, clean fuel, or hybrid electric technologies. Funds cannot be used for operating expenses or preventative maintenance. Federal share is computed through a complicated method but appear to be 83% of vehicle cost and 90% for other projects. *The notice is attached for your review.*

### **Secretary Arne Duncan**

A recent *New Yorker* article profiled **Arne Duncan**, the current United States Secretary of Education. Before working for the Obama Administration, Duncan served as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. President Obama provided the

Education Department more than \$70 billion in federal economic-stimulus funds to allocate to states this year. The article discusses that there are two major camps of education today: free-market reformers, who promote competition and incentives and liberal traditionalists who rally around teachers’ unions and schools. Duncan has sided with market-forces, promoting the linkage of teachers’ pay to their students’ performance. While many feel he has undercut the work of unions, Duncan believes in a “perfect storm for reform”—a heightened awareness of competition, agreement that there is crisis, plus fiscal needs of most states—that will allow him to push his program through. Currently his Race to the Top program represents more money dedicated to systemic reform than the funds commanded by all of Duncan’s predecessors combined, and his continued efforts to reform America’s school system will be worthy of continued close attention. *The article is attached for your review.*

### **NEA’s Rocco Landesman on the Hill**

Following up from last week’s report, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts **Rocco Landesman** appeared before the Appropriation Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies this Tuesday. In the speech, he outlined the ongoing progress made in FY10, investing in nearly \$140 million in support of the arts throughout the U.S. Regarding community engagement, Landesman explained the NEA is using technology to connect individuals with the Agency as well as beginning the “Art Works” tour. *The prepared remarks are attached.*

### **EPA Brownfield Program**

This week we participated in an EPA webinar explaining their new Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program. In an attempt to promote grassroots efforts to deal with local brownfield sites, the EPA will be distributing grant funds and direct assistance for projects to facilitate community involvement in area-wide planning approaches to brownfields assessment, cleanup, and subsequent reuse. Area-wide planning grant funding and technical assistance will be directed to brownfields-impacted areas, such as a neighborhood, district, city block or corridor. The EPA is planning on selecting about 20 pilot projects through this competitive opportunity. The award ceiling will be set at \$175,000 total for each selected entity. The Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program is designed to provide quick support by helping successful applicants facilitate community involvement in: 1) fine-tuning an ongoing planning process for area-wide assessment, cleanup and reuse; 2) developing an area-wide plan covering this matter; and 3) determining next steps and identifying resources needed to implement the plan. The EPA will be holding a second webinar April 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm EST for anyone with additional questions about the program. (Please go to [http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/areawide\\_grants.htm](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/areawide_grants.htm) for instructions on how to participate in the webinar). *For your review we have attached an overview of the Brownfield Program and will also be doing a separate memo for you on this shortly.*

*Please contact Len Simon, Abigail Evans, Claire Colegrove or Rukia Dahir with any questions.*