



Committee holds hearing, supports Perdue for USDA. Former Georgia governor

Sonny Perdue appeared before the Senate Agriculture Committee on March 23. He pointed out he had no role in developing the Administration's budget, which proposes a 21% cut to USDA funding for FY18, and noted that President Trump received strong support in rural areas. The committee voted on March 30 to recommend Perdue be confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture. A vote in the full Senate has not yet been scheduled, but confirmation is expected.

Administration proposes FY17 cuts, targets include USDA RA. Early this week the Trump Administration circulated a list of spending cuts it proposes for FY17, many of them similar to those included in its FY18 budget outline. The FY17 list would reduce USDA Section 521 Rental Assistance by \$50 million, saying that is excess funding not needed this year; would cut CDBG in half; and would eliminate funding for SHOP, Rural Capacity Building, the CDFI Fund, and more. Members of Congress are reportedly unwilling to consider new suggestions for the FY17 funding bills they have been negotiating for months. Appropriators in both houses are working to finish as many as possible of the 11 remaining individual appropriations bills before the current Continuing Resolution expires on April 28. Any incomplete bills are expected to be rolled together into another CR to finish the fiscal year.

Senate committee requests proposals for economic growth legislation. Submissions to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs should "clearly identify" proposals that will "promote economic growth and/or enable consumers, market participants and financial companies to better participate in the economy," and should include legislative language. Emails are due April 14.

RD continues two-tier income pilot for single-family programs. For a second year, income eligibility in 23 states and territories will be based on two income bands, using HUD's four-person income level for households with one to four members and HUD's eight-person income level for households with five to eight people. Contact an RD state office.

Impact of eliminating Delta and Appalachian regional bodies quantified. The Trump Administration's budget outline for FY18 proposes to eliminate the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority (along with a number of other entities). The Center for American Progress Action Fund has posted data on dollars, jobs, and other factors showing the ARC's and DRA's achievements in each state they serve.

Nonmetro counties lost jobs in 2016. A Daily Yonder analysis of federal jobs data found U.S. employment growth was concentrated in large metropolitan areas. Some rural places, such as Appalachia, did gain some jobs, while others, like those where shale gas fracking had boomed relatively recently, lost employment during 2016. Job losses were proportionally highest in counties not adjacent to metro areas.

14% of U.S. children live in areas of concentrated poverty, rates highest for black and Native American kids. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Center reports the incidence of children living in census tracts with poverty rates of 30% or higher increased by almost 30% from the 2006-2010 period to 2011-2015. The largest state-level increase over that time was in Nevada, though the states with the highest rates (20-27%) of children living in high poverty areas in 2011-2015 were Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico. Nationwide, African American (32%) and Native American (31%) children were six times more likely to live in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty compared to their white (5%) peers, and Hispanic children (23%) more than five times more likely. Data on race are also reported for each state.

Nominations open for site manager and maintenance person recognitions. USDA RD state offices can submit nominations by May 19 for the agency's annual awards to site managers and maintenance workers at RD-financed rental properties. Contact an RD state office.

Housing events planned nationwide for Saturday, April 1. Activities include speakers and education sessions in more than 20 cities and towns.