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Subject: Friday's headlines for government professionals

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Friday, January 6th, 2017

Policy & Technology. News & Analysis

Federal Policy & Business

U.S. spy chief 'resolute' on Russia cyber attack, differs with Trump

Reuters: Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said he had a very high level of confidence that Russia hacked Democratic Party institutions and operatives, as well as disseminating propaganda and fake news aimed at the Nov. 8 election. "Our assessment now is even more resolute than it was" on Oct. 7 when the government first publicly accused Russia, Clapper told a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He said a motive for the attack would be made public next week. Although Trump called himself a "big fan" of intelligence agencies, he is heading for a conflict over the issue because he has cast doubt on their assessments that Russia targeted the election. "There's a difference between healthy skepticism and disparagement," Clapper said. Vice President-elect Mike Pence has used the expression "healthy skepticism" to defend Trump's criticism of intelligence agency findings. Lawmakers from both parties are wary of Moscow and distrust Trump's praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin and efforts to heal the rift between the United States and Russia.

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Senate Panels Pressed to Open Up Nominees' Files Before Confirmation Hearings

Government Executive: As Senate committees gear up to consider incoming Trump administration nominees, a coalition of 16 transparency groups and three legal specialists are pressing chairmen to consistently require the release of the nominees' personal background documents. In a Jan. 4 letter to the major Senate committees, the coalition led by Openthegovernment.org urged leaders to create new disclosure rules to allow public online access to machine-readable questionnaires completed by the nominees on their finances and steps taken to avoid ethical conflicts. "Presidential appointees act to implement the goals of the president, running programs and agencies critical to the health, security and well-being of the American public," the letter noted. "In an era of historic distrust of government in general, and Congress in particular, it is essential for members of the Senate to take meaningful steps to improve public trust in the appointment and confirmation process."

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Federal employee union wary of Holman Rule reemergence

Federal Times: Tucked in the 115th Congress's House Rules package is a quintessential throwback measure that has unions leery of the future of federal employee jobs and salaries. The Holman Rule is a 140-year-old measure that allows Congress to "retrench" agency spending by allowing amendments to appropriations bills affecting everything from federal employee salaries paid from the Treasury Department to the number of employees in an office. The House Rules package was approved on Jan. 5, including the 19th-century appropriations measure. The Holman Rule was first introduced in 1876 and modified in 1911, but Congress used it sparingly in the 1930s to reduce the numbers of federal employees in specific agencies when it was deemed germane to proposed legislation. The rule allows congressmen to apply a retrenchment amendment to any appropriation bill without seeking insight from the agencies they propose to cut from, sending an alarm through federal unions whose members could be affected. American Federation of Government Employees President J. David Cox said in a statement that the reinstitution of the rule threatened the financial well-being of federal workers.

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Former Indiana senator Dan Coats is Trump's pick for director of national intelligence

The Washington Posts: President-elect Donald Trump is expected to announce his choice of Dan Coats as soon as today, according to a transition official. The announcement comes as Trump's relationship with the intelligence community has grown tense over its assessment that Russia meddled in the presidential election. Coats, a Republican, decided not to run for reelection in 2016 after being elected to a second stint in the Senate in 2010. He had previously served from 1989 until 1999. In between, he was ambassador to Germany.

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Federal Government IT

Former NASA CTO moves to Deep Water Point

Defense News: Deborah Diaz (middle) spoke at a kickoff event for NASA's second Datanauts class, held in July 2016. After retiring from government in September, former NASA Chief Technology Officer Deborah Diaz is taking a job in the private sector with consulting firm Deep Water Point. "Deborah brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding of IT innovation and leadership within the federal government. We are honored to have her as part of our team," said Howard Seeger, managing partner of Deep Water Point, in a statement.

