

October 6, 2017

TO: NRECA Board of Directors
Distribution CEOs
Statewide Managers
G&T Managers

NRECA Hosting Veterans in Energy Forum

NRECA is proud to host the [Veterans in Energy](#) forum today, featuring Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Gen. John Allen, USMC retired. Military veterans in the energy sector, CEOs and industry experts are discussing cybersecurity, distributed generation best practices, and how veterans are leveraging their skills and experiences to have successful energy careers. The forum is part of activities to promote outreach, networking and mentoring for veterans in the energy sector.



House Passes Budget Plan in First Step to Tax Reform

The House passed ([219-206](#)) an FY18 budget resolution that calls for spending cuts over 10 years and requires lawmakers to find at least \$203 billion in savings from mandatory spending. The budget plan (a blueprint for spending and revenues) sets the stage for tax reform legislation. The Senate is working to pass its version in two weeks. The Senate Budget Committee approved (12-11) a budget plan that would allow another \$1.5 trillion total deficit over 10 years as part of efforts to overhaul the tax code.

Senate Passes Bill Giving Clarity on Disaster Assistance Payments, Goes to President

The Senate unanimously passed a bill (H.R. 1117) requiring the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide a report on plans to ensure consistent and accurate guidance to applicants and grantees, which will ease administrative burdens. NRECA supports this effort to require FEMA to give disaster relief recipients greater consistency and clarity with processes. The House cleared the bill in on a unanimous vote in March. It now heads to the President's desk.

House Panels Hear Grid Security, Resiliency Progress; Cybersecurity Forum on Tuesday

Electricity sector officials and federal regulators highlighted public-private partnerships as key to protecting the grid from physical and cyber threats at House committee hearings and other events. During a House Homeland Security subcommittee [hearing](#), the Energy Department noted that government and industry groups are actively collaborating to ensure grid reliability and resiliency in response to disasters and cyber threats, and specifically cited the Electricity Subsector Coordinator Council's role in those efforts. At a House Science Committee [hearing](#), energy researchers explained natural and manmade grid threats and development of innovative technologies, such as distributed energy resources, used to protect the grid against those threats.

Related to the hearings, NRECA co-hosted a congressional staff briefing on grid security issues

and electricity sector efforts to protect against physical and cyber threats. NRECA will also host the “[Insights on Cybersecurity for Electric Utilities](#)” forum and workshop Tuesday as part of National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. [Registration](#) to attend is open. A [webcast](#) is available for the forum portion of the event.

House Committees OK Wildfire, Endangered Species Bills

House committees passed bills on wildfire management and Endangered Species Act (ESA) reform issues. The House Natural Resources Committee passed several ESA bills, including a measure (H.R. 717) that would allow economic impacts to be considered in ESA decisions and more recovery alternatives to listings. The committee also approved the Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act (H.R. 2897) to cap attorney fees recovered from the government in civil lawsuits on ESA issues.

The House Agriculture Committee passed a bill (H.R. 2936) that would allow use of FEMA Disaster Relief Fund monies to pay for Interior Department forest fire response when the agency uses up its funding. The Disaster Relief Fund was intended to provide support for state and local efforts and not to fund federal activities. This bill was referred to three House panels, including the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee with jurisdiction over the Stafford Act, and members of that committee have expressed concerns about this approach to providing much-needed funding for fighting wildfires. We agree with lawmakers who have expressed concern with the bill’s approach.

Senate Committee Reviews Targeted Energy Bills

A Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee hearing reviewed several energy bills that could be added to any energy package that moves. They include a measure that would expand FERC reviews of utility mergers and consolidations (H.R. 1109) and allow challenges to rate cases in which a formal decision was not issued (S. 186). NRECA supports these bills. During a full committee hearing on energy storage technologies, Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) discussed his bill, the Advancing Grid Storage Act (S. 1851), for energy storage technology research and development and a demonstration and deployment program. The bill includes electric resistance water heaters and is likely to get a committee review in November.

Administration Launches Review of Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plans

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is starting the [process](#) to reconsider greater sage-grouse conservation plans issued in 2015 for several Western states. The agency said it will publish *Federal Register* notices for potential changes to some or all of [greater sage-grouse](#) management plans and to withdraw the [sagebrush focal areas](#). The review includes changing 98 BLM land use plans developed as alternatives to an Endangered Species Act listing. The agency action complies with a March 2017 federal court ruling on flaws in the government’s evaluation of the plans for Nevada. Any changes in the land use plans or opening areas for mining activities could lead to future efforts for a greater sage-grouse ESA listing.

Senate Confirms USDA, DOE and FCC Nominations

The Senate confirmed Stephen Censky as Deputy Agriculture Secretary, the second-ranking agency leader who oversees much of the day-to-day operations. Ted McKinney is confirmed for the new position of Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. For the Energy

Department, Bruce Walker is confirmed as Assistant Secretary (Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability). Other confirmations include Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai and Commissioner Brendan Carr.