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Wednesday, February 10th, 2016

Policy & Technology. News & Analysi

Federal Policy & Business

USPS Records First Profit in Five Years as Obama Calls for Shedding 12K Postal Jobs

Government Executive: The U.S. Postal Service turned a profit in a financial quarter for the first time in five years, though President Obama still proposed the agency slash 12,000 employees in his fiscal 2017 budget.

USPS posted a net income of $307 million in the first quarter of fiscal 2016, the first such gain since the fourth quarter of fiscal 2011. Profits grew $1.1 billion over the same period last year, when the Postal Service lost $754 million.
  Operating revenue ticked up 3.3 percent to $19.3 billion between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2015, driven largely by a record volume of package delivery.

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Will Democrats get a larger raise for federal employees?

The Washington Post: As Obama administration officials and journalists gathered in cozy meeting rooms around Washington for budget briefings Tuesday, federal employees rallied in a cold rain on a muddy lawn across from the U.S. Capitol.

It was a metaphor for their power in a town where Congress is controlled by Republicans and their Democratic friends in the White House feel constrained by budget realities.

Read More | Share:

Budget projects 'largest relative pay cut' for feds

Webinars
Overcome Obstacles to Agile Application Development *Wed, February 17th, 2016 at 2:00pm EST*
Derived Security Credentials for Government Transactions
Next Generation 911
Fortifying the Federal Government Enterprise Against Hackers

Federal Times: The president's proposed 2017 budget may offer federal employees a 1.6 percent pay bump, but it's another signal that the private sector is outpacing the government when it comes to compensation.

The 2017 budget, which was released on Feb. 9, estimates that any raise less than 2.1 percent would be the eighth-consecutive annual increase that came in below the Employment Cost Index, which measures the cost of labor.

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Obama's final budget proposal calls for $4.15 trillion in spending

The Washington Post: President Obama sent the final budget proposal of his presidency to Congress on Tuesday, a $4.15 trillion package that will mark the closing rounds of a long-running fiscal battle with Republicans in Congress over the nation's spending priorities.

The proposal would boost total spending by 4.9 percent, mainly as a result of increases in mandatory programs, most notably Social Security, and a rise in interest payments on the national debt. In keeping with the two-year budget deal struck with Congress in December, the president requested only a slight increase, less than 1 percent, in discretionary spending programs overall, though Republicans still accused him profligate spending.

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Federal Government IT

Chinese Cyberspies Pivot To Russia In Wake Of Obama-Xi Pact

InformationWeek: TENERIFE, SPAIN – Kaspersky Security Analyst Summit 2016 – Cyber espionage attacks by Chinese advanced persistent threat groups against Russian targets have increased by 300 percent in the past two months, according to a top security expert with Kaspersky Lab.

Costin Raiu, director of the global research and analysis team at Kaspersky Lab, says his firm's researchers witnessed a dramatic drop in Chinese-speaking APTs going after US and UK organizations' intellectual property in September after President Obama and Chinese president Xi Jinping came to a historic agreement not to conduct cyber spying attacks for economic gain. Kaspersky Lab refrains from confirming the actual actors behind advanced groups such as nation-states, so it refers to these attackers as "Chinese-speaking" cyber espionage groups.

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White House Wants to Give Agencies New Pot of Money to Upgrade Legacy IT

Nextgov: The White House is seeking Congress' help to establish a multibillion-dollar fund that federal agencies could use to upgrade aging computer networks prone to cyberattacks and system failures.

As part of a planned Cybersecurity National Action Plan announced today, the Obama administration wants permission to establish a $3.1 billion revolving fund that will help agencies transition away from so-called legacy IT toward more modern options, such as cloud computing.

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Obama's new cybersecurity agenda: What you need to know

CIO: In response to mounting cyber attacks on federal networks, President Barack Obama is seeking $19 billion for cybersecurity, more than a 35% increase over last year's spending, and calling for a federal CISO to oversee all the upgrade of outdated and insecure cyber infrastructure.

The number of information security incidents grew more than 11-fold between 2006 and 2014 to 67,168, and attacks from other countries have been on the rise.

In cybersecurity bid, Obama wants to retire outdated government systems

CNN: The White House says it's working to increase the security of the federal government's computer and data systems after high-profile hacks at various agencies, including a recent breach at the Justice Department.

President Barack Obama Tuesday signed an executive order establishing a federal privacy council to ensure all of the administration's branches are using the best, most secure practices when safeguarding individual employees' information, as well as government data.

Knowledge Center: Special Reports & Whitepapers

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Software License Management (SLM)

Belarc's latest white paper includes the following topics:

- How to minimize the financial risk in software licensing.
- Two case studies covering both successful and un-successful implementations of SLM.
- Why Belarc's approach to SLM works quickly and effectively.
- Is SLM about Process or Automation, or both?
- What to do when you receive the audit request letter from a software vendor.
- Licensing tips and more.