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Intel Leaders Shoot Back at Trump's Mean Tweets

Nextgov: U.S. intelligence leaders bristled Thursday at President-elect Donald Trump's mean tweets about the community's conclusion Russian government-directed hackers meddled in the 2016 presidential election, suggesting the president-elect went far beyond expressing mere healthy skepticism. Trump's deriding of the intelligence community's conclusions and capabilities could undermine Americans' faith in what government knows during future national security crises, the officials and some lawmakers warned during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. They could also damage the morale of intelligence agents and analysts and perhaps drive some away from government service, the officials said. » Get the best federal technology news and ideas delivered right to your inbox. Sign up here.

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GSA looking for info on shared services software

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Federal Times: The General Services Administration is asking industry for insights on how it can apply software as a shared service to its administrative operations. The Unified Shared Services Management (USSM) office — a GSA component overseeing the government's shared services acquisition policy — issued a request for information (RFI) on Jan. 3 on what software solutions industry could provide for administrative services. "The purpose of this RFI is to understand industry capabilities to provide software as a service across the referenced administrative services and to ask for industry ideas on documentation of government-wide needs (as specified in Section 3b), and public-private partnership funding models by the vendors under GSA Schedule SINs 595-22, 874-6, 520-11, 520-13, 520-22), (sic) OASIS Pools 1 and 2 (unrestricted and small business), Schedule 70 (SINs 132-32/33/52/40) and NAICS Code 541611, 541612, 541211, 541219, 541519, and 511210," the document said.

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Use FedRAMP-Compliant Web Meeting Tools

This infographic illustrates the differences between Jack and Zach. They both work in government IT. Jack wants to know something: Why can't the people at his agency meet and collaborate on the web with anybody, anywhere, at a moment's notice, without worrying about security?

Zach has the answer. Download this short infographic to learn from Zach.

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A Security-Driven Network Refresh

This infographic illustrates the differences of approach between Jack and Zach with regards to keeping their IT infrastructure secure and trustworthy. Zach's data is safe. Jack's data is not safe. View this complimentary infographic to learn more.

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The Importance of the Internet of Things for Elected Officials

The Internet of Things (IoT) stands to fundamentally transform public sector service delivery in the following ways: first, by delivering smart government services where and when the citizen wants them; second, by enhancing public safety; third, by allowing increasingly resource-strapped government agencies to identify and manage operational cost savings; and lastly, by addressing social and environmental returns.

This paper provides answers to the following questions:

What is the Internet of Things?
Why is the IoT important for governments?
How are governments approaching IoT?
What are pitfalls to be avoided, and what are the essential first steps toward IoT?
What makes for a good IoT solution?

Read this complimentary paper to learn more.

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Defense / Intelligence / Homeland Security

Former NASA CTO moves to Deep Water Point

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Government Healthcare - Policy & IT

ACA repeal would drop healthcare spending by nearly \$146 billion

Modern Healthcare: A repeal of the Affordable Care Act would reduce healthcare spending by more than \$145 billion in 2019 and cause people to seek an additional \$88 billion in uncompensated care, according to a recent study by the non-partisan Urban Institute. Hospitals would be hit hardest. Their spending would drop by \$59 billion in 2019 and they would likely shoulder \$24.6 billion more in charity care. John Holahan, a fellow at the institute who worked on the paper, believes ACA repeal would overwhelm providers. "You can't say that providers won't figure out a way but it's just hard to see," he said. The study shows that physician practices would see a reduction of about \$20 billion in spending and there would be \$32 billion less spent on prescription drugs.

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New NIH guidelines on infants and peanuts may contradict everything you've heard before

The Washington Post: When my husband and I had our first child seven years ago, the prevailing wisdom was that babies at risk of allergies should avoid peanuts or peanut products until age 3 or older. The idea behind this restriction — which was based on American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines released in 2000 — was that feeding peanuts too early to little ones might risk severe, possibly life-threatening allergic reactions. Over the years that thinking has done a 180. Now, scientists believe the exact opposite: Giving your baby peanuts earlier rather than later might prevent them from developing an allergy. While many doctors and medical groups have come out over the past year to endorse this view, there has been a lot of confusion about which kids could benefit from early exposure, the optimal timing of the exposure, and how exactly one should feed peanuts (which, after all, are a choking hazard in their raw form) to babies.

