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**To:** Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
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**Subject:** Tax Refunds; Education Reform; Presidential Transition; Pensions; Marijuana Regulation

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**Issue: 57**

**April 11, 2015**

### **Americans Expected to Save, Not Spend, Tax Refunds**

Although not set on the usual April 15 date this year, the deadline to file federal tax returns, April 18, is quickly approaching. However, it is the extra money—not the extra filing days—that appeals more to most taxpayers. In January 2016, the Internal Revenue Service expected more than 70 percent of taxpayers to receive federal refunds this year, according to a news release. But will those refunds turn into increased revenues for states?

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### **Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act**

State officials are closely watching as the U. S. Department of Education releases more information on what the new Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, changes in accountability system requirements and funding mechanisms. The replacement for No Child Left Behind, ESSA is the product of bipartisan efforts in Congress to give states greater control of accountability and academic standards. But those changes won't happen overnight.

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### **Preparing for the Presidential Transition**

During this unpredictable presidential primary season, one thing is certain: Our nation will welcome a new president in less than one year. Any presidential candidate still in the race in April should start preparing to assume responsibility for managing the federal government, arguably the largest and most complex organization in the world. But what should be on states' to-do lists during the transition?

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### **Finding the Facts on Public Pensions**

Pension administrators and policy experts presented success stories, strategies for managing public pensions and tools for collecting data on public pensions across the country at a March 29 CSG eCademy webcast, "The Facts on Public Pensions." The webcast, which was presented in partnership with the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, introduced the Public Plans Data website, a free tool to compare plans across states and help inform debates about retirement security issues.

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### **More Confusion in Cannabis Regulation: Is Organic Marijuana Really Organic?**

As more and more states have legalized marijuana for recreational and/or medical use, there have been increasing complications and uncertainties between federal and state law in the regulation of cannabis. This has included issues such as banking, employment discrimination, federal income taxes, and now organic certification and labeling.

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### **States Aim to Prepare for and Prevent Human-Induced Earthquakes**

For the first time, new U.S. Geological Survey maps identify potential earthquake activity caused by both human-induced and natural events. Prior to this year's report, USGS maps only outlined natural earthquake hazards. The rise of human-induced earthquakes creates a new hazard zone and many states are trying to prepare for a kind of natural disaster that they haven't had to deal with in the past.

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### **The Every Student Succeeds Act: What It Means for State Accountability, Data**

Tuesday, April 12, 2 p.m. EDT  
FREE CSG eCademy Webcast  
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### **Building Student Capacity through Competency-Based Education**

Tuesday, April 19, 2 p.m. EDT/11 a.m. PDT  
FREE CSG eCademy  
Presented by CSG West  
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### **National Challenges, State Solutions: The Interstate Compact**

Tuesday, April 26, 2 p.m. EDT  
FREE CSG eCademy Webcast  
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### **10 Years of the Roberts Court for State and Local Government**

### **State Affirmative Action Bans on College Campuses**

On Dec. 9, the U.S. Supreme Court held oral arguments on *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, an important case that addresses the constitutionality of considering race in public university admissions decisions. The case dates back to 2008 when Sugar Land High School student Abigail Fisher was denied admission to the University of Texas at Austin. The facts in *Fisher v. Texas* reflect the decades-long evolution of the use of race as a factor in university admissions.

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### **CSG Convenes Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities**

CSG, in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures, organized the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities to help state leaders identify barriers to employment at the state level and provide them with policy recommendations to address those barriers. Sponsored by the State Exchange on Employment and Disability Initiative of the U.S. Department of Labor, the task force convened March 19-20 in Chicago, and will meet in Washington, D. C., later this spring. Policy recommendations will be unveiled during the 2016 CSG National Conference in Colonial Williamsburg, Va., Dec. 8-11.

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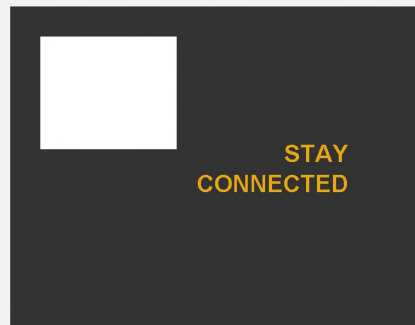
Founded in 1933, The Council of State Governments is our nation's only organization serving all three branches of state government. CSG is a region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy. This offers unparalleled regional, national and international

Wednesday, May 11, 1 p.m. EDT  
Presented by the State and Local Legal  
Center  
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opportunities to network, develop leaders,  
collaborate and create problem-solving  
partnerships.

**InfraAmericas U.S. P3 Infrastructure  
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New York City, N.Y.  
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