



FEDERAL UPDATE

Florida Association of Counties, February 2019

FAC's Federal Priorities

During FAC's 2018 Legislative Conference, the FAC membership adopted the following policy areas to focus on in 2019:

- National Flood Insurance Reauthorization and Reform
- Water and Water Infrastructure
- Disaster Recovery and Mitigation Funding
- Offshore Oil Drilling (Opposing Expansion)
- Infrastructure

A more detailed look at each of the policy priorities can be found on FAC's Federal Page [here](#). Each month, FAC will provide a brief update on each of the adopted policy areas.



Federal Budget

The FY 2019 spending package features major victories for county governments across dozens of federal programs.

On February 15, President Trump signed into law ([H.J.Res.31](#)), a 1,165-page, \$333 billion spending package for FY 2019. The omnibus package includes appropriations bills for the following seven agencies: U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce,

Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, State and Transportation.

The president's approval of the legislation averts another partial government shutdown and follows the September 2018 passage of five other appropriations bills totaling \$991 billion in FY 2019 appropriations. Combined with the spending measure signed on February 15, the \$1.324 trillion in appropriations for FY 2019 tops the \$1.3 trillion contained in the FY 2018 omnibus bill.



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Waters of the United States (WOTUS)

On February 14, the U.S. Environmental and Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) released the Trump Administration's proposed new "Waters of United States" (WOTUS) rule defining which bodies of water across the United States are subject to federal regulations under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This action represents the second step in the process taken by the EPA and Army Corp to review and replace the Obama Administration's 2015 WOTUS rule. According to the agencies, the proposed definition is intended to increase CWA program predictability and consistency by creating a definition that is more easily implementable.

The new proposed definition would create six categories of regulated waters and includes 11 exemptions. The rule and other information can be found [here](#).

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Hurricane Funding

Disaster Supplemental Appropriation



A highly anticipate disaster supplemental appropriations bill (HR 268), which would have provided \$12.1 billion in disaster relief for states impacted by disasters in 2018, passed the House on January 16, 2019. However, a last-minute amendment was attached to the bill aimed at ending the government shutdown. The bill, as amended, was sent to the Senate, where the supplemental funding was removed to ensure White House approval of the broader legislation.

Although the bill passed the Senate, because disaster funding was eliminated, Senators Rubio and Scott voted against the measure. Senator Rubio's statement can found [here](#).

On a related note, following a request by Governor DeSantis, President Trump, on

January 22, 2019, approved 100% federal funding for debris removal and emergency protective measures for 45 days for those communities included in the Hurricane Michael disaster declaration. It is anticipated that this action will save counties millions in recovery expenses.

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National Flood Insurance Program

On Friday, December 21, 2018, President Trump signed into law a measure reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) until May 31, 2019. The flood program was set to expire at midnight on December 21, 2018. This most recent extension is the tenth since December 8, 2017 and remains an area of Congressional concern, as the program owes the U.S. Treasury \$20.5 billion. FAC anticipates the House Financial Services Committee to looking at a more long-term reauthorization in March and April of this year.

Because this a FAC priority, several policy papers and data sheets have been developed that can be accessed [here](#). FAC staff will be meeting with members of the Florida delegation in early March to discuss NFIP reform.

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Infrastructure - Transportation

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the second round of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program through a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The INFRA program will make approximately \$855-902.5 million available to projects that are in line with the Trump Administration's principles to help rebuild America's crumbling infrastructure. In addition to providing direct federal funding, the INFRA program aims to increase the total investment by state, local, and private partners.

INFRA advances a grant program established in the FAST Act of 2015 and utilizes updated criteria to evaluate projects to align them with national and regional economic vitality goals and to leverage additional non-federal funding. The program will increase the impact of projects by leveraging federal grant funding and incentivizing project sponsors to pursue innovative strategies, including public-private partnerships.

In FY18, INFRA grants in the amount of nearly \$1.5 billion were awarded to 26 projects. The Application Deadline is March 4, 2019. For more information, [click here](#).



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FAC would like to thank the National Association of Counties (NACo) for providing content for this report!