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New law enables New York clinicians to access patient data for minors via state HIE

Healthcare IT News: Care providers participating in HEALTHeLINK, a regional health information organization serving Western New York, can now access health data for patients who are between 10 and 17 years old, as long as those minors' parents or legal guardians have signed consent forms.

The access to clinical information is allowed because of recent changes to state policy regarding access to patient data through qualified exchange entities such as the HEALTHeLINK, according to the group.

The law change "gives parents and legal guardians the peace of mind that their child's treating pediatrician or specialist will have the most up to date health information," HEALTHeLINK executive director Dan Porreca said in a statement.

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Knowledge Center: Webinars

Federal Data Center Optimization: Do's and Don'ts from the Experts

As federal agencies embrace the U.S. CIO's new Data Center Optimization Initiative and keep pace with growing demand for new services and applications, best practices will help guide them around potential pitfalls. In this i360Gov webinar, leading DoD and civilian IT experts will provide insights on optimization and how agencies can achieve a mandated 25% annual reduction in federal data center expenses by the end of fiscal 2018. Agency executives will gain concrete advice on the best steps to take to achieve more agile, optimized and secure IT operations.

Speakers include:

- **Michael Valivullah**, Chief Technology Officer, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), USDA
- **Fred Whiteside**, Program Manager, Data Center Consolidation Initiative, Systems Engineering Division, OASAM/OCIO, Department of Labor
- **Bill Lemons**, Director, Federal Systems Engineering, Juniper Networks
- **Stephen Crooks**, Enterprise Solutions Architect, Affigent, LLC

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Energy - Policy & Technology

China to plow \$361 billion into renewable fuel by 2020

Reuters: The investment will create over 13 million jobs in the sector, the National Energy Administration (NEA) said in a blueprint document that lays out its plan to develop the nation's energy sector during the five-year 2016 to 2020 period. The NEA said installed renewable power capacity including wind, hydro, solar and nuclear power will contribute to about half of new electricity generation by 2020. The agency did not disclose more details on where the funds, which equate to about \$72 billion each year, would be spent. Still, the investment reflects Beijing's continued focus on curbing the use of fossil fuels, which have fostered the country's economic growth over the past decade, as it ramps up its war on pollution.

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This Group You've Never Heard Of Is Suddenly Influencing Trump's Energy Policy

Bloomberg: An obscure Washington policy group that opposes almost any government aid for renewable energy has emerged as an influential force in shaping Donald Trump's plans to dismantle Obama administration climate initiatives. The tiny Institute for Energy Research and its advocacy arm, the American Energy Alliance, work from an office decorated with an oversized photo of an oil derrick in a nondescript building in downtown Washington. Their names aren't even on display in the unmanned lobby nine floors below. But the modest trappings and small, 14-member staff belies their impact. "There's not a material energy or environmental policy on which they are not involved — and most of them, they own," said Michael McKenna, a lobbyist who advises the alliance. The head of the institute, Thomas Pyle, is leading the president-elect's transition team for energy.

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2016 New York Solar Market in Six Charts

Renewable Energy World: Residential solar installations in New York increased 12 percent in 2016 to 19,945, which is a significant slowdown from 100 percent growth in 2015. Industry analysts believe this change may be due to saturation in areas that are a strong fit for solar as well as the impact of the election uncertainty. Reuters covered this trend in its [recent article](#).

The average price per watt (before incentives) for a residential installation in 4Q16 declined nearly 5 percent vs. the prior year to \$4.11 and nearly 14 percent vs. 1Q15. This decline is largely due to module price declines (as much as 30 percent), as [noted](#) by a recent article from Reuters on Sunpower, the second largest U.S. panel maker.

