

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

APRIL 1, 2015

FY 2016 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Last week, the House and Senate both approved their respective versions of the FY 2016 Budget Resolution. As previously discussed, the Budget Resolution sets the broad parameters for Federal spending, both in terms of the current year appropriations process and as a blueprint for long-term spending. Both versions would balance the budget within 10 years, largely at the expense of entitlement programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). A joint conference committee will now be tasked with reconciling the House and Senate proposals, with a target date of April 15. Meanwhile, the various Appropriations Subcommittees are continuing to hold hearings in anticipation of drafting the FY 2016 spending bills later in the spring.

HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION

As a follow-up to last month's Legislative Program Committee meeting, we contacted the Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to advocate in support of the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), emphasizing that it provides over 11,000 children in the County with comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage for a modest monthly payment and co-pays. Senator Brown (D-OH) had introduced legislation to extend the program as S. 522, and we urged the Senate Finance Committee to expedite action on the bill. Meanwhile, we also closely monitored efforts to address the ongoing problems associated with basing physician reimbursement rates under Medicare on the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). SGR was implemented by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 in an attempt to control rising costs, but so far there has been 17 "short-term fixes" to avoid dramatic cuts in the rates paid to physicians under Medicare. After intense negotiations began early in March, a compromise was reached on a long-term solution to replace the SGR that also reauthorizes CHIP. H.R. 2, the *Medicare Access and CHIP*

Reauthorization Act of 2015, would reauthorize CHIP through September 2017. In addition, it would extend the current authorization for Federal Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) for an additional two years. We urged Congresswoman Capps to support these provisions, and when H.R. 2 was approved on March 26, she voted in its favor. The measure must now be taken up by the Senate when it returns from the spring recess in two weeks.

MAP-21 REAUTHORIZATION

As the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction hold hearings on MAP-21 reauthorization, we continue to advocate in support of the County's surface transportation priorities, including dedicated Federal resources for local on-system bridges. We have asked our local delegation to sign onto a California delegation letter being circulated by CSAC in conjunction with Congressman Denham (R-CA). The letter urges the leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to make funding for the nation's crumbling bridges a top priority, and states that it is essential for Congress to provide a dedicated funding stream for local "on-system" bridges. Existing authority under MAP-21 is scheduled to expire on May 31, and another short-term extension is highly likely.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

Working in conjunction with NACo, we urged Congresswoman Capps to sign a Congressional letter in support of the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. To be sent to Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi, the letter advocates for full funding for PILT in FY 2016, while also supporting a longer range solution to ensure ongoing statutory funding for the program. In the Senate, we contacted the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in support of Senator Wyden's S. 517, the *Secure Rural Schools and PILT Repair Act*, and asked Senators Boxer and Feinstein to support it and similar measures to provide full PILT funding. The County received \$1.8 million through the program last year.

Washington Update – April 1, 2015**CAMP 4 – LAMALFA LEGISLATION**

Early in March, Congressman LaMalfa (R-CA) re-introduced his legislation to take the Camp 4 property into trust for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission Indians as H.R. 1157. After providing the text to the County and discussing its re-introduction with Congresswoman Capps' staff, we contacted new House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop (R-UT), Indian Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Young (R-AK), subcommittee members and the bill's cosponsors to advocate the County's opposition to the bill. We also met with Chris Fluhr, Majority Staff Director for the Subcommittee, to register the County's position and discuss potential action on the bill. While Congressman LaMalfa has not yet requested a hearing on the measure, it is likely to occur, and several of the bill's cosponsors also serve on the subcommittee. Congresswoman Capps remains adamantly opposed to the bill, and her staff reiterated that she is doing all she can to dissuade any action on it. If the subcommittee does proceed with a hearing, she will then work to ensure that the County has a voice at it. While companion legislation has not been introduced in the Senate, we also reiterated the County's position on Camp 4 to Senators Boxer and Feinstein.

LAND INTO TRUST PROCESS

We also met with Michael Andrews, Staff Director for new Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Chairman Barrasso (R-WY), both to brief him on the Camp 4 situation and to discuss the Committee's March 25 Roundtable on the *Carcieri* Supreme Court decision and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' land-into-trust process in general. While the Roundtable was a unique forum without formal testimony, Mr. Andrews assured us that the Committee would welcome the County's comment on the land-into-trust process. We subsequently provided them with a written statement on behalf of the County, including the Board-adopted resolution urging Congress to enact comprehensive fee-to-trust reform as part of any *Carcieri* "fix." We also attended the Roundtable, and shared the County's position with both NACo and CSAC participants. The Roundtable was by design a facilitated forum intended to stimulate initial conversation regarding the issue from all sides.

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