For a copy of our white paper, "Software License Management", please send an email with your organization's name to whitepapers@belarc.com.

Intelligent Video Analytics Infographic

Video surveillance is a crucial part of protecting citizens and the communities where they live.

Sponsored by IBM.

Refeshed Public Safety Infographic

Each week over 1 million people move into a city. Never before have the requirements for protecting citizens, property and infrastructure from harm been more pressing. Sophisticated, applied technology can yield insights.that shorten the cycle from incident to resolution. Find out more.

Sponsored by IBM.

Enhancing a City's Ability to Plan, Protect and Manage with Intelligent Video Analytics

Innovative leaders are creating smarter, safer, more secure cities - protecting citizens and the city's economic value. Intelligent video analytics solutions extend the capabilities of existing video assets, and enhance the effectiveness of safety and traffic management personnel.

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Defense / Intelligence / Homeland Security

Navy calls on researchers to create firefighting humanoid robot

CIO: The U.S. Navy is getting a helping hand from university researchers in its efforts to create a robot that can fight fires onboard its ships.

The Navy is hoping to one day have robots, instead of sailors, take on the dangerous job of tackling onboard fires. To make that happen, it is turning to researchers and students.

Read More | Share:

Coast Guard's National Security Cutter Program Needs Better Oversight

Homeland Security Today: The US Coast Guard has uncovered significant deficiencies in its $5.6 billion National Security Cutter (NSC) program. Although they are taking steps to resolve these issues, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may need to step in to ensure the NSC program operates effectively, according to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

GAO officials told a congressional subcommittee last week that the Coast Guard needs to improve its oversight of the Coast Guard's NSC program after testing revealed 10 major deficiencies, including failures in systems related to the combat weapon systems.

Read More | Share:

U.S. intelligence chief warns of 'homegrown' security threat

Reuters: Attacks by "homegrown" Islamist extremists are among the most imminent security threats facing the United States in 2016, along with dangers posed overseas by Islamic State and cyber security concerns, the top U.S. intelligence official said on Tuesday.

In his annual assessment of threats to the United States, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper warned that fast-moving cyber and technological advances "could lead to widespread vulnerabilities in civilian infrastructures and U.S. government systems."

Read More | Share:

U.S. officials: Russian airstrikes have changed 'calculus completely' in Syria

The Washington Post: Russian military intervention in Syria has turned the course of that country's civil war against U.S.-backed rebel groups, increasing the likelihood that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his loyalists will remain in power, U.S. intelligence officials testified Tuesday.

The assessment amounts to an acknowledgment by U.S. spy agencies that Russian airstrikes have derailed the Obama administration aims of pushing Assad aside as part of a political settlement to the nearly five-year old conflict.

Read More | Share:

Government Healthcare - Policy & IT

Michigan Officials Defend Handling of Legionnaires' Disease Outbreak in Flint

The New York Times: Michigan health officials on Tuesday defended their handling of a deadly Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Flint after widespread criticism of their failure to promptly notify the public, and questions about state regulators' cooperation with their local counterparts.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also released emails related to its handling of the outbreak, in a seeming attempt to prove it sought a thorough investigation but was thwarted at times by local health officials in Genesee County, which include Flint.

Read More | Share:

Cerner wins $50.7 million DoD data hosting contract as competitors lose appeals

Healthcare IT News: Health IT giant Cerner Corp. has scored a $50.7 million data hosting contract from U.S. Department of Defense as part of its Defense Healthcare Management Systems Modernization, according to official documents. The DoD last year awarded Cerner and partner Leidos the $4.3 billion contract to deploy the new electronic health record for the U.S. military worldwide.

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Court ruling gives hospitals new hope on RAC audit appeals backlog

Modern Healthcare: Hospitals persuaded a federal appeals court to give new life to their legal fight to force HHS to work more quickly through a backlog of disputed findings by Medicare's controversial recovery audit contractors.

A lower court had dismissed the case in December 2014, saying the delay in processing RAC appeals wasn't unreasonable enough to elicit an order from the court and that HHS and Congress should work together to resolve the issue.

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Are States Obligated to Provide Expensive Hepatitis C Drugs?

Stateline: A handful of federal lawsuits against states that have denied highly effective but costly hepatitis C drugs to Medicaid patients and prisoners could cost states hundreds of millions of dollars.

The drugs boast cure rates of 95 percent or better, compared to 40 percent for previous treatments. But they cost between $83,000 an $95,000 for a single course of treatment.