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State & Local Government - Policy & Technology

2017-2018 Governors' Races: Where Power Is Most and Least Likely to Flip

Governing: It may be a bit on the early side to be handicapping the upcoming governors' races when all but two are basically two years away. But with Democrats now shut out of the White House and Congress, the large crop of gubernatorial races on tap in 2017 and 2018 has become crucial to the party's survival as a significant player in American politics. Unsurprisingly, the Democrats have a lot of ground to make up. Currently, the GOP holds a historically wide edge of 33-16 in gubernatorial offices, with one governor — Alaska's Bill Walker — an independent. The gubernatorial battleground in 2018 will be especially important because it offers Democrats the biggest potential haul of governorships in advance of the once-every-decade legislative and congressional redistricting process that will begin after the 2020 Census.

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A Public-Private Effort to Build New Tech Careers in Kentucky's Coal Country

Route Fifty: As a management team member at a Kmart store in Paintsville, Kentucky, Sean Cowl said he was known as someone who had a knack for technology. "At the store they called me 'the computer guy' even though I didn't really have any training," Cowl, 29, said by phone in late December. "I've always been interested in computers and technology, but never really had the chance to go very far into it." "I'm kind of sitting on an English degree, associates," he added, "that doesn't get you far in life." Last April, Sears Holdings, Kmart's parent company, announced it would close 78 stores, including the Kmart in Paintsville. Located about 160 miles east of Louisville, the city has roughly 4,000 residents.

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Rick Scott proposes \$5.8 million funding for counterterrorism efforts

Orlando Sentinel: Rattled by the "devastation" of the June 12 Pulse nightclub terror attack, Gov. Rick Scott on Wednesday said he will ask for \$5.8 million in the state's 2017-2018 budget to hire more counterterrorism agents for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. At a press conference at Orlando's FDLE headquarters, Scott said the money would add 46 new counterterrorism agents to be spread throughout the operation's seven regions. Scott said he was inspired to seek the funding after the Pulse shooting. "A terrorist, inspired by ISIS and filled with hate, stormed into Pulse night club here in Orlando and killed 49," Scott said. "It was an attempt to rip us apart at our seams, to divide us and instill fear in our communities."

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Education - Policy & Technology

Leaders ask what free tuition would mean for New York campuses

Inside Higher Ed: How will New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's tuition-free public college plan affect individual campuses? It's not a completely fair question, at least not yet. The truth is that no one quite knows at the moment. Cuomo issued a broad proposal Tuesday calling for the creation of an Excelsior Scholarship that would stack on top of existing federal and state grants to pay for tuition for students at public two- and four-year institutions whose families earn \$125,000 or less. No legislation had been filed on the matter as of Wednesday afternoon, and the proposal will still have to go through the wringer of the New York State Legislature.

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Senate Education Committee Gets Three New Members, Including Va.'s Tim Kaine

Education Week: The new roster for the Senate education committee is set for the 115th Congress. There isn't a huge amount of turnover, but there are two newly elected senators who will join the committee, and a senator who's newly prominent thanks to the 2016 race. • Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va. Kaine, of course, was the Democratic vice presidential nominee in the most recent election. On the campaign trail, he promoted the values embodied by school desegregation and Brown v. Board of Education. His wife, Anne Holton, was previously Virginia's education secretary (a different role than the job of chief state school officer), and had her own personal story regarding desegregation in education.

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K-12 Mathematics: Tools to Boost Teacher & Student Performance

eSchool News: Free registration required to view this resource. Register today and receive free access to all our news and resources and the ability to customize your news by topic with My eSchool News. Already a member? Log in From implementing the Common Core, to juggling different age groups and skill levels, to delivering high quality instruction in the face of growing class sizes, today's K-12 math educators face an array of challenges. Many math teachers are turning to digital tools to support them in facing these challenges,

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