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Knowledge Center: Webinars

Overcome Obstacles to Agile Application Development
Wed, February 17th, 2016 at 2:00pm EST

Federal government agencies face intense pressure to build next-generation applications, despite resource constraints and growing requirements to incorporate security, accessibility and analytic capabilities. Rising complexity and overburdened IT systems only contribute a lack of agility – which is something government agencies desperately need to support the demand for new apps and services. Add the backlog of application change requests, inflexible infrastructures and the difficulties inherent in managing mobility and migrating to the cloud, and it's no surprise government executives feel frustrated.

Join us for this **complimentary** webinar on Feb. 17 at 2pm, to learn how you can overcome these obstacles and effectively reduce the time it takes to launch efficient and properly vetted applications that leverage the transactional data flowing through your organization today.

Speakers:

- Zahid Chaudhry, Branch Chief, Enterprise Application Development, Chief Information Office, U.S. Forest Service.
- Chris Steel, Chief Solutions Architect, Software AG Government Solutions

Please note: All webinar registrants will also receive a link to view the archived event.

Sponsored by Software AG Government Solutions.

Register Now | Share:

Derived Security Credentials for Government Transactions

As government organizations increasingly move towards mobile devices, they are asking how they can provide their workers with access to their applications and data with a secure digital certificate. Common Access Cards (CAC) and Personal Identity Verification (PIV) smart cards are used to manage access to both online and physical resources through controlled access to networks, systems, building and spaces. However, this standard way of doing things doesn't always work in mobile situations.

Securely storing government credentials on mobile devices allows these individuals to transform their applications into a secure enterprise space; and this is where derived credentials come into place.

In this 60 minute educational web seminar, e-SignLive along with Entrust, the leader in government software authentication platforms that strengthen security in a wide range of identity and transaction ecosystems, will provide an overview of derived PIV/CAC credential for government and how the derived credential on mobile devices is the next generation of US Government's use of PKI, enabling government workers to build trust for authentication in an increasingly mobile workplace.

Attendees will learn:

- What is the derived PIV/CAC credential in government and why it's so important
- What the implementation looks like
- The value of derived credentials with electronic signatures
- How can this be leveraged to other parts of government or commercial entities

Featuring a live demo application of e-signatures with derived credentials, this is a must-attend session for any federal organization looking to create a secure and legally enforceable means of executing regulated transactions using laptops, iPads and smartphones.

Register Now!

***If you are not sure whether or not you can attend the live webinar, as long as you register now, you will receive a link for downloading the archived webinar.

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Watch Now | Share:

Next Generation 911

With the clock ticking... are you ready to respond to every call, text, tweet, video?

Every year sizable emergencies hit the United States. Will the local emergency response systems be up to the task? Would your systems be ready?

Please join Unify for a thought leadership session discussing Next Generation 911.

Our Next Gen 911 tech expert Greg Little will take us through a customer case study and you'll learn why many of the top PSAPs are looking at Unify's First Response solution to help them meet Next Generation 911 challenges.

Topics we'll cover in the 30 minute webinar:

- What is Next Gen 911?
- Challenges in the Public Sector
- One City's Crusade
- Empowering the Public Sector

Unify is a Global provider of communication and collaboration solutions. For NG 9-1-1, we have a media-rich solution that emergency answering and dispatch centers can leverage, designed for carrier-grade communications. Whether originating as a voice, text or video call, call handlers can process multiple emergency contacts with a unified response.

Why First Response?

- Unparalleled call volume management - over 5000 calls per hour
- Support for new communications channels such as texting, video and social media
- VoIP for more reliable, resilient and afforable call management
- Virtualized back office to maximize hardware investment and minimize management effort
- Integrated, customizeable communication console for managing critical contact numbers, IPTV, other applications and more.

Sponsored by Unify.

Watch Now | Share:

Fortifying the Federal Government Enterprise Against Hackers

The federal government continues to be a tempting target for hackers. Close to 2 million data records containing bank account information or Social Security numbers were compromised in government data breaches in 2014 alone. Already in 2015 the personal records of more than 22 million people inside and outside the government were stolen from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) by suspected Chinese hackers.

With data breaches continuing to make headlines on a weekly basis, public sector organizations must implement solutions to protect sensitive data, including health, financial, and identity information.

Many are turning to Secure Data as a Service, as it combines virtual data and service-based data masking, and represents a transformative solution that succeeds where traditional data security approaches fail. Additionally, this solution provides public sector application and IT teams with full, fresh, and secure data sets in just minutes, via self-service.

Please join i360Gov for a complimentary 60-minute webinar featuring excryption expert Charles Moore to learn more about Secure Data as a Service and how this solution can protect your enterprise.

Who Should Attend?

This educational webinar will be highly useful for our subscribers with IT job functions working in federal government. If you are unsure whether or not you can attend the live webinar, as long as you register today, you will receive a link for viewing the archived version at

your leisure.

Energy - Policy & Technology

Virginia lawmakers mull slew of clean energy, storage bills

Utility Dive: As Virginia lawmakers weigh energy legislation, new measures were still being introduced and worked on in committee on Friday, Ivy Main, a state lobbyist with the Sierra Club, wrote in The Energy Collective.

Among others, Virginia lawmakers are considering bills to change local tax treatment for renewable energy, open investment access, broaden community solar initiatives, repeal standby charges for net metering, and develop energy storage programs and research consortiums.

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A huge coal miners' pension plan is on the brink of failure. One senator is blocking a fix.

The Washington Post: When Sen. Mitch McConnell strode into the Capitol for last month's State of the Union speech, he took with him guest whose presence was sure to be seen as a slap against the Obama administration and its policies on coal.

"I brought along this unemployed coal miner here," McConnell (R-Ky.) said, gesturing to fourth-generation mineworker Howard Abshire "to see the person who put him out of work."

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Clean Power Plan: 50 Ways To Get More Clean, Local Energy

Clean Technica: Six months ago, the Obama administration released the Clean Power Plan, requiring substantial greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the electricity sector. The Plan sets targets from the top down, but largely leaves the details to states, providing a significant opportunity to craft rules that encourage energy development and ownership from the bottom up.

These 50 state plans have huge stakes.

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Supreme Court blocks Obama climate change rules

CNN: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dealt President Barack Obama a blow by moving to temporarily block his administration's rules limit greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.

Reacting to a lawsuit from 29 states, as well as the energy industry, justices blocked the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan from going forward while the rule is challenged in court.

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State & Local Government - Policy & Technology

Virginia Senate Committee Approves Bill to Withhold Public Employee Information

Government Technology: Identity theft and the Islamic State group were offered Monday as reasons lawmakers should prohibit release of public employee salary databases and raise the threshold for which salaries are public.

Senators on the General Laws and Technology Committee approved two bills limiting access to that information.

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Pennsylvania stuck in historic budget gridlock

KSL.com: HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Gov. Tom Wolf warned lawmakers on Tuesday that Pennsylvania's finances are a ticking time bomb amid a record-long budget gridlock, as he sent them a spending proposal for the coming fiscal year with no full plan in place for the year that began back in July.

The first-term Democrat delivered an approximately $33.3 billion plan for 2016-17 to the Republican-controlled Legislature as he tries again to break down resistance to a multibillion-dollar tax increase that has held up passage of a budget for the current year.

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California Department of Technology Launches Office of Digital Innovation and Technology Engagement, Innovation Lab

California Dept of Technology Tech Blog: In an effort to lead a culture of innovation that will increase government and citizen engagement in California, the Operation Division of the California Department of Technology (CDT) has launched the Office of Digital Innovation and Technology Engagement. This new office will define an approach to government technology innovation that will drive th CDT forward as a thought leader and technology innovator in state government.

Read More | Share:

Michigan Officials Defend Handling of Legionnaires' Disease Outbreak in Flint

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The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also released emails related to its handling of the outbreak, in a seeming attempt to prove it sought a thorough investigation but was thwarted at times by local health officials in Genesee County, which include Flint.

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Education - Policy & Technology

iPad Shipments Plummet as Detachable Tablets Double

Campus Technology: Shipments of Apple tablets, including iPad and iPad Pro, dropped nearly 25 percent in the last quarter of 2015, leading an overall decline in the tablet market. Meanwhile shipments of detachable tablets — devices that include removable keyboard — actually doubled in the same period.

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ACLU, Tenth Amendment Center Join Forces on Data Privacy

Education Week: An unusual partnership between the American Civil Liberties Union and the Tenth Amendment Center is pushing states to adopt model legislation that the organizations argue will fill in gaps in student-data-privacy protections.

Proposed overhauls of digital-privacy laws, including many that regulate relationships between ed-tech vendors and school districts, were simultaneously introduced in 16 states and the District of Columbia last month in bills based on the model legislation.

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Mount St. Mary's president fires two faculty members, one with tenure

Inside Higher Ed: The president of Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland on Monday fired two faculty members without any faculty review of his action or advance notice. One was a tenured professor who had recently criticized some of the president's policies. The other was the adviser to the student newspaper that revealed the president recently told faculty members concerned about his retentio plans that they needed to change the way they view struggling students. "This is hard for you because you think of the students as cuddly bunnies, but you can't. You just have to drown the bunnies … put a Glock to their heads," the president said.

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New, Reading-Heavy SAT Has Students Worried

The New York Times: BOSTON — For thousands of college hopefuls, the stressful college admissions season is about to become eve
more fraught. The College Board, which makes the SAT, is rolling out a new test — its biggest redesign in a decade, and one of the
most substantial ever.

Chief among the changes, experts say: longer and harder reading passages and more words in math problems. The shift is leading
some educators and college admissions officers to fear that the revised test will penalize students who have not been exposed to a lot
reading, or who speak a different language at home — like immigrants and the poor.

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